

# St. Thomas community expresses outrage, anger during sit-in

OCTOBER 25, 2018 BY SAMANTHA HOANGLONG, NOAH BROWN AND EMILY SWEENEY



More than 500 university students, faculty and staff sit in silence for about 15 minutes in the ASC at the start of the protest. According to Warren-Yearby students of color make up 15 percent of the university population. (Emily Sweeney/Tommiemedia)

More than 500 people filled the Anderson Student Center atrium Thursday afternoon in a sit-in protest.

Organized by the Black Empowerment Student Alliance, St. Thomas faculty and staff, the protest was a response to a racial slur incident last week.

First-year student Kevyn Perkins returned to his room in Brady Hall the morning of Oct. 19 after using the restroom and found someone had written “n— go back” on his door.

“There’s no damn need for a freshman to experience this twice in the first two months of school,” Bisrat Bayou, student body president and one of the protest

coordinators, said. “And you expect our Dougherty Family College students to transfer here harmoniously?”

Protesters observed about 20 minutes of silence before five speakers addressed the crowd for another 45 minutes.

“We are here because for too long, this campus, this community, this university has tolerated white supremacy,” English professor Todd Lawrence said during the protest. “Maybe we should talk more about how to make this campus, this community, this university a place where white supremacy is uncomfortable.”

### **BESA Protest – Malcolm Lawson**



*Malcolm Lawson addresses protesters Thursday, Oct. 25 at the Anderson Student Center during a BESA-organized sit-in protest. The protest was a response to an incident last week, when St. Thomas student Kevyn Perkins found a racial slur written on his dorm room door.*

Students of color only make up 15 percent of the university population, Warren-Yearby said.

Throughout the second half of the event, frustration about belonging was weaved into the dialogue.

“These are the students you told ‘go back.’ Go back where? This university was founded for them,” St. Thomas staff member Patricia Condé-Brooks said. “At the end of the day, when I stop and think about what’s going to make a difference, looking at all these people here, it’s you ... Every single person here is responsible.”

Last week's incident was the third time in three years that a racial slur was found on campus. This protest drew a larger crowd than previous attempts to bring attention to racial tensions. Protester and first-year student Christine Nsajja thinks that this type of response should be normal.

"I was extremely emotional the entire time just seeing this turnout even, though like I should expect this," first-year student Christine Nsajja said. "It's a start, but we can't stop here. One of my biggest fears is that it will stop."

### **BESA Protest – Patricia Condé-Brooks**



*Patricia Condé-Brooks addresses protesters Thursday, Oct. 25 at the Anderson Student Center during a BESA-organized sit-in protest.*

Long-term change must start now, according to BESA President Amira Warren-Yearby, regardless of differing belief systems.

"This is not a political movement. This has nothing to do with what party you are a part of," she said. "This is a human issue."

Over the past few years, contention has risen from the university's responses to these racially motivated incidents. A few hours before the protest, St. Thomas President Julie Sullivan sent an email regarding a new "Action Plan to Combat Racism."

"We cannot deny that racism and hate continue to exist in our world and at St. Thomas," Sullivan wrote. "While

our previous efforts to combat the cancer of racism on our campus were well-intentioned, they have fallen short.”

Sullivan was in attendance at the event. St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter also came to show his support.

Even with the relatively strong turnout, Condé-Brooks thinks a lot more still needs to be done.

“I’ve had enough,” Condé-Brooks said. “How many times do we have to see them bleed before we put a bandage on this?”

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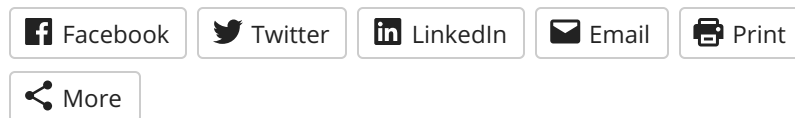
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One Reply to “St. Thomas community expresses outrage, anger during sit-in”

**P. Hoy**

NOVEMBER 2, 2018 AT 7:21 PM

Has the investigation on behalf of Kevyn Perkins been completed?

If so, will the student (if it is a student) be expelled? That is what I would hope would be the outcome of an offense such as Kevyn Perkins endured.

The short and long term action plans are solid, and, ones I assumed would have always and already been in place? Were they not?

Until students guilty of sexual assault and racist threat makers and haters are held accountable and expelled, this will continue.

The bad actors are not at your sit ins and rallies.

*Comments are closed.*

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