

GREENFIELD

Professor pleads guilty to attacking faculty member



Former Mount Holyoke College professor Rie Hachiyangi, shown at a 2020 court hearing, pleaded guilty yesterday in Franklin Superior Court to multiple counts of armed assault on a colleague. (Hoang 'Leon' Nguyen / The Republican file photo)

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A Mount Holyoke College arts professor yesterday pleaded guilty to attempted murder and other charges in connection with the 2019 Christmastime attack on a colleague at the woman's Leverett home.

Rie Hachiyangi, 50, appeared in Franklin Superior Court to enter a change of plea. She admitted to three counts each of armed assault with intent to murder and assault and battery with a dangerous weapon on a person older than 60, as well as single counts of home invasion, mayhem and entering a dwelling at night with intent to commit a felony.

Judge Francis Flannery scheduled sentencing for Oct. 20 at 10:30 a.m.

At the time of the attack, Hachiyangi was the Mount Holyoke professor of art and chair of the art studio. She has been on leave since her arrest.

According to prosecutors, Hachiyangi knocked on the door of the victim's Leverette home, claiming to need emotional support over a breakup. Once inside, Hachiyangi attacked the woman, repeatedly striking her with a rock, fire poker and pruning sheers. The attack lasted four hours and Hachiyangi taunted her the repeatedly.

The victim was finally able to persuade Hachiyangi that she needed medical help.

The victim, also a faculty member at Mount Holyoke, told the court that the attack left her with emotional trauma and permanent physical injuries. The woman told Flannery she is seeking accountability and justice.

"For four hours I experienced literal torture of body and of mind, not knowing if I would survive the next minute," she said.

"The emotional, physical, financial, and professional impacts of this crime have been huge and they continue. Now the defendant's violation of me is becoming part of a public persona that I did not choose. She has invaded my privacy, my career, my life," she said.

The Republican does not publish the names of victims of crime.

Prosecutor Matthew Thomas of the Northwestern district attorney's office asked the court to sentence Hachiyanagi to 10-12 years in prison for the armed assault and mayhem charges and 7-9 years for assault and battery. The sentences would be concurrent. He also requested three years' probation after release and that Hachiyanagi receive mental health evaluations and counseling.

He cited the "random cruelty" of the assault.

Defense attorney Thomas Kokonowski asked for a sentence of 5-7 years followed by probation, according to the district attorney's office. He cited Hachiyanagi's lack of a criminal record and said she has been a model prisoner since her arrest.