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D.A. BROWN: FIVE INDIVIDUALS ARRAIGNED ON ASSAULT AND MENACING CHARGES FOLLOWING HOWARD BEACH HALLOWEEN MELEE

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that four Brooklyn teenagers and a 25-year-old man have been arraigned on charges of assaulting and menacing a group of teenagers in the Howard Beach section of Queens on Halloween night.

District Attorney Brown said, "That which is alleged to have occurred on a busy Queens thoroughfare earlier this week was not some harmless Halloween prank meant to strike fear in its victims, but a serious assault. The defendants are accused of being part of a mob armed with sticks that chased and then attacked a group of young people. Such alleged actions have no place in a civilized society. Fortunately, no one was severely injured or killed in the melee."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as George Morales, 25, of 290 Lincoln Avenue in Brooklyn, Patrick Pugh, 18, of 542 King Street in Brooklyn, Terrance Scott, 18, and Talique Jackson, 16, both of 523 Milford Street in Brooklyn, and Victor Tossas, 16, of 700 Euclid Avenue in Brooklyn. They were arraigned today before Queens Criminal Court Judge William Harrington on charges of second-degree assault, second-degree menacing and fourth-degree criminal possession of a weapon. Bail was set at \$10,000 for Pugh and \$1,500 each for Morales and Tossas. Scott and Jackson were released on their own recognizance. The defendants, who face up to seven years in prison if convicted, were ordered to return to court on November 16, 2007.

The District Attorney said that, according to the charges, Shawn Carmatta, Joseph Friedman, Frederick Coemenza and Angelo Gurino were chased from the corner of 159 Avenue and 92nd Avenue just before 10:00 p.m. on October 31, 2007, by a large group of individuals carrying sticks. In fear of being seriously injured, the four victims fled around the corner to a McDonald's Restaurant on Cross Bay Boulevard, closely followed allegedly by their pursuers – including the five defendants. While inside the restaurant, it is alleged that one of the pursuers struck Shawn Carmatta in the back of the neck with a hard object, causing bruising and substantial pain. Carmatta then allegedly observed the defendant Pugh strike Joseph Friedman in the head with a broom handle, which broke on contact. Friedman, who suffered a laceration and substantial pain, was taken to a local hospital where he received seven staples to close his wound.

The defendants were arrested by police officers assigned to the New York City Police Department's 106th Precinct. The investigation into whether the alleged actions of the defendants were motivated by hate is ongoing.

Senior Assistant District Attorney Michael E. Brovner, of the District Attorney's Gang Violence and Hate Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Mariela Palomino Herring, Bureau Chief, and Michelle E. Goldstein, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Senior Executive Assistant District Attorney for Trials James Clark Quinn and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorneys for Trials John H. Larsen and Robert J. Masters.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org.