

Greetings,

I write in support of strong legislation on police reform. Please pass meaningful legislation in a special session in September. What I see so far emerging from Oregon's people of color caucus looks useful. I urge you to support it.

Having participated in protests this summer as a clergy witness, I have seen firsthand how brutal and disproportionate the response is to peaceful protests and minor acts of civil disobedience. I have experienced tear gas, been shoved to the ground by police batons, been close enough to pepper spray for my skin to burn for hours, been near where a flash bang went off and experienced burns on my ankle where a spark hit me, and seen riots declared regularly in situations that look nothing like riots. I have seen law enforcement officers hit protesters with batons and launch tear gas canisters far in front of crowds--meaning, tear gas is not being used to disperse the crowd, but to cause confusion and harm. My experiences are minor compared to those who have been hit by rubber bullets or tear gas canisters, or who have actually been beaten by officers.

During these experiences, when I have attempted to observe which officers were involved, it was not possible to identify them by number or name badge.

The reforms being suggested in LC 17, 18, 19, and 20 do not resolve the issues of police brutality and the racism that is infused into the system of policing, but they are strong moves in the right direction. Holding officers accountable for their misconduct and use of force, limiting the types of force they can use against protesters and unarmed civilians, and making it possible for officers to be identified individually can help the situation.

I urge you to support these bills, and to continue to work toward laws and systems that are equitable, dismantling racist systems everywhere they exist in our state.

Cherice Bock

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