

Assault on an International Student in College Station Texas

June 29, 2005

The Assault. On June 1, 2005, Ravi Mallipeddi, a Texas A&M graduate student from India, was assaulted in the Northgate area immediately adjacent to campus. Mallipeddi was riding his bicycle east on Church Street around 10:15 when he approached the corner of Church and College Main. A white van sat at the intersection for an unusually long period of time, and Mallipeddi eventually rode around the van and turned right on College Main. When he did, the van sped up to catch him, and an unknown assailant reached out of the van and struck him on the shoulder with a baseball bat. The van then stopped in front of Mallipeddi, and several young white men shouted racist epithets. Mallipeddi tried to read the licence plate, but it seemed to be obscured. He called for help from passersby, but no one came to his aid. He was eventually able to ride away and report the assault to the police.

There is currently no well-publicized and central office for reporting incidents of hate, bias, and harassment to university officials. It took days for Mallipeddi to report the assault to the university. University officials reported the crime to the campus community on June 21, twenty days after the assault.

Context. Ravi Mallipeddi is not the only student to be attacked in Northgate, a strip of bars and restaurants which lies between campus and a group of apartments and rental houses mostly inhabited by students. In January 2004, Matthew Rooney, a recent graduate of TAMU, was assaulted in Northgate because of his sexual orientation. The assailants shouted homophobic epithets and struck him in the face and head. Both Rooney and Mallipeddi had been the victim of verbal harassment in the area before.

These incidents are not isolated or unique. Numerous professors in Faculty and Staff Committed to an Inclusive Campus, a TAMU organization dedicated to making the university a more welcoming place, say that international students, students of color, women students, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students have often described to them incidents of harassment in the Northgate area and on the campus itself. A 2002-2004 campus climate study at the university report revealed that students of color were far more likely to find TAMU to offer an unwelcome climate than White students, and reported a variety of incidents of racism on campus. A 1999 study of sexual assault on campus found that of the over 800 women surveyed, 203 were victims of sexual assault while attending the university. Of those, only two reported the assault to the police. Joe Feagin, a Professor of Sociology at TAMU, is currently conducting a study of racism at the University.

FSCIC recommendation. In the aftermath of the Mallipeddi assault, representatives from FSCIC met with upper level administrators at the university to offer a set of recommendations for addressing the problems of Northgate safety. These recommendations include:

- Substantially increase policing of the Northgate area.
- Create a central, well-publicized mechanism for reporting incidents of hate, bias, and harassment in and around the TAMU campus.
- Treat racially motivated assaults with the same procedure as sexual assaults, by quickly publishing a campus crime alert and aggressively investigating the crime.

Texas A&M is a university which prides itself on its friendly and welcoming spirit. Representatives of FSCIC say that to live up to its high ideals, the university must take steps to ensure that all students can live, work, and study in a safe environment.

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References

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