

Racist and Anti-Muslim Social Media Rants by Lawyer Lead to New Trial for Defendant



The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court recently issued an opinion on June 15, granting a new trial to Anthony J. Dew, an individual represented by court-appointed lawyer Richard Doyle, who tragically passed away in 2021. The court determined that Doyle's social media posts, characterized by "unabashed anti-Muslim rants" and racism against Black individuals, were instrumental in overturning Dew's previous conviction.

Doyle's offensive remarks were not confined to his personal social media accounts; some were allegedly made from the very courthouse where he worked. His vitriolic posts targeted the Muslim faith, and he went as far as chastising Dew for wearing religious attire, explicitly instructing him not to wear it again. In one instance, Doyle even refused to engage in conversation with Dew, citing Dew's choice to wear a kufi prayer cap.

The court's opinion elucidated that Doyle's bigotry was not left behind when he entered the courthouse. It concluded that Dew's right to effective legal representation had been compromised due to the inherent conflict of interest arising from Doyle's prejudice against individuals of Dew's faith and race.

The ruling has garnered attention from various publications, including Law360, Above the Law, the Associated Press, and the Legal Profession Blog, all of which have reported on the case and its implications.

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Doyle was appointed as Dew's legal counsel in February 2016. He advised Dew to accept a plea deal, which ultimately led to Dew pleading guilty to charges related to sex trafficking in June 2016. One charge of rape was dismissed through an agreement with the prosecutors. Dew, at the time, was unaware of Doyle's inflammatory online posts.

One of the posts shared by Doyle featured a photograph of a pig with explicit language aimed at Muslims. Numerous other posts referred to derogatory terms targeting Muslims and celebrated the mistreatment of "raghead terrorist prisoners." Additionally, Doyle shared a post combining the movie "The Waterboy" with the face of Colin Kaepernick, a Black football player known for kneeling during the national anthem as a form of protest against racial injustice.

While the court acknowledged that it couldn't definitively determine the extent to which Dew's interests influenced Doyle's actions during Dew's representation, it asserted that based on the evidence presented, it was impossible to credibly assume that Doyle's anti-Muslim and racist views did not impact his representation.

The court firmly concluded that Dew had successfully demonstrated that Doyle's representation was compromised due to an actual conflict of interest arising from Doyle's discriminatory beliefs. As a result, Dew's burden of proof to establish impaired legal representation had been met.

The implications of this ruling extend beyond Dew's case, raising important questions about the role of attorneys and their ethical obligations to their clients. The decision underscores the significance of unbiased legal representation and the potential consequences of lawyers expressing discriminatory views that may undermine their clients' interests.

In granting a new trial to Anthony J. Dew, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court has taken a significant step toward rectifying the injustice caused by a lawyer's racist and anti-Muslim behavior. This case serves as a powerful reminder that fairness, equality, and the right to effective legal representation are fundamental principles that must be upheld within the justice system.