

Racial slurs scrawled in trashed room; residents demand security

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Two female students returned to their Longstreet room early Monday evening to discover that vandals had ransacked their room and scribbled racial slurs on a wall and a fan, according to Captain Jan Freund of the Emory University Department of Public Safety (EUDPS).

While the victims, one white and the other black, were out of their room for approximately 20 minutes, the vandals forced open their locked door, Freund said. Once inside, they broke pictures, poured bleach on the women's clothing, mutilated stuffed animals, and stole \$40 from the room.

Overwhelmed by the ransacking, the students failed at first to notice that the phrases "N- hang" and "N-" had been written in lipstick on the inside of a closet and on the side of a box fan, according to Freund. The victims immediately reported the discovery of the racial slurs to their Resident Advisor, who called EUDPS. Later that evening, the RA called an emergency hall meeting, during which many students demanded that an EUDPS officer stand guard in their hall. Dean Vera Rorie, Director of Minority Student Programs, and Dean Todd Schill, Director of Residence Life, attended the meeting, as well as representatives of EUDPS.

EUDPS was unable to provide the hall with a police officer Monday night due to a "shortage of manpower," Freund said. A Physical Plant guard volunteered to stand duty instead. By Tuesday night, EUDPS posted a police officer in the dormitory for the night. "Our main concern is their safety," said Freund.

Early Wednesday morning, between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m., the two students whose room had been ransacked received two off-campus phone calls during which the caller failed to identify himself. They notified the police officer on guard immediately. EUDPS plans to maintain a close watch over Longstreet, according to EUDPS Director Ed Medlin.

No suspects have been apprehended at this time, Freund said. "It could be random or it could be someone who has targeted the women," she said. Police have determined that neither

of the victims wears the shade of lipstick used to write on the closet and the fan, and they intend to dust the room for fingerprints.

According to Freund, suspects in this incident could be charged with burglary and making terrorist threats, both of which are felonies.

In a statement released to the press and to the Emory community at large, President James T. Laney expressed his intolerance for the incident and said that “we will exclude any person guilty of it from our community.”

This incident is the latest in a series of thefts on the fourth floor of Longstreet. Six robberies have been reported since January, most of which occurred while the door was unlocked. However this crime took place while the door was locked, and Freund commented that this is “unusual.” The captain refused to speculate on any connections that might exist between this incident and the other hall thefts.

“This is not something that happens at Emory,” Freund said. “In my 16 years at Public Safety this is the first incident of this [racial and violent] nature.”

EUDPS had no conclusive evidence of a motive for the violence or the graffiti.

Students in the hall are concerned with security in their dorm, and have asked Residence Life to install deadbolt locks on their doors in addition to existing locks. Residence Life is considering the possibility of taking measures to increase dorm security, according to Schill. However, Freund pointed out that thefts are still common in dorms equipped with deadbolts because students forget to lock the door.

To protect themselves, Freund urges students to lock their doors, to watch their floormates’ rooms, to question any suspicious people on their floor, and to notify their RAs and EUDPS in the event of suspicious behavior.