

NEWS

Hoax or Not, Innocent Until Proven Guilty

BY VICTORIA TURCIOS

AFTER QUESTIONING THE ALLEGED OFFENDERS that are said to have attacked Jussie Smollett in the early hours of January 29th, the investigation has taken a turn aiming guilt towards Smollett himself and his judge of character. They believe the actor could have potentially staged the attack, creating waves of anger amongst his supportive fans.

The American singer, photographer, director, and actor of the critically acclaimed TV show *Empire* may still be alleging that the two brothers arrested were the attackers, although he also has a relationship to them via his work on *Empire*. Smollett has now hired a high powered criminal defense attorney. According to a public interview with the Chicago Police Superintendent, Eddie Johnson, it is believed that the reason he staged the attack was to get a raise for his work on the *Empire* TV show.

In last month's issue, the *The Sword* article on the case focused on how "the attack on Jussie Smollett ignited a conversation nationwide on the disproportionate violence that targets black people, religious minorities, and LGBTQ people." Recent updates, however, indicate that there could be even more to the issue than the violence itself but also the possibility of staging such violence for publicity. The mistrust instilled in Smollett's fans, victims of hate-crimes, and allies of LGBTQ could have a huge impact on the future of these issues if he is found guilty.

A grand jury indicted him on sixteen counts of felony and disorderly conduct, carrying a prison sentence if he is found culpable. Arriving at court on March 14th, Smollett plead not guilty and publicly claimed that he was betrayed by the system through the assumption that he staged the attack. Officers on the case say they have evidence that supports their allegations against Smollett. The development resulted in the cast and crew of *Empire* to remove Jussie Smollett's character from the last two episodes of the show's season. Chicago's mayor Rahm Emanuel shared a few words during an interview with CNN showing his discontent with Smollett and his possible actions, saying, "You want to get paid more, get an agent. But don't use your sexual orientation, don't use your race, and have everybody's sympathies come to you and it turns out none of that was true."

The way the pendulum is swinging for Jussie Smollett leaves a lot of things for speculation with the accusation of staging his own hate crime. With Smollett's case yet to be closed, the reality is that hate crimes still exist and those investigated by the FBI in 2018 and the Human Rights Campaign organization rose seventeen percent from previous years. The possibility of Smollett lying about the attack for publicity raises a society-wide concern over the future of honesty and protection against discrimination. In the unstable social climate America is currently dwelling, having people staging hate crimes could have dire consequences for victims of real attacks who already experience various levels of apprehension. As the case unfolds, Eddie Johnson, the Chicago Police Superintendent updated the media on the case stating, "My concern now is that hate crimes will now publicly be met with a level of skepticism that previously didn't happen." †

Jussie Smollett Update

BY MATTHEW IUNG

ALOT HAS HAPPENED SINCE JUSSIE SMOLLETT WAS ALLEGEDLY ASSAULTED. However, with his recent indictment it's worth taking a look back and seeing what has taken place between then and now.

On January 29th Smollett alleges that he was attacked while walking back from a subway at 2 a.m. He told police that two masked assailants poured what may have been bleach on him as well as hanging a noose around his neck. In a follow-up with the police, Smollett alleged that his attackers used racial slurs as well as yelling "MAGA country."

(Make America Great Again). The Smollett family and his fans stood firmly behind him and there was a sort of media frenzy around the alleged attack. Many came out in support for the actor and his call for people to stand for love and be strong in the face of adversity.

Questions began to surface when the Chicago police department released the initial incident report. The important points of which are Smollett's reluctance to the point where a close friend of his called the police. Smollett's choice to continue to wear the noose around his neck until police arrived and his inability to provide a description of his assailants and the direction that they fled. In the aftermath of the initial interviews, the police had been tracking two persons of interest. After going on *Good Morning America* to recount his alleged attack Smollett was interviewed by police again. That evening the police had the warrants they needed to search the home of the two persons of interest. Not long after being brought into custody, the pair were realized and identified as Olabinjo and Abimbola Osundairo.

With new information the police wanted to speak with Smollett. Contact with the actor's attorneys was met with pushback and disbelief about the brother's involvement. The Osundairo brothers told authorities that Smollett allegedly paid them to stage the crime. In late February Smollett is charged with felony disorderly conduct for filing a false police report.

Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie T. Johnson said of Smollett during a press conference, "Jussie Smollett took advantage of the pain and anger of racism to promote his career," Johnson said. "I am left hanging my head asking 'why?'. Why would anyone, especially an African-American man, use the symbolism of a noose to make false accusations? ... How can an individual who's been embraced by the city of Chicago turn around and slap everyone in the city in the face with these false claims?"

On March 8th Cook County State Attorney's office made public that a grand jury had indicted the actor on 16 Felony counts of disorderly conduct. Early in the Chicago Police departments work, an investigation was opened by the FBI and Postal service regarding an alleged threatening letter that Smollett was sent even before his alleged assault. As recently as March 12th Smollett has made an unrequired appearance in court and continues to maintain to his claim of innocence. †

Liberian Refugees

BY ALEXANDRIA GOSEN

ON MARCH 27, 2018, PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP made the order that is affecting the lives of thousands of Liberian families in America. On this day, Trump terminated the Deferred Enforcement Departure. As defined by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services website, Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) is in the president's discretion to authorize as part of his power to conduct foreign relations. Although DED is not a specific immigration status, individuals covered by DED are usually not subject for removal from the United States for a designated period of time.

This will have a very large effect on Minnesota's population. To quote Minnesota Representative Dean Phillips, "Minnesota is home to the largest Liberian Population in the United States, [...] Minnesota is their home. Uprooting them after decades of living and working in our community would be inhumane and would cause extraordinary disruption to our local economy."

Liberian refugees have been in the United States for decades. They came here during the civil wars in 1989, 1999-2003, and again during the Ebola outbreak in 2014-2016. These refugees were originally granted Temporary Protective Status, but that grew into DED, and many families have been relying on this program.

Trump's removal of the DED program has a direct effect on twenty-eight-year-old Yatta Kiazolu. She is a Ph.D. history candidate at UCLA, and though she grew up in America, she was born in Botswana, Liberia. Due to DED's revocation, come the end of the year, she may be deported and forced to live in a country she's never truly known.