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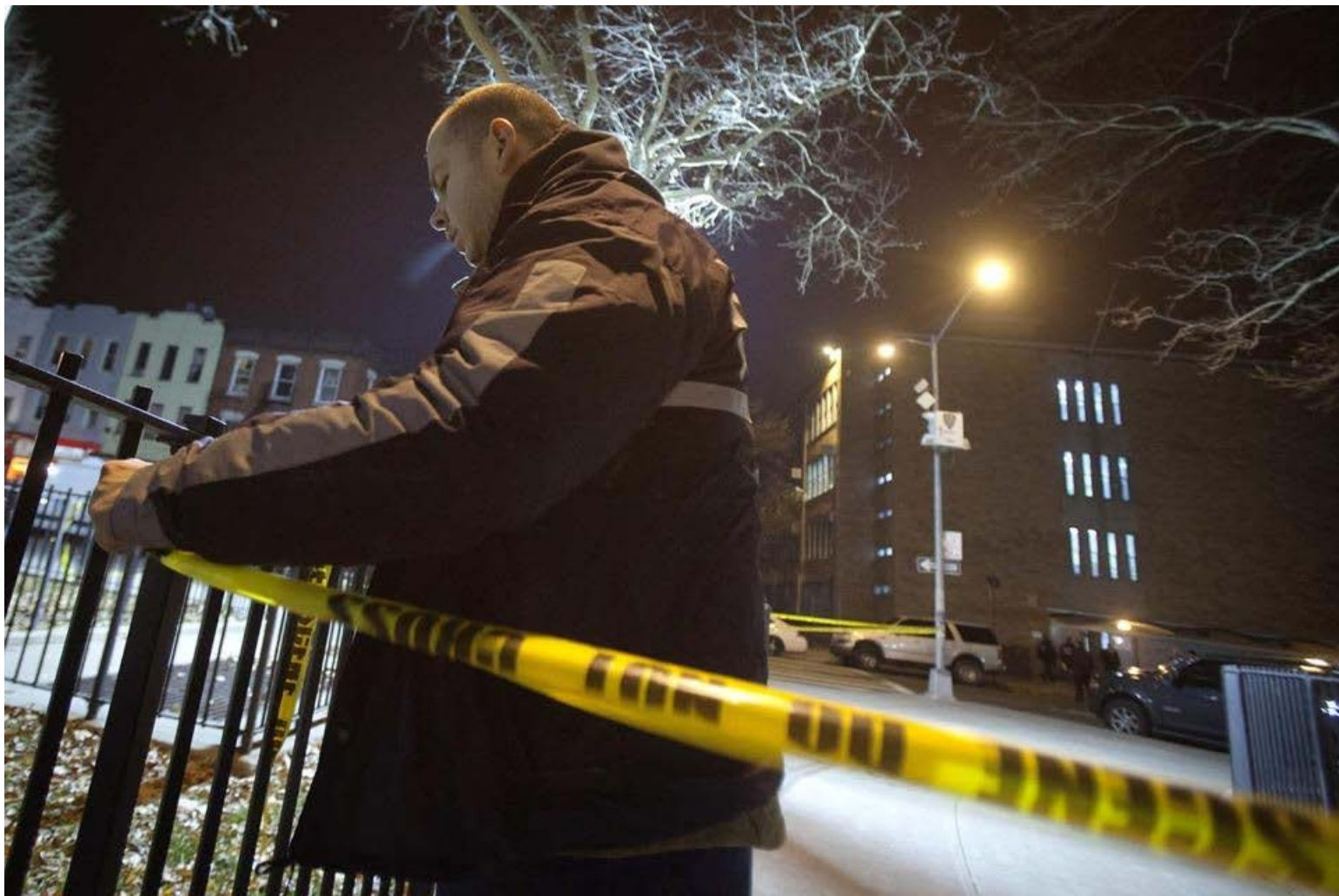
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Brandeis student stands by comments on slain NY officers

Insists tweets about deaths were taken out of context

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A New York City police officer put up crime scene tape on Dec. 20 at the scene of a fatal shooting. Two police officers were killed. A Brandeis University junior who caused an uproar on campus for tweeting that she had “no sympathy” for the slain officers is standing by her widely shared comments.

By Matt Rocheleau

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JANUARY 01, 2015

A Brandeis University junior who caused an uproar on campus for tweeting that she had “no sympathy” for two New York police officers slain in an ambush is standing by her widely shared comments.

But the student, Khadijah Lynch, told the Globe on Wednesday that she feels her messages on social media were taken out of context.

In defending the statements, Lynch said they reflected raw anger and frustration following the fatal shooting of a 12-year-old black boy by a police officer in Cleveland and grand jury decisions in Missouri and New York to not indict white police officers in the deaths of unarmed black men.



In that light, “it was hard for me to conjure sympathy for those police officers” shot to death in New York, she said.

But, she added in a telephone interview, “Not having sympathy is not that same as rejoicing or saying that they deserved to die. I think all human life is valuable; I’m not a violent person; and I don’t condone violence. I was very sympathetic for the families.”

Lynch’s comments have reverberated on campus and across the Internet, spawning debate about free speech, threats, and calls for Lynch to be suspended. They also prompted a campuswide message from the Brandeis president Frederick M. Lawrence, who called on students and others to be more civil toward one another.

Lynch resigned as undergraduate representative for the university’s African and Afro-American Studies Department.

Lynch sent out the first tweet shortly after the officers were killed Dec. 20 in Brooklyn. “i have no sympathy for the nypd officers who were murdered today,” she wrote.

The next day she reaffirmed her opinion in another tweet and added, “i hate this racist [expletive] country.”

The inflammatory messages were spotted by another Brandeis student, senior Daniel Mael, who re-published them in a [post](#) on the conservative news website TruthRevolt. That post, in turn, was well-shared online and ignited emotional, heated exchanges.

Some [condemned](#) Lynch and [defended](#) Mael’s decision to re-publish her tweets. Others [expressed support](#) for Lynch and instead [criticized](#) Mael, asserting that he had taken the tweets out of context and set her up as a target for cyberbullying.

The flurry of vitriol prompted Brandeis’ president to weigh in.

“It is critically important that we be able to have discussions about complex and charged issues in a climate of mutual respect and civility,” Lawrence wrote to the school community Monday.

Lynch said that at the time she tweeted about the officers’ deaths, she never expected much of a reaction. Her Twitter account was available for anyone to see, but had just 81 followers. She has since made her Twitter profile

private.

Lynch described Mael’s article and some subsequent coverage of her tweets as “an attempt to embarrass me and silence me.”

“But I won’t let that happen,” she said. “I stand by everything I said on my Twitter account. . . I don’t want to live in a country where police can get away with murdering black children and black people and not be held accountable.”

Mael said Wednesday he was shocked by the attention his post received and by much of the reaction. He said that he re-published Lynch’s tweets because “students on campus deserve to know when other people on campus, particularly student leaders, support violent acts and express a lack of sympathy for murdered police officers.”

Professor Chad Williams, chairman of the college’s African and Afro-American Studies Department, issued a lengthy [statement](#) distancing the department from Lynch’s comments.

“Indeed, the fundamental premise behind the declaration that ‘Black Lives Matter’ is that all lives matter,” Williams wrote. “We must mourn the unnecessary loss of life of a 12-year-old unarmed boy in Cleveland with the same compassion as we do the death of a Brooklyn police officer.

He added: “Social media has the power to educate, energize, and organize people in unprecedented ways. However, with the click of a button, social media also can give comments expressed in the heat of the moment a potentially regrettable permanency.”

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