

CAPITAL REGION

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UALBANY BUS TRIAL

Angry words fill testimony

Student recounts remarks made to fellow passengers before she said she was hit

By **Bethany Bump**

Albany

Gabrielle Camacho was sitting on her friend's lap in the back of a crowded CDTA bus last January when she heard a group of girls a few seats away call her and a friend "dumb bitches."

Tensions had been mounting between the two groups of girls — seated

toward the back of the now-infamous No. 11 bus — since the moment Camacho's friend, Mary Glisson, began drunkenly singing "99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall." So by the time she heard the insult, she was angry.

"I said, 'Are you f---ing kidding me? You're ignorant. Shut the f--- up and get a job,'" Camacho recalled on the stand before a trial jury Friday.

Camacho insisted there was no racial undertone to the statement. While she and her friends were white and the girls she yelled it to were black, she testified Friday that she

reserves such statements for anyone — friends, family or otherwise — who bothers her.

"To me, it means, like, get out of my face and go do something better with your life other than bother me," she said.

It was after that statement that Camacho recalled being struck, adding that she couldn't be "100 percent sure" but that she believes she was struck by Ariel Agudio and Asha Burwell, two former University at Albany students who reported to police they

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Albany County District Attorney's Office

Thirteen UAlbany students testified Friday in the trial of two women blamed for a bus assault. Above, a screen grab of video taken of the Jan. 30, 2016, incident.

'Then it got really physical'

TRIAL

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had been the victims of a hate crime on the bus.

The Albany County District Attorney's office is attempting to prove at trial — this week and next — that Agudio and Burwell lied, that they themselves were the assailants, and that they assaulted or attempted to assault Camacho and Glisson.

On the fifth day of trial Friday, the jury had a chance to hear from 13 college students who were on the bus that night, Jan. 30, 2016. Some details matched up. Some didn't. They came, after all, from students trying to remember — more than a year after the fact — a chaotic sequence of events that occurred on a crowded bus when many were intoxicated.

Glisson, the woman who had been singing, testified Friday she could tell the group of black girls were getting annoyed with her when one of them offered to make her a sandwich if she'd "shut up."

"The next thing I remember is my friend (Ca-

macho) getting punched in the face," she testified.

She said she pushed her friend on the ground and placed her body over her, and remembers getting punched and feeling her hair being pulled.

Assistant District Attorney David Rossi shared photos of the injuries Glisson suffered after the fight, including a black eye, bruises and a scratch. She appeared in one photo with a neck brace — which she said was given to her at Albany Medical Center after Saint Peter's Hospital failed to diagnose her with whiplash.

Defense attorneys pointed out that Rossi had failed to share another picture — one of Glisson's knuckles covered in bruises and scrapes, the kind that might be seen after hitting or punching someone. Glisson said she scraped her knuckles when pulling Camacho to the ground.

Bianca De Leon remembers trying to calm the waters as tensions were mounting.

The 19-year-old UAlbany student said she was seated next to Glisson and Camacho, who she didn't know before that night, when she noticed

the defendants getting annoyed by the drunken singing.

The black passengers expressed annoyance, she said, that people on the bus were yelling at them to shut up but not Glisson, something they attributed to their race.

"I told them it wasn't about race," De Leon said.

Then she heard a guy call Agudio a "whale" and saw Glisson laugh — which seemed to irritate Agudio, she said. It wasn't until Camacho's "get a job" comment, however, that things turned physical, she said.

"I had stood up because, like, I knew they were going for Mary and her friend so I didn't want them to get to her, so I was literally in the way," she said. "Then it got really physical. Ariel was

literally jumping, trying to jump over a seat to get to Mary. She was literally like on top of us like swinging."

A number of other students who testified Friday said they couldn't see who threw the first punch. Nobody testified that they had witnessed any men striking women — only women striking women, or women grabbing each other by the hair.

Michael Boshart, 20, said he saw one of his male friends dump a drink on Agudio, but only after "he was hit by her."

Defense lawyers pointed out that a number of the students on the bus that night had participated in underage drinking, including one student who was arrested for using a fake ID. They

had questioned earlier in the week why the district attorney's office seemed uninterested in any of those crimes, but was so adamant about charging their defendants.

They also indicated during cross-examination that a number of students on the bus were offered reassurance by investigators that "they weren't in trouble" when they went in for their interviews, even though investigators couldn't have known at that point whether the students may have been participants in the fight.

The trial may conclude as soon as Monday, when the final three witnesses are expected to be called.

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