



[Discuss] polar bear incident ends in acquittal

1 message

Brian Dolinar <briandolinar@gmail.com>

Fri, Jan 21, 2011 at 12:27 PM

To: discuss list <discuss@communitycourtwatch.org>

We've also talked to Rommell smith, mentioned below in the same incident.

This is another supposed "polar bear" incident where Champaign police preemptively arrested a couple black youth.

Rommell denied to me that he had anything to do with the skirmish.

BD

Jury acquits man in campus incident

Fri, 01/21/2011 - 8:00am | [Mary Schenk](#) 

URBANA – An Urbana man accused of threatening to beat up a man in Campustown late last summer has been acquitted of misdemeanor charges.

A Champaign County jury deliberated about an hour Thursday morning before deciding that Ezzard Johnson, 19, who listed an address in the 400 block of Dodson Drive, was not guilty of either aggravated assault or disorderly conduct.

The charges stemmed from an incident that happened about 1:30 a.m. Sept. 18 in the 500 block of East Green Street in Champaign.

Travis McChristian, 21, a UI senior who lived on Green Street in Champaign, testified he was walking toward campus when he passed a group of young men, one of whom made a remark to McChristian that had racial overtones. McChristian is white; Johnson is black. McChristian testified he made an off-color remark back then kept walking because he was alone and there were four or five young men in the group. The exchange lasted a few seconds, he said.

Seeing that a fight was possible, Champaign police moved in quickly and arrested Johnson and co-defendant Rommell Smith, 20, also of Urbana, for the threatening remarks and for alarming and disturbing McChristian.

In court, McChristian identified Johnson as the man who made the remark.

Champaign police were on campus as a result of an increase in attacks on young college-age men that started around the middle of August. However, due to a pretrial ruling by Judge Richard Klaus, the jury was not allowed to hear why police had increased their patrols.

Johnson did not testify.

Smith, who is also charged with aggravated assault and disorderly conduct, is due back in court Feb. 3.

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