



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on March 10, 2019

Smollett Faces Arraignment on Thursday on 16 Felony Counts

Jussie Smollett is scheduled for an arraignment in court on Thursday on 16 counts of disorderly conduct. The *Empire* actor, who is biracial and an avowed homosexual, had claimed that two Trump supporters attacked him on a Chicago street in January. But his account, which did not appear accurate from the get-go, soon fell apart.



[The grand jury's indictment](#) of Smollett on more than a dozen felonies comes almost a month after he told police two racist whites beat him, called him names and put a noose around his neck.

But police quickly concluded Smollett's claims about the attack on January 29 in downtown Chicago were another hate hoax, this one, they charged, by a highly-paid actor, a star on Fox's *Empire*, who wasn't satisfied with his salary.

Tall Tale

Smollett's troubles began when he decided that between \$65,000 and \$100,000 per episode of *Empire* wasn't enough pay, [police found](#). But Smollett got a bright idea after the program's director, Lee Daniels, [TMZ reported](#), posted a story on Instagram about a cousin who suffered a attack by "homophobes."

Wrote Daniels, "This past week my cousin was beat up for being gay and I am sick of hearing these stories. It's the beginning of a new year and we need to do better. We need to continue to remember to love and to turn against the hate that we're seeing out there."

Reported TMZ, "Some cast members think Jussie's gears started grinding in his head days after Lee posted a video on Instagram on January 10 calling out homophobia."

That much might be speculation, but the rest of the story isn't. [On January 22, Smollett alleged](#), he received a hate letter from supporters of President Trump. Bearing the ominous return address "MAGA" — Make America Great Again — the envelope contained white powder that turned out to be acetaminophen, an over-the-counter pain reliever, and a [threatening message fashioned](#) like a ransom note in cut-out letters: "You will die black f*g."

On January 29, returning from the Subway after a 2 a.m. munchies run, Smollett alleged, two whites attacked him. [Smollett claims](#) he never said the men wore MAGA hats, as was initially reported. But they were most certainly MAGA men.

"This is MAGA country," the two shouted, according to Smollett. They also called him a "n****r." Then they beat him up, doused him with bleach, and and put a noose around his neck. Chicago police couldn't find surveillance video that depicted the attack. But they did uncover video with two shadowy figures.



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The story quickly went viral, with no one asking why two white guys were running thither and yon in Chicago at 2 a.m., in sub-zero temperatures, looking for a random black man to attack. City detectives quickly learned otherwise. Smollett paid two black Nigerian brothers to stage the attack. The evidence? Text messages, video that showed the brothers' purchase of supplies, and the \$3,500 check with which Smollett paid them.

Chicago cops were understandably furious. Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson said Smollett dragged "Chicago's reputation through the mud" and lambasted the actor because he "took advantage of the pain and anger of racism to promote his career."

"It's shameful," he said. "It's just despicable."

The Indictment

On February 21, cops arrested Smollett and charged him with one felony count of disorderly conduct for filing a false report. He pleaded not guilty and was released on \$100,000 bail.

[The 16-count indictment](#), filed on March 7 in Cook County Circuit Court, is "two separate sets of charges, one of each lie Smollett allegedly told," [ABC 7 in Chicago reported](#):

The first set are related to what Smollett told officers about the alleged attack, including that the attackers called him racial and homophobic slurs, struck him with their hands, put a noose around his neck, and poured some sort of chemical substance on him.

The second set of charges are related to the second interview Smollett had with police about the alleged attack later that day, saying the men attacked him from behind and he fell to the ground, at which point the men continued kicking him. Smollett also told police on this occasion that one of his attackers was white.

Smollett, who was [convicted of lying](#) to police in 2007, will likely plead guilty. But regardless of how he pleads, this case may not be his only legal trouble.

[The feds are investigating](#) a "racist" letter he apparently sent to himself. [Mail fraud carries](#) a five- to 10-year prison sentence.

Photo of Jussie Smollett: AP Images



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