

New Bedford man whose negligent driving resulted in death of Assonet woman convicted

"A 51-year-old New Bedford man was convicted by a jury of his peers late this afternoon in New Bedford District Court of Motor Vehicle Homicide by Negligent Operation in connection to the 2022 death of an Assonet woman, Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III announced.

The jury deliberated for less than an hour before returning its guilty verdict around 4 pm today. The trial began yesterday afternoon.

At around 2:30 am on August 20, 2022, state and local police were called to an area of Route 140 North in New Bedford after receiving a 911 call about a motor vehicle vs. pedestrian incident.

Evidence at trial showed that Christopher Noguera was driving northbound on Route 140 in his Ford F-150 when he crossed over into the breakdown lane and slammed into Joy Swartzendruber, who was standing next to her Toyota Avalon. Dash-cam video seized from the defendant's vehicle showed that the victim was clearly standing off the roadway when the defendant's truck first impacted the rear driver's side of her vehicle and then into her and other portions of her vehicle. Her vehicle had all its lights on and was visible to other motorists on the highway. The victim was pronounced deceased at the scene.

The video also showed the defendant driving negligently during the minutes before the crash. His vehicle could be seen frequently drifting from lane to lane and into the breakdown lane in the moments before the crash.

The defendant remained on scene after the crash and was not impaired or excessively speeding. However, the jury found he clearly was operating his motor vehicle in a negligent manner, which directly led to the fatal incident.

The maximum sentence allowable for the charge is two-and-a-half years in the house of corrections.

Assistant District Attorney Patrick Driscoll, who prosecuted the case, argued that the defendant should be sentenced to two-and-a-half years in the house of corrections with two years to serve and the balance of the sentence suspended for three years. The defense requested minimal jail time.

Judge Kristen Stone, however, sentenced the defendant to two years in the house of corrections, with one year to serve and the balance of the sentence was suspended for three years. This "split sentence" means if the defendant is charged with a new crime during the three years after his eventual release from jail, he could be liable to serve the remaining year of the jail term. The defendant also had his driver's license revoked for 15 years.

"The defendant's negligent operation of his pickup truck resulted in a terrible tragedy that could easily have been avoided. The victim was clearly in the breakdown lane when the defendant struck and killed her. My heart goes out the family for their terrible loss. I hope today's verdict, and the sentence imposed by the court, provides some consolation to them," District Attorney Quinn said."

The fascinating, controversial story behind the hidden New Bedford tombstone of Daddy Grace

Nestled away in the back corner of the Pine Grove Cemetery in New Bedford, Massachusetts stands a rather impressive mausoleum, statue, and plaque. This stands in remembrance of Marcelino Manuel da Graça, otherwise known as Charles Manuel "Sweet Daddy" Grace.

Daddy Grace was born on January 25th in the Cape Verde Islands. Interestingly, there is no verifiable information to confirm his exact birth year, although most sources either state 1881 or 1884.

In May of 1902 his family set sail aboard a ship named "The Freeman" and he arrived in America at the port of New Bedford, Massachusetts. 17 years later in 1919 he quit his job as a railway cook and built the first "House of Prayer" in West Wareham, Massachusetts at the cost of \$39.



Photo by Steven Richard.

In December of 1921, a regular meeting place in New Bedford was organized on 357 Kempton Street. Throughout the 1920's and 30's Daddy Grace traveled extensively across the country holding tent meetings, healing services, and mass baptisms which were attended by the thousands.

Many people became members of the House of Prayer after these spiritual services because of the "healing power of Christ" being demonstrated. He was able to build an organization of 350 "Houses of Prayer" with a national membership of over 3 million followers.

His ability to step off the boat onto the Port of New Bedford with absolutely nothing in his name, and become an extremely wealthy man building over 350 churches with over 3 million followers is absolutely remarkable.

But unfortunately there is an aspect to his story which many have a major issue with.



Photo by Steven Richard.

Many would flat out tell you that “Sweet Daddy Grace” really was a cult leader who would enrich himself from his followers of the “Houses of Prayer”. It is rumored that he built a large wealthy empire by selling things like “plots in heaven” and “drinks that would cure anything” to his followers.

