



25th Navajo Nation Council

# 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **25th Navajo Nation Council condemns actions of Espanola shooter**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** - On Sept. 29, Ryan Martinez, 23, opened fire on a group of peaceful protesters, shooting and injuring Jacob Johns, 42, who was attending a prayer vigil protesting the installation of a statue honoring Spanish Conquistador Juan De Oñate in Espanola, N.M., according to police reports. Navajo citizens were also part of the group of peaceful protestors.

"The right of the people to peacefully assemble is protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. No one should ever fear for their life for exercising their rights. What happened in Espanola is a travesty and the shooter needs to be held accountable for his disregard of humanity in this hateful act of terrorism," said Council Delegate Carl Roessel Slater (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaile/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch'izhi)

Oñate was a conquistador with a cruel and controversial history that includes killing 300 Acoma women and children, along with 500 warriors, in 1599. After this massacre, Oñate ordered the 24 surviving Acoma warriors to have their right foot chopped off.

In 2020, after protest on behalf of the Pueblo Nations of New Mexico, a monument honoring Juan De Oñate was taken down in Albuquerque, N.M.

The significance of Oñate to the colonization of New Mexican lands has long been contested by Indigenous People in the southwest and the prayer vigil in Espanola is yet another example.

"The 25th Navajo Nation Council stands in solidarity with our Indigenous relatives and peaceful protester Jacob Johns, against the violence inflicted on our brothers and sisters who were exercising their constitutional rights," Speaker Crystalyne Curley said.

On behalf of the 25th Navajo Nation Council, Speaker Curley is asking that Martinez remain in detention and not be released on cash bail, that Rio Arriba County and the City of Espanola consult with New Mexican tribes on how to dispose of the Oñate statue, and that the U.S. Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and state authorities investigate the shooting as a hate crime and terrorist attack.

"Why were the lives of the protesters not protected at this event when the Sheriff's Office was in such close proximity?" asked Delegate Slater. "This cannot happen again. We are asking

our New Mexico state legislators, the Governor, and congressional delegation to join us in condemning this attack.”

He added that as gun violence and shootings escalate across the nation, we look to our state and federal leadership to help us protect the lives of our communities.

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