

HANDOUT 26

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ATTACK ON ARAB-AMERICAN, CAR TORCHING DECRIED

GENE WARNER

A steel men's-room door was slammed hard into the head of an Arab-American man Sunday afternoon by a teenage employee of the Tops supermarket on Broadway who called the man an "Arab terrorist," Buffalo police reported today.

Meanwhile, police and fire officials are investigating the apparent torching of an Arab-American's vehicle in the city's Black Rock area overnight.

The two incidents brought an immediate rebuke from Assemblyman Sam Hoyt, D-Buffalo, who condemned the attacks in the harshest terms. "Vigilante attacks at home against innocent people -- innocent Americans -- based on how they look, what their last name sounds like or the way they worship must not be tolerated," Hoyt said from Albany. "We as a people must not sink to the level of those who would attack us based on our religion or national origin."

Crimes like these led to last year's passage of New York's Hate Crimes Law, Hoyt added.

Tops also condemned the assault in its store.

The victim in Sunday's supermarket attack told Ferry-Fillmore District officers that he was knocked unconscious for a brief time and that when he left the lavatory, his assailant and several other employees sitting at a break-room table laughed at him and refused him any aid. Other employees, though, later told the man they were sorry about what happened.

Officers charged Brian K. Marshall, 18, of Watson Street with second-degree assault as a hate crime and aggravated harassment, following the incident, which occurred at about 5:30 p.m. Sunday.

Tops officials today condemned any such act, adding that corporate policy calls for the immediate dismissal of any employee involved in any violence, including fighting, on the premises.

"Tops deplores any acts of violence or hate crimes against people of any ethnic background," said Stefanie Zakowicz, director of public relations. "We're cooperating with the authorities, and we'll take immediate action once all of the findings are conclusive."

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One witness told police that the Arab-American man went into the employees' break room and asked for the location of the lavatory. As the man headed into the lavatory, police said, Marshall jumped up from the table, kicked his leg out in a hostile manner and uttered an ethnic slur. He then was accused of pushing the bathroom door with both hands, striking the victim in the head.

The man was treated for head and back injuries and later released from St. Joseph Hospital, Cheektowaga.

Across the city, firefighters responded to a 3:53 a.m. call of a vehicle on fire at Chandler Street and Military Road. The vehicle is owned by an Arab-American living on Chandler Street, but authorities cited no evidence of the arson being a hate crime.