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Metro

# Bridgewater State students plan to rally for columnist

Gay-marriage editorial sparked assault, she says

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT FEBRUARY 20, 2012

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Students at Bridgewater State University plan to hold a rally tomorrow in solidarity with a school newspaper columnist who told police she was punched in the face by someone who objected to an editorial she wrote supporting same-sex marriage.

As of last night, about 300 Facebook users said they plan to attend a march and speaking program scheduled to last two hours, starting at 11 a.m. Last week, the school's president, who is scheduled to speak at the event, said the school had zero tolerance for such incidents.

On Thursday, Destinie Mogg-Barkalow, 20, a junior and assistant editor for the paper's opinion section, was walking on campus when a man and woman approached her. She was wearing a sweatshirt with the school newspaper's name, the Comment.

She said the man asked her if she worked for the Comment, if her name was Destinie, and if she had written a column published earlier that week on California's controversial Proposition 8. The California law that banned same-sex marriage was ruled to be unconstitutional by an appeals court earlier this month.

When Mogg-Barkalow confirmed she had written the piece, the woman allegedly punched the columnist's right eye, and the couple walked away giggling.

Police planned to release sketches of the man and woman by this morning, according to university spokesman Bryan Baldwin.

Mogg-Barkalow, who is openly gay, said last week she does not believe her assailant was aware of her sexual orientation. School officials have said the university is not classifying the reported assault as a hate crime.

"Given that this investigation is ongoing, and we don't know all the facts, and no one has been apprehended, it's premature to call it a hate crime," said Baldwin. "That label is applied by prosecutors."

Instead, he said the university characterizes the incident as "an attack on someone's right to freely express themselves."

In an e-mail to the campus community Friday, Dana Mohler-Faria, the university's president, said the school has "zero tolerance for any such actions that impede or curtail the right of the members of our campus community to express themselves freely.

"We stand together, both in strongly condemning this action and in reaffirming our shared commitment to create a campus community that values and respects all."

The rally will be held at the school, where about two-thirds of its 7,900 full-time undergraduates live off campus, "to show that any form of hate is no longer accepted here or in society in general," the event Web page said.



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*'Given that this investigation is ongoing . . . it's premature to call it a hate crime.'*

Bryan Baldwin Bridgewater State University  
spokesman

“It’s good to see this rally happen,” said Dave Copleland, the student newspaper’s faculty adviser. “Being primarily a commuter campus, Bridgewater State does not always have the opportunity to come together that residential campus schools do.”

Mary Polleys, editor of the newspaper, said Mogg-Barkalow joined the Comment’s staff in September and will continue to write for the student publication.

“I was really surprised this was organized so quickly, but also impressed,” Polleys said of the rally. “There’s been a huge amount of support.”

The sweatshirt Mogg-Barkalow was wearing when she reported being assaulted was part of a shipment Polleys ordered for her staff this year.


At tomorrow’s event, Polleys said she and her staff will cover the rally and plan to support Mogg-Barkalow by wearing those sweatshirts proudly.

“We’re not going to be intimidated by their actions,” Polleys said.

*Matt Rocheleau can be reached at [mjrochele@gmail.com](mailto:mjrochele@gmail.com).*

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