

New York City: Army veteran kills 66-year-old black man in racist attack

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James H. Jackson, a white US Army veteran, was charged last week with the wanton killing of a 66-year-old black man in New York City. Jackson was charged with second-degree murder as a hate crime.

Jackson, 28, traveled to New York from Baltimore, Maryland for the express aim, later confessed to police, of killing as many black men as he could.

His first victim was Timothy Caughman, who was brutally stabbed to death around the corner from where he lived, on West 36th Street in Manhattan, not far from Times Square.

Jackson took a bus to New York on March 17 and spent the next several days apparently “selecting and stalking” African Americans, as the local prosecutor later stated. On Monday, March 20, he approached Caughman from behind as the older man was looking through trash, seeking cans for recycling.

A witness later reported that Caughman said, “What are you doing?” as Jackson stabbed him repeatedly with a sword with an 18-inch blade, which was later recovered. The killer walked away, and the victim staggered two blocks to a nearby police precinct. Stabbed in the spleen, colon, pancreas, diaphragm and lung, Caughman died soon afterwards of internal bleeding.

The attack took place at about 11:15 p.m. on Monday, and Jackson turned himself in to police about 24 hours later. The killer, who was arraigned last Thursday, readily confessed to a longstanding hatred of black men. His first victim was intended as a “practice run” for mass murder, and he had come to New York City for the purpose of maximum media exposure. Jackson also told the police that he had a racist manifesto on his laptop computer, which he had intended to deliver to the *New York Times*.

Caughman, who was born and brought up in the

Queens neighborhood of Jamaica, had been homeless in the past but had been living in the former single-room occupancy Barbour Hotel in midtown Manhattan for years. According to a report in the *Times*, he had previously worked for an anti-poverty agency. He remained close to family, maintained a Twitter account and also spent much of his time reading.

Jackson is the latest in a long list of veterans returning from duty in the imperialist occupations in Iraq or Afghanistan—in some cases for multiple tours—whose psychological instability or racist views have been deepened and who have come back to commit crimes like the murder of Caughman.

Enlisting in 2009, Jackson served in Afghanistan for about a year, from 2010 to 2011. The circumstances of his discharge from the military in 2012 have not been explained, nor have many details of his life in the last four years been revealed, although the manager of an apartment building from which he was nearly evicted several years ago was quoted in the *Times* as saying, “He definitely had some issues of some kind. ... He was off.”

The killing of Caughman was in one sense random, but it was obviously more than that. This murder comes less than a month after the murder of an Indian immigrant and the serious wounding of another in Olathe, Kansas, in another attack by a military veteran. These are among the more prominent incidents in what has turned into a spike of racist and anti-immigrant crimes and threats in the period since the election of Donald Trump last November.

Decades of permanent war abroad and militarization inside the US in the name of the “war on terror” have been intensified by candidate and now President Trump.

Anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim threats and

executive orders, accompanied by the official highlighting of alleged crimes committed by undocumented immigrants, have inspired racists and white supremacists of all varieties.

Neo-Nazi anti-Semites, open advocates of race war and others, often using the label of “white nationalist,” have reacted to the election of Trump and his early actions with enthusiasm. The Southern Poverty Law Center, tracking the activities of Nazi and white supremacist outfits, reports a growth in membership and activity, as well as a spike in racist attacks in recent months.

As in other instances, Trump, while regularly using certain incidents to stir up hatred of all immigrants and undocumented workers, has said nothing about the murder in New York City.



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