

Dear Legislators,

I absolutely love our state of Oregon, and I am so thankful to be able to live here.

However, I am deeply concerned. Despite our state's progressive veneer, our state suffers from multiple systemic injustices. The three biggest that I will focus on are: racism, economic injustice, and militarism in the form of our policing/judicial/prosecutorial/prison complex.

These injustices serve to work together in a sort of evil collusion. They synergistically magnify the effects of one another on black, indigenous, and people of color in our state. And as Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Ultimately, these injustices are a threat to everyone in our entire state—from Eastern Oregon to the Willamette Valley to the Oregon Coast.

Continued progressive window dressing will NOT make amends for these injustices. Our representatives and our state's leaders must lead boldly—and in loving-kindness—and enact true radical and systemic reforms to bring about much-needed healing and true transformation for our state. These injustices must be overcome.

1) I urge our state to start the process of reallocating significant portions of our budget towards the process of healing the symptoms and root issues of our injustices (e.g., significantly more money for the permanent and transitional housing for the unhoused, mental health resources, trauma-informed policing, and stabilizing programs for the poor, etc.).

2) Our state needs to publicly acknowledge its racist history and systemic racism, our state's past and current economic injustices, and past and current systemic abuses by our various state governmental offices. (A process akin to a truth and reconciliation commission.) And let me be clear: it is not just our city and state police departments that are at the forefront of injustice, but this involves a range of governmental offices. And of course, every single one of us—including private businesses—are culpable.

All of our state's injustices need to come out into the light for everyone to see; otherwise, we will never learn from our collective past. As a part of this process, we publicly need to hear from folks as to what their lived experience of injustice has been in our state.

3) Our state government and the citizens of Oregon need to make amends for the injustices that have been perpetrated on the black, indigenous, and people of color. (This might happen through government reformations and funding, private generosity, and other measures.)

4) Our state needs a complete reform of all state laws, policies, and most especially, the current and future budgets to bring about true regenerative and restorative transformation. As Rev. Dr. William Barber says, it's the statutes, not the statues that

are the true injustices.

As a solution, I exhort our state's leaders to reform Oregon's policies and budget to mirror the Poor People's Moral Budget (www.poorpeoplescampaign.org). Adopting tenets from their platform and budget will bring about true transformation for those oppressed by our systemic injustices. Plus there will be long-term fiscal savings as we address root humanitarian issues, improve the quality of life of our citizens, and even expand our tax base as people are lifted out of poverty!

Further Reflections on Policing:

We will always need some form of policing to protect our communities from some horrendous evils. But despite the good intentions of our many dedicated and noble police officers, the institutions of policing/prosecution/prison still carry an original sin—it's complicity in the institution of slavery and then later in legalized slavery (incarceration) under the 13th amendment. Our current policing/justice/prison systems have the power to kill, the ability to perpetuate trauma, and the power to take away someone's freedom.

Our policing/judicial/prosecutorial/prison complex must be completely overhauled. Our police must become our true trusted guardians of our black, indigenous, and people of color communities. Our criminal justice system must bring true justice, true peace, and true healing—both to the victim and to the offender.

- Our prison system must transform and become a place where people are truly reformed and healed—not traumatized.
- We need restorative justice and community accountability for offenders. (Regarding accountability, I envision a council of community mothers that offenders are accountable to and that shape an offender's restorative path that includes radical public volunteer service, higher education, restorative and regenerative justice, mental health/addiction treatment, and prison if need be).
- We need more and improved addiction treatment. Italy has models where offenders go away for a year and completely start over, create new support communities, learn new trades, and create new patterns. It's fairly radical and effective.
- We need substantially more women and especially women of color in policing and in command positions. It has been shown in research that women are better about de-escalating situations, which is critical in policing. Research has also shown women make better decisions in crisis situations.
- We need more mental health and earlier interventional services like CAHOOTS as stop-gap measures until our investments in housing for the unhoused, mental health, drug treatment, education, and other social services lift our people out of poverty and crisis.
- We need prosecutorial reform so that public defenders are funded at the same level that district attorney offices are funded at, and public defenders have the exact same level of resources as district attorney offices. And better yet, we

innovate improved justice models that are more restorative and regenerative so we send fewer offenders to prison and for less time.

- Every police department in the state needs body cameras, and we need a way to fund those (will probably require federal funding).
- We need to decriminalize certain crimes.
- We need to complete police union reform, so the power in policing is brought back to the community. In many departments, the union has more power than the chief, city council, or the citizens.
- We need to end qualified immunity at the federal level.
- Police disciplinary records need to be public or at least be able to be referenced by all law enforcement offices, defense attorneys, judges, and city officials.
- We must strive harder in our policing so that all imaginable mental health and de-escalation efforts must fail before we ever inflict harm or end life (true trauma-informed policing).
- We need social and economic justice to lift everyone up—to help break the cycles of poverty, trauma, and mental health.

Thank you for your service to us—especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. I urge you to lead boldly, courageously, and in loving-kindness to all of our citizens—and most especially to our oppressed. While there may be changes at the federal level in the next election cycle, we cannot wait, and changes must start in our state.

Peace to all of you,

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