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# The Red Nation's account of Thursday's shooting

written by The Red Nation  
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## **WHAT**

THE RED NATION RESPONDS TO RACIST ATTACK ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

## **WHERE/WHEN**

SEPTEMBER 28, 2023 RIO ARRIBA COUNTY ANNEX BUILDING

## **WHO**

CALLING ON ALL NATIONAL, STATE, TRIBAL, COUNTY, AND CITY OFFICIALS, AND MOVEMENT ALLIES, TO CONDEMN THIS RACIST ATTACK AND DEMAND THE PROTECTION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

## **WHY**



An agitator opened fire on a prayerful celebration in Tewa Territory (Española, New Mexico) shortly after 12PM local time on Thursday, September 28. This was a premeditated act of violence. The agitator shot Jacob Johns (Hopi and Akimel O'odham) in the torso. Johns was protecting a peaceful group of community members assembled at the Rio Arriba County Annex Building, along with half a dozen community peacekeepers. The gunman was heard saying

“let’s do this” to a small group of men immediately before opening fire. At the time of the shooting, community members were celebrating a postponement of the reinstallation of a Juan de Oñate statue that was previously removed from Alcalde, New Mexico, on June 15, 2020. Rio Arriba County officials planned to reinstall the statue on Thursday morning in its new location in front of the county annex building but postponed the reinstallation after community members and activists mounted pressure earlier in the week. News of the postponement came as a relief to organizers, who turned the planned peaceful protest into an impromptu peaceful celebration with speeches and a community feed.

Before the shooting, the agitator was seen antagonizing the crowd, saying racist remarks, referring to attendees as “Indians,” and at one point proclaimed himself to be a follower of QAnon. The agitator also made a point to introduce himself to the media present and requested to be photographed and filmed. In the moments leading up to the shooting, the agitator attempted to approach the small crowd of mostly Indigenous women and children congregating around the event’s speakers in front of the building’s main entrance. Video evidence shows that Jacob Johns and other community peacekeepers successfully stopped the agitator from approaching the crowd. Eyewitnesses speculate that the shooter was trying to break through the crowd to shoot the speaker, or to jump on the cement pedestal to get a vantage point with the intent of carrying out a mass shooting. Video footage also shows that community peacekeepers did not pursue the agitator once they had successfully removed him to the other side of a wall separating the sidewalk from the complex. Despite this, the agitator reached under his sweatshirt with his right hand, drew a pistol, pointed, and shot one round into the crowd, hitting Johns in the torso. Additional ammo was seen tucked into his belt by eyewitnesses and on camera. Eyewitnesses have confirmed that the agitator quickly adjusted his aim after shooting Johns and pulled the trigger a second time with the intention of shooting Malaya Peixinho, one of the attendees, but the gun jammed, preventing the release of further rounds. Upon realizing he could go no further with his planned attack, the

shooter turned and fled into the complex's parking lot, got into a white Tesla, and sped off. Additionally, eyewitnesses report the shooter attempted to unjam his gun as he fled. The shooter was later apprehended eleven miles away by New Mexico State Police in Pojoaque, New Mexico.

Despite Rio Arriba County citing concerns for “public safety” as the rationale for postponing the reinstallment, the county offered no protection for Indigenous community members on Thursday. In fact Rio Arriba county and leaders at all levels of government were made well aware of the high possibility of gun violence. Denise Williams, mother of shooting victim Scott Williams, who was targeted at a 2020 Oñate protest, said prior to Thursday's event she called Governor Michelle Lujan-Grisham's office, the office of U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich, New Mexico State Police, the office of the New Mexico Attorney General, all members of U.S. Congress representing Valencia County in New Mexico, and all New Mexico state representatives and senators from Valencia County, to warn them of the high chance of gun violence directed at attendees. State senator Elizabeth “Liz” Stefanics was the only one to respond. Immediately after the shooting Scott Williams' father, Dan Williams, called the governor's office again to tell her that she “had blood on her hands” for failing to properly respond to both shootings.

Immediately after the shooting, two Rio Arriba County Annex employees denied children seeking shelter from the shooter entry into the building. They proceeded to come out, yelling at people to leave, and made disparaging comments about attendees and Jacob as he fought for his life feet away from them. The cops did not show up in a timely manner despite the shooter being in the same parking lot as the Rio Arriba County Sheriff's office, and it took several more minutes for an ambulance to arrive. Eyewitnesses report the complete absence of police intervention. The event's organizers assembled a community peacekeeping team to provide the only public safety measures present on the ground. Without hesitation, Johns and half a dozen other Indigenous men and allies volunteered. When Johns

was shot, it was attendees who provided the first medical response, saving Johns' life. The first law enforcement officer on the scene ordered the community members providing medical assistance to move away, but they refused because the officer did not identify himself as a medic and made no other attempts to provide assistance.

We are incredibly alarmed that pretrial services have recommended the agitator be released without cash bail. We know from first-hand experience that politically—and racially—motivated shootings like this embolden other like-minded vigilantes who hold the same contempt for Indigenous people and organizers. The agitator and his sympathizers pose a very real and serious threat to all Indigenous people, and to Indigenous women activists specifically. The establishment, which Alex Naranjo himself lauded as “a system that we’ve lived with for 400 years,” circles its wagons to protect Indian killers who are colonialism’s foot soldiers. This means there is virtually no formal protection or justice for Indigenous people, women, and activists in these times of heightened danger. We call upon all national, tribal, state, county, and city officials, and movement allies, to condemn this racist attack and demand safety and protection for Indigenous people, women, organizations, and communities. We call upon everyone to contact your officials and apply pressure.

Demand the following:

1. Do not release the shooter!!
2. This must be recognized as the racially-motivated hate crime it is at all levels of government.
3. Protect Native women!!

As of now, the shooter is being held at Rio Arriba County Jail in Tierra Amarilla. The bond hearing is scheduled for Monday at 11:30AM at the Rio Arriba Magistrate Court. We will inform the public of any further updates.

Pray for Jacob Johns and his family. A [GoFundMe](#) has been set up to help support

him and his family during this recovery. Donate and circulate the donation request.

The Red Nation Podcast will be recording an emergency live episode about Thursday's events on Monday, October 2 at 5PM MT. The Red Nation and NDN Collective will be discussing the event's wider significance for the Native liberation movement.

Further updates, The Red Nation social media channels, news reporting, and other links can be found [here](#).

Our first press release and original demands can be found [here](#).

Source: [The Red Nation](#)

