



**NAACP**  
*Monroe County Branch*

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **VAUHXX BOOKER - But for being Black.**

Bloomington, IN, July 30, 2021: Vauhxx Booker, a Black man, was the victim of a vicious hate crime on July 4, 2020. In the year since, the criminal justice system has itself joined in the attack against him. Now it has taken the outrageous step of charging Booker, the victim, as a felon. He faces up to 3 1/2 years in prison and \$15,000 in fines for being subjected to a racist assault. This miscarriage of justice cannot be tolerated.

Booker was assaulted near Lake Monroe, just south of Bloomington, Indiana, by Sean Purdy, a drunken White man wearing a Confederate flag cowboy hat. The assault took place on public property. When Booker defended himself, several of Purdy's White friends joined in the attack. Booker was wrestled to a tree and someone yelled "get a noose". Fortunately, Booker's friends were able to rescue him, amid racist taunts like "nappy headed bitch", and the threatened lynching was stopped. Booker suffered abrasions, contusions, traumatic hair loss, neck strain and a mild concussion.

Immediately after he was attacked Booker called 911. Department of Natural Resources officers investigated. They started off by talking with the White perpetrators, who had not called 911. They told the DNR it was "no big deal," while providing fake names, no information about the events, and no complaints about being attacked or injured. When the DNR interviewed Booker they observed physical injury, saw his companions' cell phone videos of him being held against a tree by a gang of White men, then pursued by Purdy's friends yelling racist taunts like "nappy headed bitch", and heard that an assailant said "get a noose". The DNR made no arrests, and in their reports listed Booker among the suspects.

Monroe County's elected Prosecutor filed charges against Purdy, but not against Booker. So Purdy got her off the case, and a Special Prosecutor, Sonia Leerkamp, took over. She made clear from the start that she would file charges against Booker if he didn't agree to her dismissing the case against Purdy. Booker refused for over a year. When Leerkamp finally figured out that Booker would not bend to her will, she filed these unjustified charges against him, after sitting on them for over a year, and with no new investigatory information to support them. Special Prosecutor Leerkamp followed the lead of the DNR. Protect Purdy and his racist friends, and treat Booker, defending himself from an attack on public property, as a trespasser assaulting landowners.

But for Booker being Black, no one would have suggested that he was the criminal. This is systemic racism in action. At every step, White officers and the White Special Prosecutor give White folks the benefit of the doubt and all the sympathy. If the Black man won't go along with letting them off the hook, he will be punished. Whitewash at its most blatant. White Supremacy on display.

The Monroe County Branch of the NAACP condemns the prosecution of Vauhxx Booker, demands that the charges against him be dropped immediately, and calls on Special Prosecutor Sonia Leerkamp to resign.

Blaming the Black victim has gone on too long. Let it stop in Vauhxx Booker's case.

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*Monroe County, Indiana, Branch NAACP Branch Number 3062 P.O. Box 243 Bloomington, IN 47402-0243 The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, widely known as the NAACP, was founded in 1909. It is a civil rights organization committed to the fight for equality and the elimination of racial discrimination. For more information on the Monroe County, Indiana, Branch, visit our website at: [sites.google.com/site/mcbnaacp](https://sites.google.com/site/mcbnaacp)*