



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR HOWARD COUNTY

For Immediate Release:

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Two Former Glenelg High School Students Plead Guilty to Hate Crime Vandalism

Two of the four former students charged with hate crimes arising from the discovery of racial, anti-Semitic and anti-LGBTQ slurs and symbols painted on the property of Glenelg High School last May have pleaded guilty in Howard County Circuit Court this morning. Joshua Shaffer, 19 of Mount Airy, pleaded guilty to a single count defacing school property with evidence of animosity against a person because of his race and color. Seth Taylor, 19 of Glenwood, pleaded guilty to a single count defacing school property with evidence of animosity against a group because of their race, color, religious beliefs and sexual orientation.

School administrators and custodians discovered the widespread vandalism and graffiti throughout the campus less than three hours before an awards ceremony for graduating seniors on May 24. Assistant State's Attorney Melissa Montgomery told the court that Shaffer and Taylor, along with two additional defendants, were identified by the school's resource police officer after reviewing video surveillance and school Wi-Fi network logs that showed the defendants' cell phones auto-connecting with the network at 11:30 p.m. the previous evening.

Montgomery stated that during Mirandized police questioning, one of the defendants characterized the vandalism spree as a senior prank. Judge William V. Tucker observed, "The court is very disturbed; the court does not consider it a prank."

The judge set sentencing dates of March 8, 2019 for Shaffer, and March 22 for Taylor. Prosecutors will recommend a three-year sentence, suspending all but 18 weekends in jail for Shaffer, and a three-year sentence, suspending all but nine weekends in jail for Taylor. In addition, Montgomery recommended 150 hours of community service, cultural awareness/sensitivity class attendance, restitution for damages, along with a fine and court costs for both Shaffer and Taylor.

Two additional defendants were indicted on similar hate crime charges at Glenelg High School. Tyler Curtiss, of Brookeville, is scheduled for trial on January 14, 2019. Matthew Lipp, of Woodbine, has a February 6 trial date.

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