

Collins' breakdown, media siege rocks Emory

Students voice concerns at campus forum

By Caroline Nylén

Executive Editor

While local media swarmed outside Glenn Memorial, a crowd of about 600 students, faculty, staff and other members of the community inside led a call for more education about racism and African-American concerns at yesterday's open forum.

The audience aimed their comments and questions at a panel which included President James Laney, Dean for Campus Life Bill Fox, Director of Minority Student Programs Vera Rorie, Director of Equal Opportunity Programs Robert Ethridge and Student Government Association President Aldous McCrory.

"I don't think any of us are naive enough to believe education is a cure-all for racism," junior Marisa Schreihöfer said, "but it is the place to start."

Senior Khurran Hassan also advocated education. "Racist incidents have been on the rise...and Emory has been no exception," he

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Collins still hospitalized, in fair condition

By Meredith McDonald

Asst. News Editor

Freshman Sabrina Collins, the victim of racial harassment in Longstreet Hall, is reported to be in "fair condition," a spokesperson for the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta said yesterday.

Since an incident last Tuesday, Collins has been unable to speak much. She remains in the Medical College's psychiatric unit.

Collins' emotional breakdown occurred after she found racial slurs scrawled in fingernail polish under a carpet. This was the latest in a series of incidents of racial harassment directed toward her. Collins previously found racial epithets such as "die n- die" and "n- hang" scrawled in her room, and received death threats through campus mail.

Vera Rorie, associate dean of Campus Life, said after the incident Collins became “extremely emotional about what happened.” She was taken to the student health service and met the director of counseling at Emory last week, said Rorie.

Administrators defend University

By Adam Biegel

News Editor

During a hastily-called press conference Thursday afternoon, University officials defended their handling of the series of racial incidents aimed at freshman Sabrina Collins since March 5.

“This is one of the most perplexing and exasperating experiences I’ve dealt with in my life,” said President James T. Laney. “We’re determined to get to the bottom of it.” He cited his March 6 bulletin to the Emory community and the role of the Emory University Department of Public Safety (EUDPS).

“These incidents, when they were discovered [by EUDPS], were recorded on Dekalb County incident reports and filled with DeKalb County,” Directory of Public Safety Ed Medlin said. “There was no effort to keep them within the school.”

“In discussing this with the Georgia Bureau of Investigations (GBI),” he said, “the conclusion we keep coming back to is that we have done pretty much what anybody could do in this situation.”

He stated his belief that with the recently granted access to GBI crime labs, the cooperative investigation will progress more swiftly.

Medlin also spoke of the safeguards EUDPS subsequently implemented in Longstreet Hall, such as patrols by officers and portable alarms as well as new locks.

Vera Rorie, associate dean for Campus Life, detailed the counseling the University provided to Collins and her family, including proposals to have the freshman complete her studies at home or arrange for there to switch residence hall rooms. “I have had a very strong relationship with her since this whole incident started,” Rorie said.

“To my knowledge,” said Vice President and Dean for Campus Life William Fox, “we have not experienced a harassment case against another person of any race like this in recent history.”

Marvin Arrington, a Law School graduate and president of the City Council, also attended the press conference and praised Emory. “It’s a fine institution and I can say that the administration has been responsive.”

Arrington, who chairs a special Emory panel on race relations, said, “We want to get it resolved and prosecute the party or parties involved...It’s like trying to find a missing piece to a puzzle.”

In response to recent complaints from state legislators about the handling of the case, Arrington said Emory is not “trying to brush it under the rug in any way.” He labeled such accusations as “irresponsible.”

Dismissing the notion that Emory “has a racial problem,” Student Government Association President Aldous McCrory said, “Our administration is very concerned with making sure that we as black students and other minority students feel comfortable on this campus.”

“I’ve seen all types of problems,” said Arrington, “but...this is the most baffling of all the problems that we have faced at Emory University.”

Black students react to incidents

By Regina LaRocque

Asst. News Editor

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Staff Writer

In the wake of Sabrina Collin’ hospitalization last week, a “core committee” of African American students was established over the weekend to “formulate a set of demands and course of action” in response to alleged campus racism.

Although that committee has yet to announce its goals, Lisa Green, a leader of the student group, indicated that it was “possible” that they would do so soon. She added that the

group's leaders "are not saying anything individually" about either their activities or demands. Dean Vera Rorie and Lisa Middleton of the Office of Minority Affairs also refused to comment.

Black Student Alliance Vice President Kendall Wood and other black undergraduates announced the formation of the core committee in a meeting after Friday's vigil. Along with the students, Middleton helped preside over the meeting.

Organizers of the meeting proposed a slate of 14 nominees for the core committee to a capacity crowd in Harland Cinema. A female graduate student was added to the slate in response to demands for diversity on the committee.

