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September 28, 2020
For Immediate Release

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Man Sentenced to One Year in Jail for Shooting Out Windows of Black-Owned Business

Steve Soto Used a BB Gun in Shooting Spree in North County

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) announced today that a 23-year-old man has been sentenced to one year in jail after pleading guilty to felony vandalism, a misdemeanor hate crime, and an unrelated felony assault charge. San Diego Superior Court Judge Harry Elias handed down the sentence, which was previously stipulated when the defendant, Steve Soto, pleaded guilty on August 28.

During a Black Lives Matter protest in early June, Soto drove by an Oceanside café with a BLM and black-owned sign posted and shot out the front window of the business with a BB gun.

“We want the public to know that we will fight hate in all its forms,” DA Summer Stephan said. “Hate Crimes impact the entire community and erode our right to equality and fairness.”

In 2019 and 2018, the District Attorney’s Office filed hate crime charges against 30 people. The number represents a continued increase from cases filed in previous years. Historically, race-based hate crimes make up between 50 and 60 % of all hate crimes in the County.

Earlier this year, the District Attorney’s Office set up a new online form and hotline where the public can report suspected hate crime they’ve witnessed in San Diego County. The tool is partly in response to reports of hate-related incidents aimed at the Asian community across the nation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the arrest of a 66-year old man in San Diego, who physically attacked a man he perceived to be Chinese-American.

“We know that people often don’t report hate crimes because of fear or shame, and we wanted to provide a direct avenue to encourage victims or witnesses to hate crimes to report,” DA Stephan said. “People can and should continue to report hate crimes to their local police departments and Sheriff’s

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Department. This additional reporting mechanism will act as a safety net and help ensure reports are reviewed and shared by law enforcement.”

The **online reporting form** can be found on the District Attorney’s website **here**. The Hate Crimes Hotline number is 619-515-8805.

Anyone submitting information about a suspected hate crime will be contacted with information about the DA’s review of the report and any action that may be taken. The public is reminded that hate speech in and of itself often does not rise to the level of a hate crime, but it could escalate to criminal behavior. By law, a hate crime is a criminal act committed against another person that is motivated by prejudice against a person’s race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office

The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.