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Suspects plead guilty in defacing of Joe Louis monument

By Jim Irwin, The Associated Press

DETROIT — Two suburban Detroit men pleaded guilty Thursday to defacing a downtown monument honoring boxing great Joe Louis.

Brett Cashman, 45, and John T. Price, 27, could face up to five years in prison at a sentencing hearing scheduled for May 14.

But the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office expected Circuit Judge James Chylinski to approve its recommendation that the men serve 30 days in jail and the remainder of their sentence on probation, and also pay \$1,000 in restitution before sentencing, spokeswoman Maria Miller said.

Cashman and Price were charged with malicious destruction of property after using mops to swab white paint on the 8,000-pound sculpture depicting the arm and fist of Louis, who grew up in Detroit.

With credit for three days spent in jail after their Feb. 23 arrest and 21 days served on house arrest, the two residents of Washtenaw County's Superior Township actually will spend just six days behind bars, said Cashman's attorney, Marc Beginin of Birmingham.

"He's satisfied with (the sentence) — otherwise he wouldn't have agreed to it," Beginin said of Cashman. "They did what they did, and they're willing to take responsibility for it."

Price's attorney, David Rosenberg, did not return a telephone message left Thursday afternoon at his Southfield office.

The monument is a tribute to Louis and considered by many a symbol of black power and triumph over injustice. But Cashman said earlier that he and Price targeted the fist because of its "violent imagery" and because it was an inappropriate symbol of a city bedeviled by crime, guns and drugs.

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Police found photos at the base of the statue of two white police officers shot to death during a Feb. 16 traffic stop. Their suspected killer is black.

"This regrettable event could be used to divide the community," Prosecutor Kym Worthy said in a statement. "We should learn from this incident and use it as another step that will bring the community together."

Cashman and Price have insisted that their action was not racially motivated.

Louis, who lived from 1914 to 1981, moved to Detroit with his family when he was a boy and is a hero in the city. The Red Wings play in a downtown arena named for him, and the sculpture, called Monument to Joe Louis but known to residents as simply "the fist," enjoys a prominent location along Jefferson Avenue.

The fist was erected in 1986 as a gift from Sports Illustrated to celebrate the centennial of the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Cashman resigned his post as a Superior Township parks commissioner about a week after his arrest. He plans to remain in the Detroit area, however.

"He doesn't like the fist, but he does like the area," Beginin said.

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