



U.S. Department of Justice

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wisconsin Man Sentenced for Making Racially-Charged Threats Toward Black Residents

Gregory J. Haanstad, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, joins Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division in announcing William McDonald, 45, of West Allis was sentenced on June 29, 2023, in federal court in the Eastern District of Wisconsin to 30 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release for intimidating and interfering with Black residents because of their race and because they were exercising their right to fair housing.

According to court documents, McDonald vandalized a Black woman's vehicle parked outside her apartment by slashing her tires and smashing her windshield in March 2021. McDonald then left on her car a note filled with racial slurs, threatening to slash her throat, and demanding that she move out of West Allis. A week later, McDonald slashed two of her car tires and left another note filled with racial slurs and giving her an ultimatum – move out of the neighborhood or suffer violence. In April 2022, another Black woman and her two minor children moved into McDonald's apartment complex. Shortly after they moved in, McDonald vandalized her front door with racial graffiti and left her a note, calling her family a racial slur and demanding that she get out of the building.

"Every person in the United States has the right to live in their homes and neighborhoods free from the threat of violence based on race," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "The Justice Department will vigorously enforce federal laws that protect all residents against race-based threats like those made by this defendant. This sentence should send a strong message to others who would carry out similar acts that they will be brought to justice."

United States Attorney Haanstad said, “The protection of citizens’ civil rights, including the right to live free from race-based discrimination and intimidation, is a top priority for the United States Attorney’s Office. We will continue to work closely with federal, state, and local partners to bring federal resources to bear on those who violate the rights of any of our fellow citizens to live where they choose.”

“The 30-month sentence of William McDonald is a direct outcome of the unrelenting efforts and dedication of federal and local law enforcement officers and prosecutors to protect the rights of every Wisconsin citizen to live in a safe and protected environment free from race-based violence,” said Special Agent in Charge Michael E. Hensle of the FBI Milwaukee Field Office. “Additionally, the Milwaukee Field Office of the FBI along with all its law enforcement partners are unwavering in their joint commitment to combat any and all crimes and discrimination based on race and ethnicity with the goal to make Wisconsin a safer and more inclusive community for everyone.”

The FBI Milwaukee Field Office and the West Allis Police Department investigated the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Christopher Ladwig and Philip Kovoov for the Eastern District of Wisconsin and Trial Attorney Matthew Tannenbaum of the Civil Rights Division’s Criminal Section prosecuted the case.

For more information and resources about the department’s work to combat hate crimes, visit www.justice.gov/hatecrimes.

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