

Hello,

My name is Jaydra Perfetti and I am a registered voter and homeowner in Portland, OR, 97206. I attended a protest last week will share my experience. This is relevant to your discussions about police policy, the scope of bargaining power of police unions, and any law that should be promoting racial equity but continues to find racial inequity in BIPOC communities.

An animal caught in a trap will lash out in fear at a human trying to help. Last week I observed this same fear blindness in the police at a protest. They were decked-out in body armor complete with battle helmet and face shield, carrying weapons of varying degrees of deadliness. And they were afraid. I could see it in the posture of their bodies and the way they brandished their weapons. They were afraid of being perceived as anything other than tough and imposing. They were afraid of showing any sign of their humanity to the angry chanting crowd. And the great irony is that they also wanted desperately for their humanity to be seen.

A few officers came to less crowded sections of the fence to talk with protestors. The one who came to talk to my group told us they wanted us to know they were human just like us, and they were in this job because they want to help people. They explained they were only out tonight to protect the people inside the justice center. They were standing behind a twelve foot fence in their body armor and with all their weapons to protect the inmates in the jail from the protestors.

We asked if they lived in the area, and the officer explained they would never want to live in the community they police because what if they run into someone they arrested at the grocery store? It was clear they were afraid of being accountable to a member of their own community for their behavior at work. They also explained they have never seen racism in their police department and they attended a 10-hour equity training where they all learned about privilege. It was clear they were afraid of being dismissed as a "racist and therefore bad person."

We brought up the overwhelming body of evidence that racial bias exists in policing generally and in this city specifically. We asked why they think communities of color are disproportionately harmed by police practices if they have never seen racism in their ranks. And then they announced they were going to step away from the fence because they no longer felt safe. It was clear they were uncomfortable that we were simultaneously acknowledging their humanity and also challenging their claim of non-participation in white supremacy. It's clear they were afraid of looking at themselves and considering their own contribution to that system.

And their fear was all they could see.

Police are routinely trained to expect attack at all times and to see the community they serve as inherently threatening. We need to give our police DIFFERENT TRAINING. I'd like to see the whole police department disbanded and those funds channeled into mental health, drug addiction recovery, homelessness alleviation and other community safety programs.

10 hours of equity training does not replace years of training to view the public as life threatening.
10 hours of equity training does not remove the racist policies and practices in the police department.
10 hours of equity training does not replace a lifetime of training to fear blackness and avoid talking about racism.

It is clear the current system is not working. You cannot allow the police union to decide what new policies or what new discipline structures exist. That is not the place of a union. THE EMPLOYER HAS THE RIGHT TO DEFINE WORK. THE UNION IS THERE TO BARGAIN OVER IMPACT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF WHAT MANAGEMENT DECIDES. That means you must absolutely put citizen accountability review boards in place to review police discipline and make changes to that discipline when appropriate. That means you must not accept a police contract that takes away the teeth of any legislation you enact to deter and punish criminal behavior in police officers.

Our legislative outcomes have been and are racist. You have the power to change that. Redo all of them to have outcomes of racial equity, starting with the criminal justice system, and then everywhere else too.

Sincerely,

Jaydra Perfetti,
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