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Men Charged With Covering Fist Sculpture In Paint

Pictures Of Slain Police Officers Reportedly Found At Base Of Statue

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Two men were charged with malicious destruction of property in a video arraignment at 36th District Court in downtown Detroit Tuesday afternoon.

Brett James Cashman, 45, a parks commissioner in Superior Township, and 28-year-old John Timothy Price of Ypsilanti, are accused of covering the city's landmark Joe Louis fist statue with white paint early Monday, Local 4 reported.

FIST VANDALISM



Magistrate Steve Lockhart ordered each of the men held pending \$1,000 payments on \$10,000 bonds. Lockhart also said once bond was posted, the men must be electronically tethered and placed under house arrest, with the condition that they may travel to and from a specific workplace.

Lockhart reportedly compared the act to a cross burning or a hate crime.

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- [Good Samaritan Calls 911 To Report 'Fist' Vandals](#)
- [Neighbors Of Suspected Vandal Shocked](#)

"I do not consider the facts alleged to constitute a prank, I consider the facts alleged to constitute a threat," said Lockhart.

The vandalism was discovered early Monday. The 8,000-pound sculpture, a 24-foot-long arm with a fist suspended from a frame, is important because it represents a hometown hero and because many people view it as an assertion of black political power and triumph over injustice. Louis was black.

When Cashman and Price (pictured, right) were arrested, police confiscated six photocopies of pictures of the two [Detroit police officers](#) killed during a traffic stop last week, as well as paint cans and mops. Written on the photocopies was: "Courtesy of Fighting Whities," according to the police report. After being pulled over, officers were told: "We did it for you guys," the report said.

Price's attorney, David Rosenberg, said he disagreed that the vandalism was hate speech and said he thought the men may have been trying to make a political statement.

"This country has a long history of political activism," said Cashman's attorney, Marc Beginin, adding it would be wrong to put someone in jail for that.



The Feb. 16 killings of Officers Jennifer Fettig and Matthew Bowens, who were white, have heightened concerns about violence in a city where 35 people were slain in January, nine more than in January 2003, and where killings have averaged about one a day this month. A black man is charged with murder in the officers' deaths.

Some critics of the fist sculpture said when it was unveiled in 1986 that it was emblematic of violence in Detroit. Cashman and Price were stopped by police in the suburb of Romulus and brought back to Detroit after authorities were tipped off by a motorist.

Tommie Ruffin, the owner of Class A Transportation, was driving a work van when he spotted the two men covered with white paint driving out of Detroit, according to Local 4 reports.

Ruffin followed them while calling state police on his cell phone.

"I did it because I like art and I like the city of Detroit," he said.

Ruffin (pictured, right) was honored for his good Samaritan act Tuesday night in Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's State of the City address.



Cashman and Price are set to appear at a preliminary exam set for March 18.

Previous Stories:

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- February 23, 2004: [Famous Detroit Landmark 'Fist' Vandalized](#)

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