

**Gay Lincoln woman says attackers cut slurs into her skin**  
**By: Roseann Moring & Leslie Reed, Omaha World Herald**  
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INCOLN — Three men broke into a Lincoln woman's home, bound her with zip ties, carved anti-gay slurs into her skin and set her house on fire, she told Lincoln police.

Police are investigating the incident as a hate crime, said Lincoln Police Officer Katie Flood. They have not made an arrest in connection with the attack.

A candlelight vigil in the woman's honor at the State Capitol on Sunday night drew more than 500 people.

The woman was treated at a hospital and released Sunday.

Outlinc, a Lincoln gay-rights organization, said in a statement Sunday evening that board members have confidence in the police investigation.

"Many in our community are understandably experiencing a great deal of sadness, anger and confusion," Outlinc President Tyler Richard said in the statement. "We look to our entire community to pull together in this difficult time."

Beth Rigatusso of Omaha's Heartland Pride said advocates plan to hold an Omaha vigil at 8 p.m. Thursday in Memorial Park.

The woman called police around 4 a.m. Sunday, saying men wearing black ski masks had broken into her home, according to Lincoln police.

She told police the men assaulted her — binding her hands and carving words into her skin with a knife — and then set fire to the house.

Capt. Jim Davidsaver said the victim's description of the men was limited because of the masks.

When police arrived, the house was still on fire, the captain said. He said it caused about \$200 in damage.

Davidsaver would not say what the men carved into the woman's skin. "We need to maintain the integrity of the case," he said.

But Erin Thompson of Lincoln, who described herself as the victim's best friend, said she got a call from her friend about 6:30 Sunday morning. The friend asked Thompson to pick her up from the hospital.

"They carved on me," Thompson said her friend tearfully told her.

Thompson said three epithets, including the word "dyke," were carved on her arms and stomach.

The woman, who is in her 30s, walked, naked and bound, to a neighbor's house to get help, Thompson said.

"I am so proud of her," she said. "I'm so proud that my best friend could walk out the door."

Davidsaver declined to release the victim's name, as did those who spoke at the vigil.

"The victim has asked that she remain anonymous," said Karen Bratton-Cranford, president of Star City Pride. "We respect that. We respect her right to tell her story when she is ready."

Thompson said the victim is openly lesbian.

She read a statement on behalf of the victim, who thanked those attending the vigil, her neighbor for summoning help, the police and fire department for their quick response, and the paramedics, nurses and doctors who helped her at BryanLGH Medical Center West in Lincoln, as well as an advocate from Voices of Hope who sat with her.

Thompson said she and her friend “always get harassed here and there.” She said they have only suspicions about the possible identities of the assailants.

Laya Martin-Tardy helped arrange the quickly organized vigil, putting up a Facebook event page to get the word out. She said at least 800 people said they would attend. Many in the crowd cheered when asked who had traveled from Omaha or elsewhere in the state to attend.

“I pray to God this never happens again,” Rigatusso of Heartland Pride shouted to the crowd.

Later she described the assault as “terrorism at its finest. I'm disgusted.”

Bratton said it seemed ironic that the assault comes only weeks after a gay pride celebration in Lincoln.

“I'm not going back in the closet,” she said. “You're not going to scare me back.”

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