

Windsor police under fire after violent party crackdown

Investigation underway after Windsor Police Service use excessive force to break up predominately black party at campus pub

JAMIE HARKINS
The *Charlatan* (Carleton University)

OTTAWA (CUP)—The University of Windsor is supporting an anti-racism student group in its fight with Windsor Police Service after a predominantly black party at the campus pub was violently shut down by more than 25 officers.

Lori Lewis, a spokesperson for the University, said that U of W President Ross Paul is actively working with Students Against Anti-Black Racism (SAABR) to find out why police responded with force at the "Passa Passa" party held at the Basement Pub on campus.

SAABR was formed immediately following the January party and now boasts more than 100 members. The heavy police presence at the party preceded numerous arrests and harsh confrontations with students.

Lewis said the University hasn't approached the police, but takes the

group's allegations of racism seriously and wants to make sure the matter is dealt with appropriately.

"We want an environment for our students to not feel discriminated against," Lewis said. "We have to listen to our students and find out what those things are, how they feel they are discriminated against, and to what suggestions they have to make those changes."

Matthew Macdonald, a member of SAABR and second-year law student, said the group decided to ask the Windsor chief of police to bring in the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) for an independent investigation.

"As far as I know, we hadn't heard a response back yet," Macdonald said about the request.

"We've met with the administration a few times now. They have recognized there is a huge problem, and they've endorsed our request for the OPP to do an independent investigation into what occurred."

Macdonald added the OPP is needed

because it would be impossible for the Windsor police to investigate itself considering the number of the force's officers involved.

"I certainly hope it does happen. There was such an overreaction to a student event and a student event that was planned, organized, and had mostly African-Canadian students there," he said.

"We want an environment for our students to not feel discriminated against."

LORI LEWIS
UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR SPOKESPERSON

"Whether that was the reason or that exacerbated the overreaction, we need to identify why this happened so it doesn't happen again. There is a lot of concern about the student body generally about this incident."

The Students' Union is also supporting the group in its quest for answers.

According to Zach Cranny, Vice-President of University Affairs for the Students' Union, the Union would like an investigation to be conducted by the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal.

He said that this is the first incident of this magnitude to occur at the campus pub, and he encouraged students affected to file complaints against police.

"We feel that there needs to be a full public inquiry," Cranny said. "There was far too much police violence used that night. We're fully behind the group on campus, SAABR, and are doing all we can to help facilitate their future actions."

Bright Kyereme, a third-year communications and political science student at Windsor, said he is working with the Students' Union to file a human rights complaint after he was allegedly beaten by several officers when he stepped in to help a friend that night.

"There were four or five of them all at once on me," Kyereme said, adding that he was kned in the face. He said that he was still beaten even though he was not resisting.

Originally, Kyereme was told that he would be charged with assaulting a police officer, then just disturbing the peace. Kyereme didn't end up being charged with anything, but still spent the night in jail.

Kyereme also alleged that when he asked for a complaint form upon being released, police laughed at him. So he has decided to file a complaint with the human rights tribunal instead.

Nadine Fearon, a first-year drama and communications student who was also at the pub that night, said that no one knows why the police showed up at all considering no fights took place—just a shouting match between two girls, which was handled by the pub's bouncers.

The Windsor Police Service did not return phone and email messages.

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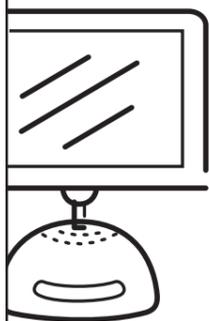


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