

Tenn. State Student Found Dead Off-campus

Contributed by Marshall A. Latimore, Jennifer Butler -- Black College Wire
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Freshman's body discovered after she was reported missing

Tennessee State University freshman Racquel Elena Johnson was found dead off-campus in an abandoned duplex at 1729 Herman Street Friday, Feb. 20, according to a media release by Metro Nashville-Davidson County Police. Johnson, an 18-year-old social work major and Nashville native, was reported as a missing person on Tuesday, Feb. 17, after her mother, Maria, reported the disappearance when Johnson didn't return from working at her job at Starbuck's in Opry Mills Mall.

Metro police recovered Racquel's 2001 gold Chevrolet Impala from the parking lot of Rivergate Mall near Dillard's on Tuesday night, the police's media release stated. [Suspect arrested: Related story]

Cheryl Bates-Lee, spokeswoman for the university, explained in a TSU media release that Johnson's cause of death was unknown.

The Metro police release stated that Johnson had "suffered obvious trauma." Evidence at the scene indicated that her body had been there, unmoved, all week, the release stated.

TSU President Melvin N. Johnson expressed his concern for the loss and made a statement on behalf of the university community.

"We are truly saddened by the loss of one of our beloved students," Johnson said. "Racquel was a great student with a bright future in front of her. Her presence will be missed by the University family."

Bates-Lee said that university officials are planning an on-campus memorial service for early next week.

The release stated that grief counseling will be available for students and faculty.

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Marshall A. Latimore and Jennifer Butler write for The Meter, the Tennessee State University student newspaper, which originally published this article.