

Stupidity, profiling – we can do better than this

Everyone (and I do mean everyone) I've spoken with in the last weeks has been consumed by one thing – the recent reconfiguration of the Southeast and Central precincts and its corresponding effects on the homeless population.

Now having said this, let me qualify the statement. Most of the gypsies (i.e. homeless people) I know don't give a damn about the police or their politics or policies – after all, they neither serve nor protect our population on a normal basis, so

5) I, along with many others, have been woken up in the middle of the night several times and asked to move. In one such case, the officer pointed to a sign that says "No camping. Shelters are available," at which point I laughed out loud. What a crock of shit. We all know the shelters are full; most of us are on their waiting lists. When I asked, "Where would you like us to go?" he said nothing. No answers because there isn't a place left for us – just demands to leave, because this place or that place isn't OK, either.

These officers are being encouraged in this behavior by a man known to have "a hard on for the homeless." Yep folks, that's a direct quote from an officer.

I can tell you this – for sure and for certain – the police now have our attention; mine in particular since an anonymous officer begged me not to organize a protest or write about this.

"Julie, don't do this. You don't understand, this man is a hard ass – with a hard on for the homeless. You'll only make things worse." Which we all know was exactly the right thing to say to inspire a call to action. Well, that, and every single person who said to me – you're one of our voices – SPEAK UP, GODDAMNIT!

Here goes: The stupidity, profiling, harassment *needs* to stop. Portland, we can do better than this!

Frankly, both communities need to come together to focus on an immediate solution. A realistic one to my fellow gypsies – always get names and badge numbers. If you suspect profiling and harassment, demand a supervisor be called in.

To the police: There are guidelines you must follow when dealing with people. We are going to be watching and aware of your actions.

We understand that not all the police have "a hard on for the homeless" just like not all homeless people are "hope-to-die addicts and alcoholics." Still, we can do better as communities.



**THE URBAN GYPSY**  
 By Julie McCurdy

*Julie McCurdy and her dog Maggie live in Portland without a home. She is a regular contributor to Street Roots.*

why should we care?

I was relatively stunned to encounter the level of intensity involved in people's responses to this, and when I started listening to accounts of actual events surrounding the reconfiguration – I have gone from stunned to horrified and am now settled firmly into outrage.

Here are some examples:

1) I watched an officer walk up to a tent, and literally pick the tent up and shake it without first announcing himself. Inside said tent was a very young woman (age 18) who was terrified by this. He said "police wake up" as he picked up the tent and shook it.

2) A man was approached, searched and questioned for standing next to a cart. When he asked why he was being questioned, the officer said, "You want to get smart with me? You wanna make this tough?"

3) This morning the police took a man's tent while telling everyone else to pack up and leave.

4) I have also heard more accounts than I care to, regarding officers sitting in their patrol cars watching us rather than doing their job. Clearly, they have better things to do than watch the man who cans at night.



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