



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

April 06, 2023



Petaluma Man Convicted of Marin Hate Crime

San Rafael, CA – A Petaluma man has been convicted in Marin County Superior Court of a misdemeanor hate crime and sentenced to 80 days in jail.

Robert Lynn Thorne was convicted March 29 by jury and also sentenced to one year of probation, 15 hours of volunteer work, and \$270 in fines and fees.

The conviction came one day after Marin County District Attorney Lori E. Frugoli [spoke before the California State Senate Public Safety Committee](#) about the need for more freedom to issue search warrants during investigations into hate crimes.

The hate crime charge stemmed from an October 2022 incident at a Novato shopping center during which Thorne damaged and spat upon a woman's car. The defendant spat on the hood, kicked a door, and scratched the paint, leading to a damage estimate of \$1,000. The man also yelled racial slurs toward the woman. He was contacted by law enforcement two hours after the incident and identified by the victim.

Trial Attorney Zach Harmon, with assistance from hate crime investigator William Reid, proved that the vandalism was committed due to the defendant's bias or hatred of the victim due to her race in violation of her civil rights.

The U.S. Constitution allows hate speech as long as it does not interfere with the civil rights of others. A hate crime is a crime against a person, group, or property motivated by the victim's real or perceived protected social group. A hate incident is an action or behavior motivated by hate but which, for one or more reasons, is not a crime. [The DA website](#) has more details about the differences.

"Hate crimes harm not only the victim but also our community," Frugoli said. "We thank the victim for standing up and reporting this crime to the Novato Police Department. We thank the jury for their jury service and for returning a guilty verdict on this disturbing and harmful crime."

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