



Department of Justice Press Release

For Immediate Release
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United States Attorney's Office
Western District of Arkansas
Contact: (479) 783-5125

Four Arkansas Men Convicted of Civil Rights Charges in Cross Burning Conspiracy

WASHINGTON—The Justice Department announced that Jacob A. Wingo, Richard W. Robbins, Clayton D. Morrison and Darren E. McKim pleaded guilty today and yesterday to conspiring to drive a woman and her children from their home in Donaldson, Ark., because they associated with African-Americans. A fifth defendant, Dustin Nix, 21, pleaded guilty to similar charges in July 2009.

All defendants pleaded guilty in federal court in Hot Springs, Ark., to civil rights charges and charges of making a false statement to a federal law enforcement officer. Each admitted and pleaded guilty to a felony civil rights charge for conspiring with each other to force a woman and her young children from their home by threats and intimidation because she associated with African-Americans. Wingo and Morrison also pleaded guilty to an additional civil rights charge related to their direct involvement in an attempt to burn a cross at the victims' home to intimidate the victims into leaving. All four defendants also pleaded guilty to a related charge of lying to agents of the FBI in an attempt to cover their conduct.

"The defendants used a despicable and unmistakable symbol of hatred, the burning cross, to intimidate a young family because the family associated with African-Americans," said Loretta King, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "The Civil Rights Division will continue to prosecute this type of illegal, hateful behavior to the fullest extent of the law."

As part of the conspiracy, Wingo, 20, admitted to building a cross, transporting it to the victims' home, and attempting to set it on fire. Morrison admitted to helping to prepare the cross and accompanying Wingo and Nix to the victims' home to burn the cross. McKim and Robbins, 42, admitted to encouraging Wingo and Nix to build the cross and burn it, as well as driving to the victims' home on a separate occasion to threaten and intimidate them. McKim also admitted to providing materials to Wingo and Nix for them to build the cross.

Wingo and Morrison, 29, face a total of 25 years in prison and a fine of up to \$750,000. Robbins and McKim face a total of 15 years in prison and a fine of up to \$50,000. The defendants will be sentenced at a later date.

Special Agents from the FBI's Little Rock Field Office investigated this matter. The case was prosecuted by Special Litigation Counsel Gerard Hogan and Trial Attorney Benjamin Hawk of the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department, with the assistance of Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew Quinn for the Western District of Arkansas.

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