

The Intelligencer

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Victims in Center City gay beating case sue Bucks County trio in Philadelphia court

By James O'Malley, staff writer

Two Philadelphia men are suing the Bucks County trio convicted of beating them in Center City.

Zachary Hesse and Andrew Haught on Tuesday filed a civil complaint in the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas seeking judgment in excess of \$50,000 on each of 10 counts in their demand for a jury trial.

Kathryn Knott, Kevin Harrigan and Philip Williams — all serving sentences for their roles in the September 2014 attack on Hesse and Haught, a gay couple — are named as defendants in the lawsuit.

“The criminal justice system ran its course,” said attorney Andrew Youman, a Philadelphia-based lawyer representing Hesse and Haught. “What this lawsuit is about is seeking appropriate compensation and accountability for their roles.”

The beating near 16th and Chancellor streets left Haught bloodied and battered with severe injuries to his face. His civil complaint says he was hospitalized for five days following the assault.

Williams, 25, of Warminster, pleaded guilty to conspiracy and aggravated assault. Harrigan, 27, of Warrington, pleaded guilty to conspiracy and simple assault. Both men are serving probation sentences.

Knott, 25, of Upper Southampton, took her charges to trial and her conviction for simple assault landed her behind bars at the Riverside Correctional Facility in the city. She is more than three months into her five-to-10 month prison sentence.

Though the defendants insisted the attack was not motivated by hatred of homosexuals, the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office argued the three hurled homophobic slurs against Hesse and Haught.

Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Judge Roxanne Covington, commenting at the conclusion of Knott's trial, called the behavior by the defendants "a violation of human rights," and said the homophobic slurs hurled during the attack were hateful and unacceptable.

The assaults prompted an expansion of Philadelphia's hate-crime law to include protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals.

The lawsuit is at least the second filed in recent weeks in connection with the case.

Kathleen O'Donnell, of Norristown, filed a civil complaint against Knott and Bucks County officials claiming her First Amendment rights were violated when county detectives visited her at work while investigating her "parody" internet message board account titled "Knotty is a Tramp."