



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The Mack and Dub's Excellent Chicken & Waffles restaurant is left in ruins after a suspected arson fire and possible hate crime. Authorities on Tuesday could not release any new information about their investigation. Arson investigator Rick McGraw said it would be baseless to say how the fire started without more facts.

Mack and Dub's Will Bounce Back

continued ▲ from front

"I thought it was a prank," he said, until the man passed the phone to a fire marshal on the scene.

Oddly enough, the alarm company had called Travis the night before at 11:30 p.m. to tell him a

sensor had been set off at the restaurant, but with high winds blowing that night, both ends assumed it was nothing and hung up.

The next morning, Travis called McClendon first and the two arrived to Mack and Dub's in disbelief.

According to a report by Willamette Week, a worker on the scene said some sort of fire starter was thrown through the back of the building, where the restaurant's music studio and main office had been reduced to ashes. The kitchen and dining room were also devastated.

Worse, evidence of burglary and derogatory graffiti on a wall of the restaurant lead police to believe the incident is a hate crime. "It was definitely offensive," Travis said about the word(s) on the wall.

Still shocked by the event, both owners say they have no idea who set fire to their restaurant. They have great relationships with all of their fellow business owners nearby, they said.

"We grew up in this neighborhood," said McClendon. "We had all nationalities of people coming to our business... a cool mixture of neighborhood folks and people outside of northeast Portland. Lots of people have been very supportive of us."

False rumors floated that the

restaurant's motorcyclist neighbors, the Gypsy Jokers, may have sparked the fire, but Travis disputes all claims. "We are confident it's not them," he said.

Other suspicions lead them to wonder about former employees, but "We would hate to think it was one of them," said McClendon. Police told them that burglaries, robberies, and fires—similar situations have been common lately.

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The owners-- both rappers of duo Big Dub and J. Mack (Mack was the founding MC of the rap-R&B quintet, U-Krew), are relying on friends and their catering gigs to get by until their work place is restored.

Youngster Productions will lend the guys their recording studio, so they can stay on top of ongoing music projects, while other friends will give up their kitchen.

The pair said they are grateful for everyone in the community who has offered their love and support. They show optimism in an otherwise gloomy situation.

"We are planning on being there," said McClendon, "Forever," Travis chimes in. "We are definitely going to be back open."

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