



# Department of Justice

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## **LOUISIANA MAN CONVICTED OF CIVIL RIGHTS VIOLATION IN CONNECTION WITH CROSS-BURNING**

WASHINGTON – Daniel Earl Danforth of Minden, La., was convicted yesterday by a jury in Shreveport, La., of a civil rights conspiracy, use of fire in the commission of a federal felony, and obstruction of justice in connection with a cross-burning near the home of an interracial couple in Athens, La., the Justice Department announced.

Sentencing has been set for April 14, 2010. At sentencing, Danforth, 31, faces a maximum penalty of 10 years for the civil rights conspiracy; 20 years for obstruction of justice; and an additional 10 years for use of fire.

At trial, evidence revealed that on Oct. 23 or 24, 2008, Danforth agreed with his two cousins to build, erect, and burn a cross near the homes of a cousin and her African American boyfriend (now husband), and other relatives who approved of their interracial relationship. Danforth and his co-conspirators built the cross using two pine trees, wire or cable, and a large nail. One of Danforth's cousins then went to get diesel fuel to use to burn the cross. Meanwhile, Danforth and his other cousin transported the cross to an area adjacent to the victims' homes where, using chainsaw gas, they set the cross on fire in order to intimidate the victims. On Oct. 26, 2008, Danforth telephoned a relative who was living with the victims and directed her to the location of the burned cross.

The evidence also showed that several days later, after the defendant and his co-conspirators learned that the FBI was investigating this crime as a potential civil rights violation, Danforth, his cousin who helped transport and burn the cross, and the cousin's girlfriend formed a plan to get rid of the burned cross to prevent the FBI from discovering it and using it as evidence. Danforth's cousin then drove Danforth to the woods behind the victims' homes, where Danforth removed the cross, disassembled it and hid it in the woods in an effort to thwart the FBI investigation.

“The defendant and his co-conspirators, driven by hatred, threatened a family with violence simply because they associated with persons of another race. Incidents of this kind have no place in this country, but they are regrettably all too common,” said Assistant Attorney General Thomas E. Perez of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

“Burning a cross near someone's home to threaten or strike fear and terror in the hearts of other human beings is a criminal act deserving vigorous investigation and punishment. This office will continue to aggressively direct federal law enforcement resources toward investigating

and prosecuting those criminals who infringe and violate the civil rights of others,” said William J. Flanagan, Acting U. S. Attorney for the Western District of Louisiana.

This case was investigated by the FBI. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Mary J. Mudrick for the Western District of Louisiana and Trial Attorney Erin Aslan from the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division.

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