

As a resident of downtown Portland during the Summer of 2020, I was a firsthand witness to the protests that followed the murder of George Floyd. If you didn't have the experience of attending a protest yourself, you'd be forgiven for thinking that they consisted primarily of nightly clashes with police. Indeed, the city, the country, and even the President were fixated on the oft-reported violence. I'm not interested in rehashing old arguments about the reality of those altercations. Instead, I'd like to share a different aspect of that summer that went nearly unreported - *the speakers*.

Believe it or not, very few people left the comfort of their homes on hot summer nights with the sole intention of being teargassed. Instead the protests were, more often than not, focused on listening to community members of color discuss their experiences with oppression. I would like to take this opportunity to share with the commission the lessons I have learned from listening to my fellow Oregonians.

First, the speakers at these events came from a variety of backgrounds. Despite the fact that Black Lives were the focus, speakers of Hispanic (Latinx), Indigenous, and Asian & Pacific Islander heritages were also common. In addition, women and LGBTQ+ experiences were given a heavy spotlight. Among the diversity of backgrounds it was easy to see parallels between their experiences despite coming from different oppressed groups.

While the protests were sparked by the killing of George Floyd, police brutality was just the tip of the iceberg. Police violence is certainly the most egregious issue facing communities of color, but they're far from the only ones. Speakers shared experiences in how their backgrounds affect them in nearly every aspect of their life. These issues ranged from their difficulty finding employment during the COVID-19 pandemic to how oppression of their parents or grandparents have lasting effects to this day.

One of the most striking through-lines that I noticed was their negative experiences in school. Granted, growing up is tough for everyone. However, I heard testimony on every aspect of school life from one speaker or another. Grievances were not limited to White-focused history and literature nor were they limited to racially prejudiced teachers, staff, and classmates. Of course, many spoke on the inequality of funding their schools received in contrast to primarily White schools. However, one thing stuck with me more than anything else. Many spoke on how the institution of the schools that they attended were not structurally formed to even encourage success. I've been unable to stop thinking about this because it's an aspect of their lives I couldn't have noticed had it not been spelled out for me.

These are issues more complicated than the 3-word chants that echoed down the streets of the Rose City. They deserve advocacy somewhere far from the threat of teargas and rubber bullets.

I'm sure the committee will be receiving many testimonies related to the Portland protests in this hearing and over the following years, so I'd like to point to one last experience I had over the course of that summer. Nearly every police tussle, every toppled statue, and every

spray-painted slogan was met with the same detracting sentiment. "Don't do it this way - make change through the legal means!" Of course, change has not always been possible through these avenues, nor is it easy today. However, if there's one thing that can make change possible "through the legal means," it would be expanding the budget of the OAC.