

To the Joint Committee on Transparent Policing and Use of Force Reform,

I'll start with the hypocrisy and irony of Gov. Brown's statement about the recent deployment of federal troops in Portland. On July 16th, while here in the city, Acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf accused Portland officials of failing to restore order during the protests, saying we are "lawless anarchists and a violent mob that desecrated and destroyed federal property." Gov. Kate Brown responded on Twitter, "This political theater from President Trump has nothing to do with public safety. The President's failing to lead this nation. Now he's deploying federal officers to patrol the streets of Portland in a blatant abuse of power by the federal government."

Oregon and Portland leadership suddenly want these federal officers to be held accountable for excessive force, brutality, and lack of transparency. What are you talking about?!?! Haven't we been demanding this for PPB, from local Portland leadership for the last 50 days, especially in cases where Portland police have murdered Black citizens and used "less-than-lethal" force on peaceful protesters throughout the city? (By the way, "less-than-lethal" sometimes means brain damage, handicapping, or death. Fun!) The Portland police are trying to control us with the same tactics the feds are using, to "crack down" on "illegal assemblies," "riots" and "property destruction," the same excuses the feds are using to brutalize us. Don't you get it?

So, today, while simultaneously in a panic about federal troops patrolling our streets, suddenly you're faced with the same thing we've been facing on the streets with local cops - you are living in an occupied territory, and armed officers with no accountability or transparency are brutalizing citizens. How does it feel? Do you want them to stop? Oh, how cute!! Obviously, we want it to stop too, since we're literally risking our lives on the streets every day we go out to protest. We may be brutalized or handicapped by police. We may be attacked or killed by people in cars or White supremacists on the street. We may get sick and die of COVID. And we don't give a shit because we're in a war to protect Black and Indigenous lives, and the lives of all citizens. Racism is a pandemic, and has been for 401 years. Today, it is represented in militant policing, and Oregon legislature's historic support of it. So while we're at war, where are you? Probably sitting at a desk, in a safe building somewhere, deciding today whether or not to ban tear gas. Nice.

So if you're suddenly in a panic about Trump's actions, you are nuts. YOU are the ones using this as a political moment, somehow finding a way to twist this into being all Trump's fault. Give me a break. There is a culture in the United States of using force to keep "order," which in Portland these days means protecting statues and buildings - The vast percentage of which is simply White property, whether "public" or not. What our legislators and representatives right now don't seem to understand is, hundreds of years of using violence to oppress citizens are over. That time is over. You can't "control" or "quell" this unrest. We will force you to change, and all you have to decide is how much YOU want to lose before we win.

How long do you want to resist the history we are making in this moment? It just so happens that you are the people sitting in this moment with us, and you do hold power that is meant to protect our lives and liberty. Don't fight against us. Create your own honor and integrity in this moment, uphold the ideal of compassionate leadership, and take a stance in your fight for Black and Indigenous lives. Tear gas and other militant policing in this country is going to stop. The police and ICE are not protecting us. We WILL abolish them. Wake the fuck up. Listen to Black citizens and leaders. Listen to young people. Use your power to end the violence.

Thank you in advance for doing the right thing. Otherwise, go home, take a nap, get out of our way. Your time is over.

Chessey Henry

Tigard, OR 97223