

For Immediate Release

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Judge Awards Three African-American Men \$1.44 Million in Hate Crimes Lawsuit Against Four Members of White Mob

CHICAGO – The Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Inc. and **Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP** today announced that the Circuit Court for Kankakee County (Illinois) has awarded \$1.44 million to three young African-American men who were brutally beaten by a mob of white men in a racially motivated and unprovoked attack that took place outside the Manteno, Illinois, home of a longtime white, female friend in February 2005.

“We and our clients are extremely pleased with the judge’s ruling in this case, which represents an episode of racist violence that would have shocked the conscience in the 19th century, much less in the 21st,” said Pamela G. Smith, a litigation and dispute resolution partner in Katten’s Chicago office who led a Katten legal team that handled the case, *pro bono*. “The judge granted our clients all of the relief they requested and in their eyes, this result offers them a much-needed vindication of our legal system. We hope news of this judgment also sends a very strong message that the people of Kankakee County will not tolerate racial hatred in their community.”

The judgment for \$240,000 in compensatory and \$1.2 million in punitive damages was handed down this week by Judge Kendall O. Wenzelman of the 21st Judicial Circuit, Kankakee County. The plaintiffs were represented in their lawsuit by *pro bono* attorneys from Katten, along with Betsy Shuman-Moore of the Chicago Lawyers’ Committee. Two other defendants in the case previously settled with the plaintiffs out of court.

The lawsuit, *Kenyon Coiley, et al., v. Larry Delawder, et al.*, established that an unprovoked mob of white men, including defendants Larry Delawder, Jeremiah Spainhour, Jason Stinebring and Richard Rybolt, viciously attacked Vantis Coiley, his brother Isaiah and their cousin Kenyon Coiley outside the Manteno home of a white friend.

“The Coileys simply intended to visit a friend as they had done many times before, and they could not possibly have anticipated what happened next,” Ms. Smith explained. “The Coileys heard racial slurs being shouted at them from inside the house and attempted to flee, but once the door was opened, the attack on these three young men by nearly 20 white men was instantaneous and vicious.”

The mob used fists, bricks, knives and hammers as weapons to savagely beat the Coileys and prevented them from escaping by slashing their car’s tires and disabling the ignition by jamming it with a screwdriver. Despite being severely injured, the Coileys eventually were able to escape and drive their damaged car to the nearest hospital.

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The Coileys have suffered and continue to endure physical and emotional injuries as a result of the attack. Their lawsuit sought damages for violations of Illinois statutory law, emotional distress and property damage. In 2005, a jury convicted Stinebring of felony criminal charges, and in 2006 Delawder and Spainhour pled guilty to felony criminal charges for the attack. The court found Delawder, Rybolt, Stinebring, and Spainhour in default and held that they are legally liable for the racially motivated attack.

Ms. Smith, along with current associates Monica J. Mosby, Laura A. Brake, Brian J. Poronsky and former associate Sonja Clayton-Pedersen, represented the plaintiffs.

Katten has a long-term commitment to helping the poor, the powerless and the disenfranchised obtain first-rate representation without charge. Attorneys and other legal professionals give their time, resources and talent to serve individuals and organizations in need, to engage in important national litigation, and to partner with local legal service providers to ensure access to the justice system.

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