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Rutgers student tepidly admits to invading privacy

By Gene Racz, (East Brunswick, N.J.) Home News Tribune

Updated 3/8/2012 7:34 AM

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NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – After the revelation Wednesday that a [Rutgers University](#) student sent his gay roommate a text message that said he had no problem with the young man's sexual orientation, the prosecution produced an evidentiary bombshell of its own Wednesday in Middlesex County (N.J.) Superior Court.

The prosecution, which is expected to rest its case Thursday morning, aired a video of [Dharun Ravi](#) being questioned by investigators, during which Ravi was asked whether he thought he had invaded the privacy of [Tyler Clementi](#).

Ravi replied, "Well yes, but I didn't realize it was something so private. It was my room also. That's why I immediately closed it."

STORY: [Student saw roommate's tweets before suicide jump](#)

Ravi told the investigators that he was concerned for his valuables in the room at the time and had "a bad vibe" about Clementi's older male guest who has been known throughout the trial only as M.B.

By Kathy Johnson, (Somerville, N.J.) Courier News

Dharun Ravi, right, walks with lead defense attorney Steven Altman, center, outside the Middlesex County (N.J.) courtroom on Wednesday.

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Ravi is charged with bias intimidation as a hate crime, invasion of privacy and hindering apprehension. He is not charged in connection with Clementi's death. Ravi is accused of rigging a webcam to spy on Clementi and covering up evidence as investigators looked into Clementi's death.

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Tyler Clementi jumped to his death off the George Washington Bridge in 2010



Facebook.com via AFP

Clementi unknowingly had sex when the camera was set up, discovered the spying before a second date with his partner and disabled the device. But the next day, he jumped off the George Washington Bridge and his body was not found until a week later.

Prior to the playing of the video, defense attorney Steven Altman read a text Ravi sent Clementi on Sept. 22, 2010, in which Ravi said, "I've known you were gay and I have no problem with it. In fact one of my closest friends is gay and I have a very open relationship. I just suspected you were shy and never broached it as a topic.

"I don't want your freshman year to be ruined because of a petty misunderstanding, it's adding to my guilt. You have a right to move if you wish but I don't want you to feel pressured to without fully understanding the situation."

It's not known whether Clementi ever read the message. He committed suicide that day.

Besides Ravi's qualified admission of invasion of privacy that he also characterized as not deliberate, Ravi told investigators during questioning on Sept. 23, 2010, that he was only "joking" when he encouraged others to video chat his room on Sept. 21, 2010.

"Everything we show you, you say is a joke," one of the investigators said.

At one point on the video, Michael Daniewicz, a Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office investigator, asked Ravi whether he took private information and shared it with the public.

During questioning, Daniewicz read a tweet that Ravi sent out on Sept. 21, 2010, before the second meeting of Clementi and M.B. was set to occur. The tweet was: "Anyone with iChat I dare you to video chat me between hours of 9:30 and 12. Yes it's happening again." iChat is Apple's version of instant messaging that includes video.

"Seems like you tried to sell it," Daniewicz said to Ravi, who replied, "I did not set this up for a second night." However, Lokesh Ojha, a former Rutgers dorm mate of Ravi, testified that he helped Ravi set up the remote webcam in his room that night by helping him angle the camera toward Clementi's bed.

In earlier testimony, jurors learned that 86 text messages sent from Ravi's phone were missing when a computer forensics expert examined it after the suicide.

Robert Torrisi, a computer forensics investigator from the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office, said he reviewed Verizon phone company records and compared them with Twitter messages on a cell phone that authorities seized from Ravi.

Torrisi examined 576 messages sent Sept. 18 to Sept. 23, 2010, comparing phone company records to call-log records within Ravi's cell phone. The phone was missing dozens of messages with two of Ravi's high school friends — one who lived across the hall from him at Rutgers — that might indicate he was trying to cover up use of a webcam to spy on Clementi's intimate encounters with another man.

In one text message on Ravi's phone, Clementi asked to have their room all to himself on the evening of Sept. 21, Torrisi said.

One of the messages displayed to jurors was a Sept. 19, 2010, tweet sent by Ravi and received by Rutgers dorm mate Alissa Agarwal: "Roommate asked for the room. I went into Molly's room and turned on my webcam I saw him making out with a dude. Yay."

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John Grimes · Program Manager at University of Idaho

What a complete waste of money. This is vengeance, not justice.

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Douglas Thorne · Ohio University

I completely agree this is right up there with a school not liking the lunch a mother sent her child to school with.....makes me ashamed to call myself a democrat

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Jeremy Rooker · Works at McDonald's

You're confusing concepts. It's not revenge, if it were he'd be charged with his murder. He's being charged for the things he did, actions have consequences not all consequences are revenge.

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John Grimes · Program Manager at University of Idaho

Jeremy Rooker It's pure vengeance. It's about hurting him back. This will restore the other guy to life. This is pointless, and expensive, due process.

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Penelope Mace · Works at Self-Employed

D Ravi and all his smirking little prep school friends should be sanctioned in some way for what they did. They are not 5 yrs old, they are 18, 19 - old enough to be parents, be in the military, earn a living. They are spoiled little upper middle class jerks who have no doubt had ma ma wiping their stuck up asses all their lives and they think they can just do anything to anyone and it's fine - I hope he gets the book thrown at him

Like · Reply · 36 · Mar 7, 2012 11:20am



Wally Casio · Colorado Technical University

I applaud you Penelope Mace. You said the right thing to this post. I seriously believe that Robert Torrisi and the person across the hallway, Molly Wei, deserve the book thrown at them! They have no morals.

Like · Reply · 28 · Mar 7, 2012 1:29pm



Chris Payne

Nyx VonDog, that is an incredibly superficial observation. Tyler grew up in a world where he had to hide himself in fear, most likely. The reality is, yes, suicide is always a bad option, and yes, he did have control over the choices he made, but he had no control over what led him to that moment of despair. His roommate is alleged to have had that control, however...and the evidence seems to be indicated he in fact did.

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