



# Department of Justice

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## **NORTH CAROLINA MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO RACIAL HARASSMENT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN FAMILY**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Justice Department today announced that a Leland, North Carolina man pleaded guilty in federal court to conspiring with others to violate the civil rights of an African-American family in Richlands, North Carolina.

The defendant, 23-year-old Joshua Hancock, told United States District Court Judge James C. Fox that in 1999, he participated in the hanging of a rope noose on the front door of the victims, who had just moved into a previously all-white neighborhood of Richlands, North Carolina. Hancock admitted that he and his co-conspirators intended to frighten and intimidate the family into moving away from Richlands.

“The despicable racial intimidation that occurred in this case is deeply offensive to the values we as Americans share,” said Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights R. Alexander Acosta. “This kind of threatening behavior, aimed at forcing a family from its home, will not be tolerated. The Justice Department is committed to vigorously prosecuting crimes that are motivated by racial bias.”

On February 19, 2004, a federal grand jury indicted Hancock and two other men for a civil rights conspiracy relating to a series of racial incidents that occurred in 1999. A fourth defendant was charged with obstructing justice and lying to a federal agent during the subsequent federal investigation. The indictment alleges that the defendants conspired with each other and with unindicted individuals to hang a noose on the family’s door, throw a dead raccoon into the family’s yard, and burn a cross on the family’s property, all in an effort to frighten the victims into leaving their new home.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and is being prosecuted by attorneys from the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice and the U.S. Attorney’s Office in the Eastern District of North Carolina.

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