

Two men stabbed to death in Portland, Oregon anti-Muslim incident

Toby Reese
29 May 2017

Ricky John Best and Taliesin Myrddin Namkai-Meche died on Friday after being stabbed in the neck by 35-year-old Jeremy Joseph Christian in Portland, Oregon.

Christian was reportedly yelling ethnic, racial, and religious-based obscenities at passengers on the city's Metropolitan Area Express (MAX), including two young women--one wearing a hijab.

The men were attacked by Christian when they intervened to try and calm down the situation and were stabbed before Christian exited the train. A third victim, 21-year-old Micah David-Cole Fletcher, was also attacked and is currently being treated for wounds that are not expected to be life-threatening.

According to witnesses, Christian entered the train on Friday afternoon and soon after began hurling epithets at passengers that police said could best be described as "hate speech toward a variety of ethnicities and religions". The police and medical personnel arrived at Hollywood Station responding to a report of a disturbance on the eastbound MAX train to find the three victims of the stabbing. Christian was arrested a short while later nearby--repeatedly telling the police to "shoot me then" prior to being subdued and taken into custody.

Local police stated that an investigation was being conducted into Christian's "extremist ideology" but the FBI stated that it was too early to say if the killings qualified as a federal hate crime. Christian is expected to appear in court on Tuesday and is currently being held without bail on several charges including aggravated murder, intimidation, attempted murder, and as a felon in possession of a weapon.

Best, 53, a father of three teenage sons and a 12-year-old daughter, was an Army veteran and had been working for the City of Portland in the Bureau of

Development Services. He had worked as a technician for the city after retiring from the Army and, according to his supervisor Kareen Perkins, was well-liked.

Perkins told the local press that Best "was always the first person you would go to for help. I've talked to most of his coworkers today, and several of them said it's just like Rick to step in and help somebody out." He was pronounced dead at the scene when authorities arrived.

Namkai-Meche, 23, of Portland, had recently graduated with a degree in economics from Reed College. He died shortly after he was taken to the hospital. In a statement posted on the school's homepage one of his former professors recalled, "I still remember where he sat in conference and the types of probing, intelligent questions I could anticipate him asking. He was thoughtful, humble, smart, inquisitive, and compassionate. He was a wonderful human being. As good as they come."

Christian had been known to police and political groups in Portland for his outspoken political views on social media and at protests. Almost one month prior to the stabbing, Christian had shown up at a "March for Free Speech" event in the Montavilla neighborhood brandishing a baseball bat and wrapped in an American flag.

In videos that are now circulating on the Internet, Christian can be heard espousing racist comments and obscenities to counter demonstrators--as well as at the right-wing organizers of the event who refused to allow him in and claimed that he was not "with them." At the time, police officers told local press that he had a head injury and was mentally ill but did not pose a threat.

At that event, as on the Facebook page identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center as belonging to Christian, he referred to himself as a "nihilist." He had

previously created posts calling for the creation of a “White homeland” in the Pacific Northwest, claimed support for the Nazis, and praised Timothy McVeigh on April 19, the anniversary of the 1995 bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

The postings on the Facebook page make it clear that Christian’s political views were inconsistent and confused. In a post from January 25 of this year, Christian declared that he supported Bernie Sanders and Jill Stein and wanted to “reign in the Prison/Military Industrial Complexes”.

His mother, Mary Christian, told the *Huffington Post*, “I can’t imagine he would do anything like this, unless he was on drugs or something. He’s been in prison, he’s always been spouting anti-establishment stuff but he’s a nice person. I just can’t imagine.”

In 2002, Christian was convicted of first-degree robbery, second degree kidnapping, and conviction for carrying and using a dangerous weapon. In 2011, he was indicted for being a felon in possession of a firearm.

The Portland attack happened on the same night as the commencement of the Muslim holy month, Ramadan. Muslim organizations, imams, and mosques in Portland and around the country have issued alerts and called for extra patrols during the month in anticipation of hate crimes and persecution that have intensified since the inauguration of President Donald Trump.

After the stabbing on Friday, the Council on American-Islamic Relations demanded that “Trump speak out personally against rising bigotry and acts of racial violence in America targeting Muslims and other minority groups”. The organization cited a 50 percent increase in anti-Muslim incidents in 2017 and noted that in 8 percent of all incidents, a “Muslim woman’s headscarf has been a trigger”.

Trump has repeatedly stated that his actions, including an attempted travel ban targeting seven predominantly Muslim countries, bears no connection to the increased number of reported anti-Muslim crimes since the start of his presidential campaign. As of this writing, Trump has not tweeted about the incident nor has the White House issued a statement.

In Trump’s statement on Friday, after wishing Muslims a “joyful holiday,” he repeatedly referenced terrorism, violence, and national security. Before his

recent speech in Saudi Arabia last Sunday, Trump called for a “Terrorist Financing Targeting Center.” He demanded that the monarchies in the Middle East take a more active role against alleged Muslim extremists to “drive them out. Drive them out of your places of worship. Drive them out of your holy land. Drive them out of this earth.”



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)