

## Redwood City man wanted in attack on gay man at Santa Cruz club

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SANTA CRUZ — A judge signed a \$50,000 arrest warrant Tuesday for a Redwood City man suspected of attacking a gay man at a downtown nightclub early Sunday because of his sexual orientation.

Cole White, 24, is wanted for assault and a hate crime enhancement, according to Santa Cruz police spokesman Zach Friend.

Investigators suspect White made derogatory statements about another man's sexual orientation at the Blue Lagoon, a gay-friendly club on the 900 block of Pacific Avenue. White and the other man, a Santa Cruz resident in his early 30s, were separated briefly, but became embroiled in a second altercation that injured the Santa Cruz man, police reported.

The beating is being investigated as a hate crime because police believe the victim was targeted because of his sexual orientation, according to Friend. A hate crime allegation can add one year to a jail or prison sentence.

Accounts of how the fight went down varied.

The victim said White called him a gay slur outside the club. He said he saw White at the bar a few minutes later and turned to ask him if he was the

man who had just verbally accosted him on the sidewalk. Instead of answering, White allegedly punched the victim in the face. The victim said he was knocked to the ground and beaten for 10-15 seconds before someone pulled him off the floor and rushed him outside.

Blue Lagoon manager Fred Friedman said the altercation actually began with bumping and name-calling inside the club, then went outside.

"This gentleman and the other people decided to handle it themselves out on the street," said Friedman, who was working Saturday night and early Sunday.

Friedman said everyone involved came back in the bar, but were thrown out by security staff before police arrived.

The victim said he snapped a cell phone photo of the man he said attacked him, something police later used to identify White, Friend said. But outside the bar in the moments after the fight, 23-year-old David Douglas Cameron allegedly grabbed the cell phone and ran toward the levee, according to police. The victim chased after him until police took up the pursuit and apprehended Cameron, who police said is a friend of White's. Cameron was arrested on suspicion of robbery.

As police sorted out the incident early Sunday, Cameron's girlfriend, Meisha Galpren-Gibson, 18, was also arrested on Pacific Avenue near the club. She allegedly hit someone in the face and was arrested on suspicion of being drunk in public, disturbing the peace and fighting, according to police.

The victim, who suffered bruises, cuts, sore ribs and a possible broken nose in the attack, said he

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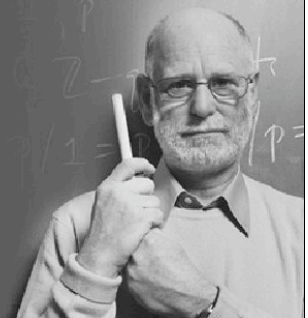


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was shocked by the hate speech and violence, especially in Santa Cruz and the Blue Lagoon.

In 2009, Santa Cruz police investigated eight hate crimes, which can also include crimes motivated by someone's disability, gender, nationality, religion, race or ethnicity.

Friedman said fights at the club are rare.

"I wished he had approached us initially because this wouldn't have happened," Friedman said, speaking of the man who was beaten. "We always take care of our customers. We look out for our customers." The bar manager also said everyone involved in the fighting will be banned or "permanently 86'd" from the Blue Lagoon.

"No one's allowed to fight. No one's allowed to push people. No one's allowed to call names," he said. "It's not that type of a club."

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