

Hello,

I am an educator, it is all I have wanted to be since I can remember. Actually, I come from a long history of school teachers and stepping into a path of education feels as natural to me as breathing. The sense of community, of wanting to be of service, of stepping into a role often overlooked and often defunded has been something for which I have actually strived. I have seen my family and my colleagues berated, yelled at, coerced, battered and pulled from what passes as an income in this career choice to get supplies to students. So, I want to sympathize first with the difficulties that come with a chosen profession that makes you feel endangered or taken for granted. I choose this every day and so do many other people who aren't wearing badge. However, this has never been an excuse to escalate, manipulate or use force the way we have all seen it play out during these protests. Most importantly, this has been a career choice that we continue to make, and so do police officers who feel threaten by people running away enough to use brutal tactics and chemical weapons during a pandemic. I beg you to watch the video streams at night and watch those moments when their feed blacks out from an officer demanding their actions not be recorded, their name not released for what they are about to do.

Why did they choose to become police officers? This can't have been what they wanted when they were kids. What happened to let them think this behavior is palpable, or even laudable? We need to demilitarize, add duty to intervene measures, look at the use of force, prohibit chemical weapons against citizens (I can't believe I am saying this during a pandemic) and chokeholds. If for no other reason than history tell us this area is known for racism, known for having racism in its policing history and it needed to have stopped a long time ago, but we sure as hell need to deal with this now. Wherever you put money next, in the community, in the hospitals during a pandemic, in education (please! We are spending our own money on supplies and don't get overtime!) or militarizing the police will speak volumes about the priorities are being put forth. Respect is not gained through brute force and fear and certainly not by being the person that carries a gun into a water bottle fight. In conclusion, I want to echo what the American Federation of Teachers in Oregon have released as part of their stance on current events to emphasize the communal call for better policies, accountability, descalation, tolerance and education.

"The labor movement has a moral duty, and a civic responsibility, to fight for fundamental changes to policing in this country, as well as recognizing its historic complicity in racism and police violence. We affirm the foundational labor principle that "An Injury to One is an Injury to All," and we will use our power and resources to make good on that principle in our actions.

I hope you find this testimony moving in considering how to proceed with the policing issues you have in front of you today. As much as I stated teaching came as naturally to me as breathing, one of those is a choice I make and one is something that can be taken from me as it was with George Floyd...Breanna Taylor....

All the best.