

Walmart line cutting case ends with misdemeanor guilty plea

Written by Special to the NNPA from the Afro-American Newspaper
Wednesday, 25 November 2009 15:32



(NNPA) - A woman who faced up to 15 years in jail for an altercation which began when she allegedly cut the line at a Missouri Walmart has pled guilty to misdemeanor charges. Heather Ellis went on trial November 18, for two felony charges of assault in Kennett, Mo. But just a few hours after the case went to the jury on November 20, Ellis accepted a plea deal. The deal dropped the two felony charges of assault in exchange for Ellis pleading guilty to two misdemeanor charges, disturbing the peace and resisting arrest, according to reports in the Daily Dunklin, a newspaper in Kennett, MO.

As part of her plea, Ellis will spend four days in jail before the end of the year. Then she will undergo an unsupervised probation for a year and she will have to attend two hours in an anger management class. She is also required to pay the costs of her prosecution in the case. If she complies with the terms of the deal, the incident will be sealed and her record expunged.

The deal is similar to one which Ellis was offered by prosecutors shortly after her arrest, a deal that she refused several times. According to a report in the Southeast Missourian, Ellis said it had been worth it to go to trial, saying, "I still think it's important my story got out."

While the incident occurred almost three years ago, Ellis' case gained national attention in the weeks leading up to her trial, largely due to efforts of prominent advocate Boyce Watkins and his organization, Your Black World Coalition. Watkins worked in concert with the local NAACP chapter and the Southeast Missouri ACLU to provide support for Ellis and her family.

In a statement on BlackVoices.com, where Watkins is a regular contributor, he said he was happy that this ordeal was over for Ellis and her family. However, he expressed surprise at the outcome of the case, and said he would urge the Justice Department to investigate wider issues of prosecutor intimidation.

In an interview before the trial, Ellis' mother, Hester, told the AFRO that her daughter was innocent.

"I think the truth is a very important element," Hester Ellis said. "There is nothing really to prove their story. She's innocent and that's her stand. Hopefully the truth will come out."

Walmart line cutting case ends with misdemeanor guilty plea

Written by Special to the NNPA from the Afro-American Newspaper
Wednesday, 25 November 2009 15:32

But after accepting the plea deal, Heather Ellis told reporters, "I was responsible for my actions and I was able to say what I did wrong and I think it's important that everyone else step up to the plate and admit what they did was wrong, too."