



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on August 11, 2010

Hartford Distributors President Filed Lawsuit For Black Children

The family and girlfriend of Omar Thornton, the black man who murdered eight at a beer distributorship in Hartford, Conn., before killing himself, rushed to the media after the mass murder to accuse the company of racism. That racism, they allege, led Thornton to snap, and the media ran with story as if to say the employees of the company deserved what they got.

But now another installment of the story in the [Hartford Courant explains](#) that the company's owners not only did not tolerate racism but also went to court to fight on behalf of the educational needs of black children.



The "Racists" Deserved It

Hartford Distributors [made headlines](#) last week after Thornton murdered eight of its employees, shooting them to death. Thornton acted after the company called him into a meeting, where officials produced video-recorded evidence that he was stealing from the company. They offered him the chance to resign. Or they would fire him. Thornton signed a resignation letter, then went on his rampage.

The family and girlfriend, Kristi Hannah, quickly charged the company with racism, and the media assisted their effort to smear its name. "I killed Five Racists," [blared the headline](#) at CBSnews.com. The *Christian Science Monitor* [headline ran](#) as follows: "Is racism at heart of Connecticut shooting? Answer still unclear." Reported the Monitor, "Reports indicate that, to Thornton at least, race was an issue at Hartford Distributors. He told friends and relatives that coworkers had scrawled racist epithets on a bathroom wall and a hung a stick-figure effigy in a miniature noose."

The *New York Times* [followed suit](#), permitting Thornton's white girlfriend, Kristi Hannah, to file even more ridiculous charges:

Mr. Thornton called her from the men's room at the plant to let her hear his boss and a colleague he identified as a union representative say they were going to get rid of him, using a racial slur. Ms. Hannah said she could hear the comments clearly because of how they echoed in the bathroom. She said that even though Mr. Thornton brought the case to his union representative several times, the union never followed up.

"I know they pushed them; they did this to him," Hannah [told the Times](#). "I know what was said, and I know it was very hurtful, and I know it bothered him a lot."

[Hannah told](#) the *New York Daily News* that "every one of [the victims] was a person I heard Omar mention. He didn't go around randomly shooting people. He knew these were the people who harassed him." She noted that he "was very sensitive about his race. If you called him a n---r, he would go off."



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But he kept it inside. He kept it all bottled up."

[Thornton's uncle told](#) the CBS affiliate, WFSB: "He said, 'I killed the five racists that was there bothering me,' He said, 'That's it. The cops are going to come in so I'm going to take care of it myself.'"

"This all could have been avoided," Holliday told the station. "He went to the union a couple of times with issues concerning what was going on, and it was not dealt with appropriately."

But the media never adduced any real evidence for any these inflammatory charges, instead permitting the family to smear Hartford Distributors.

Company Would Not Tolerate Racism

The *Hartford Courant*, however, [has published](#) another story that shows how unjust the media's hunt for racists was.

When company president Ross Hollander learned that Thornton, during a four-minute telephone call after the rampage, [told state police](#) that Hartford Distributors was a "racist place," and that he should have killed even more employees, Hollander was dumbfounded: "That's just terrible, that's just unfounded. If it were true, certainly there would have been a complaint to some state or federal commission, to the union," Hollander told the paper. Union officials have [repeatedly defended](#) the company, the newspaper reported, against the charges of Thornton's family and girlfriend:

Union members and current and former employees said the Hollander family would not have tolerated the racist conduct Thornton claimed he endured. Police said they found no evidence of racist graffiti Thornton claimed to have seen on bathroom walls.

Hollander said Thornton was "embraced as a member of our team and judged purely on the merits of his work performance."

The company didn't fire Thornton until it had solid proof he was stealing beer.

As well, [the Courant reported](#), Hollander sued the Bloomfield, the town he lives in, because the town attorney invalidated a referendum to allocate \$94 million to improve the schools, the students in which are mostly black.

"The current student population in the Bloomfield public schools is 88 percent African American, six percent white and six percent other minority," Hollander's lawsuit observed. "Given that African American children in this country have historically been educated in substandard facilities, the May 23, 2006, referendum seeks to give children who traditionally have not had access to the same educational facilities as their suburban counterparts. BloomImagefield has the opportunity to reverse this traditional disadvantage by enacting the referendum as passed, as it would provide for modern facilities now enjoyed by its suburban counterparts."

Because of Hollander's efforts, a federal judge overturned the town attorney's decision and reinstated the results of the referendum.

So, contrary to what the media permitted the family to say about Hartford Distributors, Hollander would not have permitted racist taunts or other behavior against Thornton.

As [one retiree told](#) the paper, Hollander had "[z]ero tolerance for that stuff."

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