He made so much money that he actually bought the largest apartment building in New York City.

According to reporting from Southcoast Today, he faced some legal battles regarding tax evasion, IRS investigations, and even human trafficking which all make sense in regards to how

he built his wealth. Although I don't believe it is necessary to dig into the details of his legal issues, I figured it is important to note as it gives credibility to the rumors and stories surrounding him.

The story of Marcelino Manuel da Graça is a fascinating one to say the least. A poor kid that sailed to New Bedford from Cape Verde and became a wildly rich and famous cult leader that bought the tallest apartment in New York City. His life story has "Netflix Documentary" written all over it.

RELIGION

'Daddy' Grace Buys Tallest N. Y. Apartment House

Bishop Charles M. (Daddy) Grace, wealthy religious cult leader and landowner, bought the tallest apartment building in New York for an estimated \$4,000,000. Named the Eldorado, the 34-story, 216 - apartment building occupies an entire block front on swank Central Park West, home of scores of millionaires. Cash



"Daddy" Grace and \$4,000,000 building.

payment for the building was not disclosed, but Joseph H. Lopin, Grace's real estate manager, said mortgages total \$3,800,000. Bishop Grace, who heads the House of Prayer for All People, also owns large apartment buildings on New York's Sugar Hill and Riverside Drive, has real estate holdings in Los Angeles and Cuba.

Photo by Steven Richard.

Boston doctor indicted for exposing himself to minor sitting next to him on flight

“A Boston man was indicted today by a federal grand jury in Boston for allegedly masturbating and exposing himself within the view of a 14-year-old female seated next to him onboard a flight from Honolulu to Boston in May 2022.

Dr. Sudipta Mohanty, 33, was indicted on one count of lewd, indecent and obscene acts while in the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States. Mohanty was arrested and charged by criminal complaint on Aug. 10, 2023 and was released on conditions.

According to the charging documents, at the time of his arrest Mohanty was an internal medicine and primary care doctor with a practice in Boston. It is alleged that, on May 27, 2022, Mohanty was a passenger aboard a Hawaiian Airlines Flight enroute from Honolulu to Boston with a female companion. Mohanty was allegedly seated next to a 14-year-old minor travelling with her grandparents, who were seated nearby.

About half-way through the flight, the minor allegedly observed that Mohanty had covered himself with a blanket up to his neck and that Mohanty’s leg was bouncing up and down. Shortly thereafter, the minor observed that the blanket was on the floor, no longer covering Mohanty, and that Mohanty was masturbating. The minor moved herself to an empty seat in a different row for the remainder of the flight.

After arriving in Boston, the minor informed members of her family about the incident and law enforcement was notified.

The charge of lewd, indecent and obscene acts while in the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States provides for a sentence of up to 90 days in prison, up to one year of supervised release and a fine of up to \$5,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy and Jodi Cohen, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Elianna J. Nuzum of the Major Crimes Unit is prosecuting the case.