Most importantly, the students decided to hold a meeting at the BSA house on Sunday afternoon to formulate their demands and approve their leaders. Despite vehement disagreement, the students opted to exclude non-blacks from the initial planning of the movement's direction. The students did not stipulate that the African-Americans attending the closed meeting be affiliated with the University. Three representatives of the Wheel were turned away when they attempted to attend the closed session.

Forty non-blacks arrived at 6 p.m. to express their solidarity with the African-Americans. Only 15 students and a handful of African-Americans waited until 8:15 to hear a representative of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference outline "six steps for nonviolent social change." Although the presentation was originally scheduled to inform the community of the results of the closed session, four Emory representatives indicated only that their demands were not yet "ready to be read."

Rev. Randel Osborne of the SCLC asserted that "if it takes going to visit trustees at their homes and offices and taking stronger action such as seizing an administration building or blockading entrances to the university, we are prepared to do that." Osborne later explained to the Wheel that such action was only intended as a last resort for those with "personal commitment" to the efforts of the group.

Other African-American students, however, question the motivations of this group of activists. "The BSA may be looking for a little too much media hype...they should have fought for these things all along," said one woman.

Protesters assail 'system of racism'

By Meredith McDonald

Asst. News Editor

Andrew Mackler

Managing Editor

Recent campus events that were construed as racist attacks culminated in a sit-in protest Friday in the Dobbs University Center by more than 200 students, the majority of whom were African-American. The students gathered to show their support for freshman Sabrina Collins, who left the University after several incidents of racial harassment.

Participants held signs, some which said, "We love Sabrina," "No more Racism" and "Emory, What are you going to do?" The protest included an hour of silence to support Collins and to express discontent with racism at Emory.

A statement released at the sit-in by a group calling themselves The African American Students of Emory University said, "We have been unlawfully and unduly terrorized and discriminated against on the basis of our ethnicity due to a climate which is conducive to and perpetuates racists behavior." It was then stated that they would not allow "this pervasive system of racism" to continue any longer.

Following the proclamation made by the student group, supportive statements from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and a member of the Morehouse College Board of Trustees were released.

The representative from the SCLC outlined three basic issues that needed to be addressed, the first being that "the school should have moved quicker than they did in utilizing all law enforcement and investigative agencies at the time when the first occurrences took place." The other two issues concerned a meeting with the University administration and an offer of "assistance in nonviolent sensitivity training to the students in the exercise of their activism."

A Morehouse College trustee supported the students, stating “as students, you are indeed in the belly of the beast.” He described Emory as a “hostile environment” that needed to be changed.

Rev. Darryl Gray, executive director of the NAACP’s Atlanta branch, said “racism and discrimination is not just a black and white thing.” He then challenged the administration to end Emory’s racial problems.

Responding to charges of not doing enough to protect Collins and not calling in the proper outside authorities, President James T. Laney said “everything that could be done was done.” He added that “we will welcome anybody...anyone who can help are welcome.”

Laney promises more openness, availability

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said. One way to combat the ignorance that spawns intolerance, he said, is “requiring students to take black studies as part of their curriculum.”

Dean of the College David Minter told the audience that while African American and African Studies classes are offered as options in fulfilling some core requirements, requiring such a class is a proposal that would be hard to implement. “We really have very few absolute requirements in the College,” he said.

The forum, called in response to the racial terrorism that drove freshman Sabrina Collins from her Longstreet Hall room, included reactions to both the Collins case, and the broader issue of racism at Emory.

A number of audience members called for greater awareness of both subtle and blatant manifestations of racism at Emory. “Yes, racism is a problem on this campus,” Laney said. “Minority students...are often subjected to insult or to demeaning behavior on campus,” he said.

While Emory is proud of its rate of black enrollment, minority scholarships and anti-harassment policy, Laney said, “There’s much more to be done.”

Ethridge added that he expects the committee formed in response to the two rapes on campus earlier this year to come up with substantive recommendations for combatting “systemic problems” of racism on campus.

Laney also recounted the steps taken in the investigation of the vandalism and threats, as well as the assistance offered to Collins and her hallmates. “Campus Life staff and Dean Vera Rorie provided every conceivable support,” Laney said, adding that he wanted to make himself more available for discussion and support. “I stand open and corrected, that I have not been as forthcoming as I should have been,” he said.

A number of Collins’ hallmates expressed their support for her and dismay at the rumors and publicity which they say will hamper Collins’ return to Emory “The media obviously is wrong and uncontrollable,” one said.

“It is our hope that with your cooperation, we can come to some kind of agreement about what steps to take next,” McCrory told the audience.