

EDUCATION

## Johnson County high school investigates racist 'these cotton pickers' threat

BY SARAH RITTER

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Bishop Miege High School in Roeland Park is investigating a social media threat against Black students. *Google Maps screenshot*

Bishop Miege High School and law enforcement are investigating a racist social media threat targeting Black students at the private Roman Catholic school in Roeland Park.

Administrators said they were alerted Monday night to a “disturbing social media screenshot” with racist language and a threat against Black students. The school informed the Roeland Park Police Department, which sent officers to students’ homes overnight, officials said.

Roeland Park Police Chief John Morris said the incident involved students exchanging Snapchat messages. School officials said in an email to families that students have been identified in the incident and “will remain off campus as the investigation continues.”

Morris said in an email to The Star he believes “one or more (students) is possibly going to be removed from the school on a permanent basis.” He said the incident remains under investigation, but his department has not found “any factual information that there was a threat being planned to carry out.”

A screenshot of a Snapchat message shared with The Star showed a picture of a student, with a message using a racial slur and derogatory language, warning Black students to “watch out” because “im gonna bring a gun to school and shoot of these cotton pickers.”

Morris said the student pictured in the screenshot did not write the threatening language. Instead, he said, other students altered the language to add the threats.

Bishop Miege officials have not confirmed whether that screenshot is the same as the one being investigated.

“Bishop Miege takes these messages seriously and will deal with them swiftly,” school officials said in the email.

“Appropriate consequences will follow when all the facts are known. Miege is cooperating with Roeland Park police to ensure the safety of our students, faculty and staff. Bishop Miege has zero tolerance for any racial threats and threats of violence.”

Mike Kelly, former Roeland Park mayor who was elected as chair of the Johnson County Board of Commissioners this fall, said in a Facebook post he is “disturbed and saddened” to learn of the threat.

“All of Johnson County’s schools, whether public, private or parochial, must be places where our youth can learn, compete, and participate in safe and accepting spaces. Threats and intolerance simply do not belong,” Kelly said. “... We will work together to confront these issues, because everyone deserves to feel safe in their school and community, and we all want Johnson County, Kansas to be a place where people choose to raise a family, run a business, and retire.”

The racist threat comes one week after another Johnson County school, Blue Valley High School, reported its football stadium and press box were defaced with [racist and offensive language on Martin Luther King Jr. Day](#). Videos and photos of the vandalism showed the N-word and other racist and homophobic slurs, a swastika, the words “F--- Jews” and other offensive messages spray-painted inside the press box.

SevenDays, an organization that works to overcome hate by teaching kindness, said in a statement that both incidents show there is “a lot of work left to do.”

“Law enforcement authorities along with school officials are hard at work to find who committed these hurtful and damaging acts. We support their efforts to find the perpetrators,” said a statement from Mindy Corporon, president of SevenDays, which was formed after [three people, including Corporon’s father and son, were killed](#) by a white supremacist in 2014 outside Jewish sites in Overland Park.

“What those perpetrators need most is education to understand why their words and deeds are so destructive and how they can make change in a positive way.”

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