

I was attending a protest in North Portland against police brutality and the violence that is protected by the Portland Police Union. I was standing on a sidewalk with friends when police officers rushed out of the darkness from multiple directions, clad in full riot gear. A panic was caused and the crowd stampeded. We ran to keep from getting trampled and I only stayed on my feet by grabbing onto a friend's backpack. It was exactly at this moment that loud explosions went off all around us and we were engulfed in toxic CS gas. What was already a chaotic moment became so disorienting I had no idea where to go. There were no police announcements saying what they wanted. At this point I was in the middle of a cloud of gas and could not see anything. I started to choke and gasp for air, it felt like I was drowning in gas. Think of someone holding your head underwater. My vision began to fade out, slowly losing consciousness. Had I been alone I genuinely think I may have passed out. What saved me was the hand I had on my friend's backpack. They had kept running and pulled me through the cloud which lasted for several blocks right in front of a large apartment building. Finally the block ended and we were able to turn down a side street into fresh air. I had lost vision and continued to struggle to find breath. I have no lung issues or asthma but in that moment it felt like it. I can only imagine how it would have affected someone who did. Thankfully there were trained medics there who washed my eyes out slowly I returned to normal. However I had a rash on my skin that lasted several days. The people trusted with keeping us safe responded to our protest against their violence with more violence. I wish I could say I was surprised.