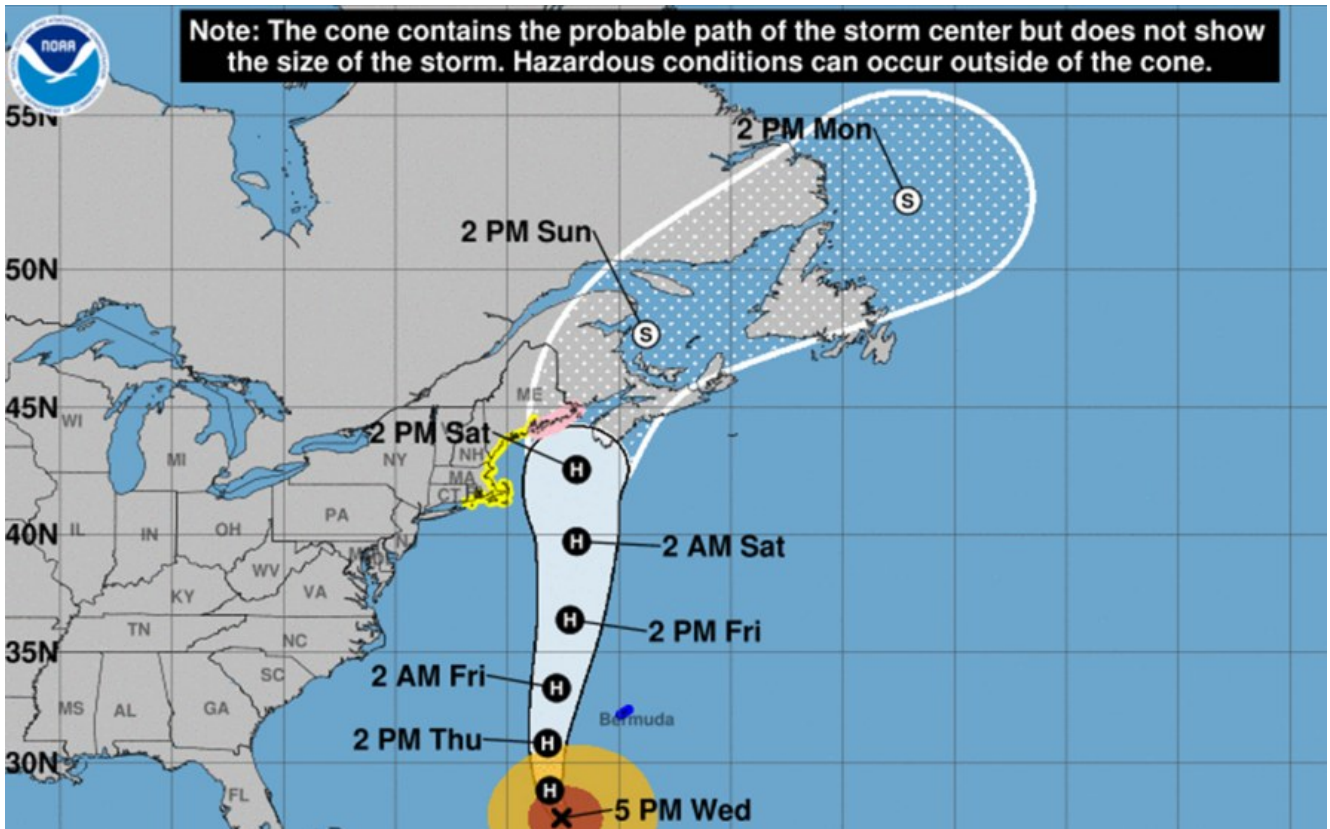
The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.”-Massachusetts Department of Justice.

NOAA projecting New Bedford could get whalloped by tropical storm this weekend

Hurricane Lee is heading north up the Atlantic ocean towards the New England area. While its path can't be predicted with 100% certainty, it appears it will miss the south coast and hit the Maine and Nova Scotia area.

With that being said, the NOAA storm tracker is predicting the south coast to get hit with a tropical storm while the hurricane moves past us. The storm is predicted to begin around 2am Saturday and continue for the rest of the day.

The yellow highlight on the storm tracker map indicates areas that will be experiencing a tropical storm.



NOAA Storm Tracker photo.

Mayor Mitchell noted, "While it is too soon to determine whether the storm will affect our area, city departments have already begun planning and preparing for possible impacts out of an abundance of caution."

It is important to prepare for power outages and flooding just in case the storm takes a turn for the worse and hits the south coast dead on.

New Bedford's Prince Henry

Society to honor Dr. Michael Rocha as 2023 Person of the Year

“The New Bedford Chapter of the Prince Henry Society of Massachusetts will recognize Dr. Michael Rocha at their annual Installation Banquet on Saturday, October 14, 2023 at the Century House, 107 South Main Street in Acushnet.

Michael Rocha, MD is a cardiologist at Hawthorn Medical Associates. He graduated from New Bedford High School in 1993 and completed his undergraduate studies at UMass-Dartmouth. He attended UMass Medical School and completed his residency and cardiology fellowship at Tufts Medical Center in 2008.

In 2014, he founded the New Bedford Wellness Initiative to focus on prevention of disease through lifestyle interventions. The Weekly Walk with a Doc remains a year-round event that has welcomed walkers of all ages. The Sunday Wellness Program, added in 2015, has offered free classes in nutrition, exercise, yoga, meditation, stress reduction, and smoking cessation addressing many of the major drivers of chronic diseases. During the pandemic, the wellness program transitioned to offering online classes and the added focus of COVID 19 education and resources.

