

## **For Immediate Release: March 13, 2009**

*Jury acquits John Bowes of civil rights violation;  
Judge Payne gives 1 year probation for disorderly conduct*

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**Belchertown, MA** – John C. Bowes, formerly of Milton, was acquitted today on a misdemeanor civil rights violation charge and convicted of a misdemeanor charge of disorderly conduct in relation to an incident that occurred on February 3, 2008 outside the UMass dormitory room of Jason Vassell.

Judge John Payne stressed Bowes' demonstrated pattern of alcohol abuse as reason to sentence Bowes to a substance abuse treatment program, to be verifiably completed within the next three months. Along with this, Bowes was sentenced to 12 months of administrative probation (which allows him to travel to Baja California for a scuba diving instruction course later this year) and upwards of \$200 in court fees. In light of Bowes' acquittal on the civil rights violation, Judge Payne denied the request of Assistant District Attorney Neil Desroches that Bowes be sentenced to attend a "diversity sensitivity program".

The charges against Bowes stemmed from an onslaught of vicious racial slurs he unleashed at Jason last February. Jason's dormitory neighbor, Barbara Rutman, was called on Thursday afternoon as a prosecutorial witness, and testified that she heard a male voice outside Jason's window yell "Your family was slaves" and "I'm gonna whip you", along with ample usage of the word "nigger." Other eyewitnesses Ashley Clancy and Lindsay Toper, both of whom were present in Jason's room when the attack took place, also testified to hearing the word "nigger" again and again from Bowes.

A statement from Committee for Justice for Jason member Joe Mirkin claimed that "A prosecutor that seriously wanted to get the conviction for the civil rights violation could have done a lot more than Mr. Desroches did in this trial. We can safely assume that the District Attorney's office will not attempt such weak arguments in their case against Jason Vassell." The statement continued to attack the District Attorney's office for pursuing such a watered down set of charges against Bowes. "To drop the assault and battery charge against Bowes is to completely ignore the fact that after violently intimidating and threatening Jason because of his race, Bowes went on to *break his nose*. To me this represents an interest in letting Bowes off so as to better frame up Jason on felony charges of aggravated assault and battery with a dangerous weapon."

Jason's case has been delayed until April 28, at which time a status hearing on a recent discovery order will take place in the Supreme Judicial Court.