

Hi,

My name is Noah Grunzweig. I am a registered voter and home owner in Portland, OR, 97206. I would like to share a story about the protests I have been attending and an officer I spoke with personally. I see it as relevant to your discussions about police policy, the scope of bargaining power of police unions, and really any law that should be promoting racial equity but continues to find racial inequity in BIPOC communities.

I spoke to a white female officer at one of the protests in Portland last week. My partner, myself, and a friend of ours were speaking with her on either side of a 12 foot tall fence. There were probably 20 other officers about 15 feet behind her, some glaring and others pretending not to be there or masking their face entirely. I asked the officer I spoke to candidly if she recognized the racism present in PPD's policing. She said, and I am paraphrasing, "oh yeah, I see it, but you don't need to worry about it, because we just watched a 10 hour training on Portland's racist history."

One of our white PPD officers, a white person who currently has state authority to murder someone in public so long as they say the words "I felt unsafe," for any reason - yes, one of these white people actually said, in public, and nonchalantly, that she saw racism all the time in her department, but that I shouldn't worry about it, because they took 10 hours of training course, and say they are working on it.

It seemed less like admitting racism and more like she was admitting "Oh, yeah, leave the toilet seat up when I pee all the time, but it's not a bit deal, I'm working on it." Now, she was super friendly, and she also asked me to remind my protesting friends that she is human too - a request, if you cannot tell, I am aiming for - but then, THEN, I got to learn why she wanted me to remember she is human. Let me explain. One of the late nights to follow (you know, after the PPD breaks up the protest for throwing water bottles or pushing down a fence) she and the Portland Police Department corralled a bunch of protestors up against a wall. There were a bunch of protestors kind of squished in a line, backs to the wall, surrounded by police officers all like 20 feet away. The jig is up, right? This is when PPD arrests everyone who cooperates, right? Nope. PPD waited for the protestors to stay still, put their hands up, and then they proceeded to shoot metal tear gas canisters AT THE PROTESTORS, immediately following with an intense barrage of rubber bullets. They were like a firing squad at a holocaust carnival, they almost seemed gleeful as they beat anyone that they could catch escaping the toxic fog and continuous barrage of wetting rubber bullets.

You ever have someone ask you to remember their humanity right before they choke you with toxic gas that makes you feel like you're about to die, shoot you as casually as a 10 year old shoots a bush with a BB gun, and then club you with batons - all the while chanting "stop resisting" even if you are laying bloody and motionless while they kick you on the ground?

Is that something you've experienced? Because if you haven't, maybe you should try it. I hear it is good for perspective. Police acting on policies you either crafted or have upheld seem to think it will change our perspective your public service and the policies you craft. They seem to think I'm going to develop a quieter and more respectful disposition for your perceived authority over our lives.

Do you understand the absence of awareness that is embodied in that officer's request? Do you understand the amount of learning and training necessary to even begin to have the

awareness this officer lacks? I am pretty sure you know It is several years more than 10 hours, a pat on the back, and, “now, you go out and get em’.”

Do you understand the impact of the policies you've crafted, or the policies you have left unexamined, and their impact on the outcomes of BIPOC lives and livelihoods in Oregon? See, if there is racial inequity in a state, for any reason, it is because there is a policy that maintains that inequity. Are you seeing that now?

Because I have been asked to remember their humanity. Not because she feared being vilified, but because she herself has forgotten her own humanity. That officer is so practiced at what she sees as inhumanity that she only registers being demonized and not the demonizing she does. She would like better policies that hold her to a better moral standard, so that she can be compelled towards her own humanity, not away from it. Everyone protesting, and millions afraid to join the call because of Covid, or fear their voices didn't matter in America anymore. We all want better policies - policies focused on outcomes of racial equity.

Now, one moment of focusing on policing, because they are the enforcers of policies supporting outcomes of racial inequity (aka racist policies). This officer I spoke of was, and I am sure is, nice. She is polite, and probably a friendly neighbor. She even continued our conversation cordially until I asked for some more specifics about how they have been trained to respond to protestors. She then became rather distant, stepped back and said, again paraphrasing, “I am going to move back and stop talking now, because I just noticed I am alone at the fence and am feeling scared.” What I see, and I hope you see, is that she was not “Scared.” She was “uncomfortable.” Most of us white people never have to learn the difference. I understand that, but she doesn't. More over, she is trained, and protected by policies that promote fear over discomfort. This is a human being, told they can shoot and kill anything that scares them, says, even behind a 12 foot fence, armed with deadly and excruciatingly painful artillery, and backed by 20 some odd other officers, and only faced with an uncomfortable moment in conversation - she says she feels scared. And she was not misspeaking. This officer, who would later be beating and shooting fellow Portlanders for standing still, was scared by a conversation and knew that she can do whatever she wants, so long as she says the right things to engage the laws and policies protecting her.

10 hours of history training does not replace training to respond to discomfort with life threatening fear.

10 hours of history training does not replace training daily to respond to all fear with force.

10 hours of history training does not replace a lifetime of training to fear blackness or talk of racism.

10 hours of history training doesn't replace that for white officers, and it doesn't replace it for BIPOC officers - and yes, they too live and can and do adopt all the narratives of white supremacy, and will carry them until someone offers them a mirror of their own humanity they can actually look at. Diversity in policing is not a cure.

10 hours of history training doesn't replace a culture of mafia fellowship where dissent for any individual cop is dangerous for them, where no matter what any officer does, the whole gang rallies supports them, or else. And it doesn't replace feeling war with the general public - a war for their own safety.

10 hours of history training doesn't replace the culture of violence, intimidation, and killing as incentives for promotion or pay that we've trained into our policing for hundreds of years.

10,000 hours of training and reflection is required to unlearn and relearn a new way of being, and is what will be needed reform and retrain each and every police officer.

And none of that will matter even a little if you do not change the policies that govern them.

You have the authority create, and recreate, the legislation necessary to make transitioning to a new way of policing less miserable (still miserable, but less miserable) for BIPOC Oregonians:

Important closing:

Are you taking the next steps to ensure that 10,000 hours of personal development are required with oversight and tangible metrics for officers who remain?

Are you taking the next steps to protect our BIPOC residents from racist police policies and union protections of police criminality?

Are you taking the next steps to protect our BIPOC citizens from racist laws governing criminal justice, voting, education, employment, loans, and housing in Oregon?

I am defining racist as creating outcomes of racial inequity. Our legislative outcomes have been and are racist. Lets redo all of them to have outcomes of racial equity, i.e. anti-racist policy - and not just in criminal justice.

Cheers,

Noah Grunzweig

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