Other community and statewide organizations that he has been involved with include co-chair of the New Bedford Opioid Task Force, the Physicians to Prevent Opioid Addiction (PPOA) and the COVID-19 Action Coalition in Massachusetts. Since 2013, he has served on the board of directors for the Boys and Girls Club of Greater New Bedford, an institution that he benefited from as a youth in New Bedford.

Musically, he began learning to play the trombone through the New Bedford Public Schools starting in 4th grade and studied

privately with John Martin. His musical beginnings include performing with Eddie Rodrigues' Meadowlarks and the Portuguese American Band. He continues to perform locally with the Southcoast Jazz Orchestra, Southcoast Brass Band, Buttonwood Brass, Dartmouth Town Band, and Mattapoissett Town Band.

Dr. Rocha has been a guest speaker on health, both locally and nationally. He presented a 2015 TEDx talk entitled "How to Keep Your Heart From Killing You." He was recognized by the Southcoast Media group as the 2015 New Bedford Man of the Year and as the Robert Chadwick Community Service recipient in 2017. He is grateful to his family, friends, and the Greater New Bedford community for all of the support over the years and deeply honored to be receiving this award.

Dr. Rocha has been nominated and received the award for his dedication to the health and well-being of New Bedford, the city where he was born and raised. Dr. Rocha has established himself as a major force in volunteering and community leadership. For quite literally walking the walk, he is the Prince Henry Society's Person of the Year for 2023.

The event is Saturday, October 14, 2023 with cocktail hour beginning at 6:00 p.m. and dinner served at 8:00 p.m. at the Century House, 107 South Main Street in Acushnet.

Those interested in attending may contact Michael Gomes for tickets, \$100 each, at 508.989.7438 or mgnbfd@comcast.net."

New Bedford woman bitten by

pit bull shocked over owner's callous response

"To the person with the grey pitbull that was walking their dog on Brigham street at 11am Tuesday morning, this is what your dog did to me.

You walked right by my with your dog on the leash and you saw the thing bite me and all you did was pull him off of me and just said 'Sorry.' You didn't even bother to ask if I was OK or if I needed any help or anything.

I was so in shock about what happened that by the time I paid attention to where you went, you were walking up the stairs to a house where I couldn't see which house it was. A decent person what have stopped and asked if I was OK after their dog bit me, but you just kept on walking.

Well honey, this is what YOUR DOG DID TO ME! So thanks."- Alicia Mae French.

Lakeville Fire Department remind all the value of seatbelts after serious accident

"Seat belts save lives!

Anyone who follows our posts receives frequent reminders about the value of seatbelts. The individuals involved in the

crashes seen on this page almost always come through with fewer and less serious injuries when using seatbelts.

This accident occurred yesterday just before 3 pm at Bedford and Main Streets.

The 4 occupants of the two involved vehicles reported no injuries or complaints following the crash.

LFD applauds their choice to buckle up.”-Lakeville, MA Fire Department.



Lakeville, MA Fire Department photo.



Lakeville, MA Fire Department photo.

Massachusetts State Police sobriety checkpoint nets multiple OUI arrests

“Interdiction of impaired drivers has always been a core mission of the Massachusetts State Police, one that Troopers fulfill in various ways – through regular patrols out of 37 MSP Barracks across the state, dedicated patrols targeting specific trouble spots as identified by statistical analysis, and sobriety checkpoints set up on busy roads in areas of high incidence of drunk driving crashes and arrests.

One such checkpoint was in operation on the night of Thursday, Sept. 7 into the early morning of Friday, Sept. 8 on Route 18 in New Bedford.

At checkpoints, Troopers greet every vehicle that comes through the checkpoint, and if the initial interaction gives the Trooper reason to suspect further investigation is warranted, the driver is waived over to a safe area off the side for further conversation with Troopers. After that, if a Trooper suspects the driver may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, standardized field sobriety tests will be administered. Based on observations, conversation with the driver, and the result of the field sobriety tests, the Trooper will determine if the motorist will be arrested for operating under the influence. Checkpoints are coordinated and overseen by the MSP's Traffic Programs Section.

