

I am writing today to speak for myself, and for the Oregonians who are unable to provide testimony because they are in state or federal custody, in the hospital, or were killed for resisting law enforcement's violent attacks. Attacks which are, of course, in response to protests against this very kind of police brutality and needlessly violent criminal system. Such violence in our system and brutal attacks by law enforcement has been so normalized in our state, country, and psyches, that it is almost easy to flip channels or turn away to avoid it. However, many people in this country cannot simply ignore this violence, they must instead be victims to it.

Please take the time to observe some footage from Portland Protests *from the last two weeks*. [Donavan Labella](#) is in critical condition after being shot in the head while holding a speaker above his head at a protest, like John Cusack in Say Anything. I'll spare you the video of him bleeding out on the concrete. [Here is footage](#) from the night peaceful protestors and families in surrounding homes were gassed because someone in power decided a peaceful protest was a riot. [Here is footage](#) from the night law enforcement declared a riot from the broken window that the officer himself broke by knocking a protesters phone out of his hand. Word from tonight's protestors is that a chant, "burning down the system," was [characterized as a threat to torch the Sheriff's Office](#), giving leave to declare the protest a riot to deploy dangerous weapons against these people. As you know, this means a creative expression of protestors' anger at this system was criminalized, and this excused any brutal response by law enforcement. All of these incidents occurred after the temporary ban on the deployment of less-lethal munitions except when a riot is declared.

Simply put, such measures do not prevent law enforcement violence and brutality. Even without tear gas, rubber bullets, and LRAD, non-violent protestors and houseless people have been routinely bullied, shoved down repeatedly with batons, belongings swept and destroyed, and generally hurt and treated very badly. But this movement has power. These feeble proposals to protect us against violence are insulting. There is a growing number of abolitionists who want you to move toward real change.

If you hope for any kind of solution to quell this uprising, then you will put forward a realistic and legitimate prevention plan against this violence. This includes the immediate defunding of police steps toward abolition of our current, sickeningly violent form of law enforcement. I believe in your power as lawmakers, and so it is up to you if you choose to wield that power to protect us. Your constituents, your neighbors, the parents of your kids' friends, and all the other people you share this state with.

If, during this meeting, you have perspective and insight from officers who are able to explain away these events, but no such insight from the protestors being attacked, ask yourself why that is. Do you see why this is wrong? The old "in my years of experience as a law enforcement" trick is for the courtroom. As the world can see, and the world is watching, we have taken to the streets to find our justice. A justice that means something. One that we can feel. Justice that is like a sigh of relief, or the soft stomach-turn of joy. The gentle but powerful floating sensation of hope.

Please unify us in a common hope for a better place for us all to live. Let us see each other in all of our humanity - our pain, tears, hopes, fears, and the love that lives in each of us. In all of us. Those who are brutalized and have taken to the streets, the officers who were trained by trauma and are also victims of this system, those who don't have a safe place to live, even those who refuse to wear masks because someone they believed in lied to them. There is love and humanity in all of us. We all want the same thing, really. A safer place to live. Help make it so.

Finally, to end with scholar Ijeoma Oluo's words, "People calling to defund the police are not naive, are not uninformed, not irresponsible. We know how the current system works, with brutal familiarity - and we have the audacity to believe from our research, our work, and our lived experience, that we can come up with something new and better."

Black lives matter,

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