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COURTS AND JUSTICE

Three sue Case Western Reserve University over spray-painting of protesters

Updated: May. 14, 2025, 7:56 p.m. | Published: May. 14, 2025, 3:43 p.m.

[Contractors spray-painted over pro-Palestinian protesters at Case Western Reserve University](#)



By [Adam Ferrise, cleveland.com](#)

CLEVELAND, Ohio — Three pro-Palestinian student protesters sued Case Western Reserve University on Wednesday over contractors spraying them with paint on campus.

Video of the May 7, 2024, incident went viral after it showed protesters getting doused with paint.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Cleveland, accused university officials of violating the protesters' free-speech rights and accused them of using excessive force. A similar lawsuit was filed in Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court.

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Attorney Peter Pattakos filed the lawsuits on behalf of protesters Kevin Kennelly, Weillin Feng and Ameer Alkayali, whose family owns Algebra Tea House in Little Italy near Case's campus.

The lawsuits name the university's president, Eric Kaler, its police chief, Paul Owens, and police officers as defendants.

University officials declined comment, citing the pending case.

Pattakos wrote in the lawsuit that the incident was "shockingly unconstitutional."

The spray-painting happened after students on May 6, 2024, painted on the campus' Spirit Wall and Advocacy Wall the university had set up for people to express their beliefs or draw attention to events.

Among the slogans on the walls included: "I dream of breaking the siege" and "Come together in peace."

The next day, Kaler sent out a statement that said protesters had scrawled "threatening" and "intimidating" messages on the walls.

Several people — including Alkayali and Feng— showed up about 5 a.m. to block painters from covering up the slogans, according to the lawsuit. Kennelly was walking home from studying, saw what was happening and helped block the wall, the lawsuit said.

Officers, who spoke with officials, told the painters they could shoot the spray paint on the protesters, the lawsuit said.

All three plaintiffs in the case were covered in “toxic” paint, according to the lawsuit.

Kaler issued an apology the same day and said he would hold people responsible, including the officers for failing to intervene.

“Let me be clear: No students — or any individuals — should ever be treated this way, especially on a campus where our core values center on providing a safe, welcoming environment. This is not who we are as an institution, and I am deeply sorry this ever occurred,” Kaler’s statement said at the time.

Adam Ferrise covers federal courts at cleveland.com and The Plain Dealer. You can find his work [here](#).

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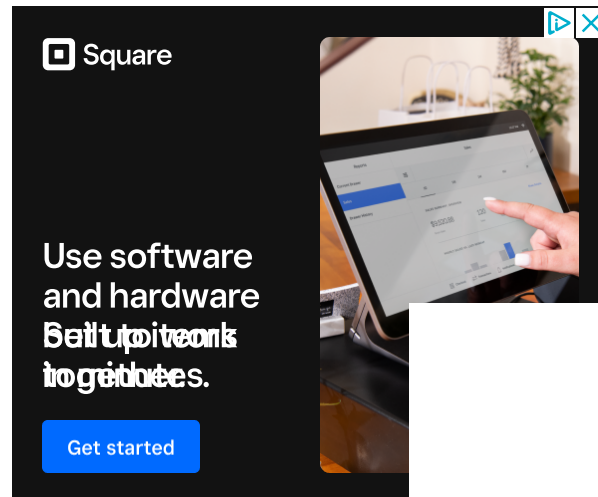
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