



718.286.6000
WWW.QUEENSDA.ORG

QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568



MELINDA KATZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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CONTACT: PRESS OFFICE (718) 286-6315
QDACommunications@queensda.org

MANHATTAN MAN CHARGED WITH FELONY HATE CRIME
AFTER TARGETING SIKH ON MTA BUS

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Christopher Philippeaux was arraigned last night, accused of taunting, punching and trying to knock off the traditional Sikh turban of a fellow bus passenger.

District Attorney Katz said: “We will hold accountable those that would attack others based on their religion. Freedom of religion and expression are foundational principles of our democracy. That is most true here in Queens, the World’s Borough, the most diverse county in the United States. Unprovoked attacks, especially ones motivated by hate, will not be tolerated.”

Philippeaux, 26, of Park Avenue in Manhattan, was arraigned last night in Queens Criminal Court and charged with assault in the third degree as a hate crime and aggravated harassment in the second degree. Judge Maria Gonzalez ordered him to return to court on October 23.

According to the charges:

- On October 15, at approximately 9:00 a.m., Philippeaux and a 19-year-old man were passengers on an MTA bus in Richmond Hill. The teenager was wearing a medical-type mask and a turban—a head covering he wore as part of his religious practice as a Sikh.
- Philippeaux approached the victim and yelled at him to remove his mask. He pushed the victim and punched him in the face.
- Philippeaux punched the teenager in the back of the head, tried to knock off his turban and told him, in sum and substance, “We don’t wear that in this country.”
- Philippeaux punched the victim multiple times in the back of his head and body. He then fled.
- The victim received medical treatment for the injuries sustained during the assault, including facial swelling, bruises, substantial pain and bleeding from his nose.
- Philippeaux was arrested Thursday.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Howard Kwok of the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force.

Assistant District Attorney Zebo Fattoyeva of the District Attorney's Hate Crimes Bureau prosecuting the case under the supervision of Michael Brovner, Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for the Major Crimes Shawn Clark.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: Archived press releases are available at www.queensda.org.

