

2 protesters accused of causing hearing loss with megaphones

By **Associated Press**

Jan. 29, 2021 at 2:02 p.m. EST



CLEVELAND — Two people accused of causing permanent hearing loss to a Cleveland restaurant employee while using megaphones during a coronavirus protest outside the eatery are facing felony assault charges.

Josiah Douglas, 25, of Cleveland, and Sydney Yahner, 21, of Willoughby were indicted last week by a Cuyahoga County grand jury, Cleveland.com and Scene Magazine reported.

Both have pleaded not guilty. Their attorney, Peter Pattakos, called the charges an “outrageous attack” on the pair’s First Amendment right to engage in peaceful protest.

“Being subject to a baseless felony prosecution is one of the worst things that happen to a person at the hands of the government,” Pattakos said.

Douglas and Yahner were among a small group of protesting near an outdoor patio at a restaurant in July to protest what they said was the lax response to pandemic protocols there and at other restaurants owned by the same man.

An undercover detective wrote in a police report that Douglas and Yahner repeatedly blasted the megaphones in the employee’s face.

Pattakos previously said there is no evidence the employee suffered from hearing loss in one ear, as the woman has claimed.

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