Here are some scenes from last Thursday night's checkpoint, which did result in the arrest of several suspected impaired operators."-Massachusetts State Police.

All photos by the Massachusetts State Police:



Applications now open for New Bedford Creative Grant programs

“In 2023, ARTnet helped downtown New Bedford art gallery owner Alison Wells launch the “Grateful Palette Community.” It’s a monthly membership that allows you to explore and refine your skills freely through art journaling and mixed media painting techniques that you can learn more about at alisonwellsart.com.

And, it helped Candida Rose Baptista – vocalist, entertainer and educator of Golden Rose Music – release her new album “Here I Am” featuring 14 songs with themes of solidarity, hope, and faith. You can purchase and download it at candidarose.net.

Meanwhile, Art is Everywhere helped Chakira Gonsalves and Fitzcarmel LaMarre bring Reggae to West Beach, and Wicked Cool Places assisted the Community Economic Development Center (CEDC) with turning Riverside Park into Patio de Comidas and Festival Tipico de Guatemala.

In 2024, it just may be your turn to realize your artistic ambitions in the city of New Bedford by applying for either an ARTnet, Art is Everywhere, or Wicked Cool Places grant.

New Bedford Creative is excited to explore the possibilities with you as applications are now being accepted for its three grant programs aimed at fostering creativity and innovation in the city. These programs, funded through the City of New Bedford’s Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund and ARPA/American Rescue Plan Act, play a vital role in advancing New Bedford as

one of the most culturally unique and creative cities in America. All they need to accomplish that mission is...you!

The grant programs, each with its own distinct focus, are designed to empower artists, entrepreneurs, community groups, and individuals to contribute to New Bedford's creative landscape and bring opportunity to its neighborhoods. Here is an overview of the three grant programs:

ARTnet: Artist Recovery and Training Network

- ARTnet is a comprehensive initiative designed to support artists in their recovery from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It provides financial support, business planning assistance, training workshops, and access to a network of creative entrepreneurs.

Art is Everywhere!

- Art is Everywhere! is a grant program that seeks creative solutions to expedite the recovery of New Bedford's neighborhoods from the pandemic.
- Originally established in 2020, it prioritizes projects that directly impact residents, visitors, and businesses while promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA).

Wicked Cool Places

- Wicked Cool Places is a grant program aimed at creating or enhancing vibrant spaces within New Bedford's neighborhoods.
- It focuses on projects that involve and positively impact residents, visitors, and businesses, contributing to the city's cultural vitality.

Grant awards for these programs range from \$2,500 to \$20,000, accommodating projects of varying scales. Individuals, non-profits, community groups, and for-profits are all eligible to apply.

To provide further guidance and support, New Bedford Creative is offering 30-minute one-on-one sessions with Creative

Specialist Hendrick Hernandez-Resto. Interested parties can schedule a session by emailing him at hhernandez@nbedc.org. It is highly recommended to review the guidelines and questions on newbedfordcreative.org before scheduling a session, as slots are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

All #NBCreative grant applications will undergo a rigorous evaluation process by a selection committee of local community leaders from New Bedford. Proposals will be scored based on criteria such as quality and creativity, community benefit, partnership, planning, and budget.

New Bedford Creative encourages all creative minds and community advocates to seize this opportunity to contribute to the city's vibrant cultural tapestry and make a lasting impact on its neighborhoods.

For more information and to access the application portal, please visit newbedfordcreative.org."

New Bedford Firefighters help woman deliver a baby in her living room

It wasn't your average day in the office for four New Bedford Firefighters this Tuesday evening! At 5:10pm, Engine Company 8 responded to 104 Whitman St for a female in labor.

Lt. Nate Sylvia, FF Josh Charbonneau, FF Steven Mourao, and FF Kyle Carlson assisted a Mother in delivering a baby boy in her living room without complications. New Bedford EMS Paramedics along with EMS Supervisor Ralph Isherwood arrived and assumed

care of Mom and her baby boy.

Both of them were transported to St. Luke's Hospital Emergency Department and are doing well. NBPD also assisted on scene. Congratulations to the mother and huge shoutout to the New Bedford first responders that helped out!