

Saturday rally a sideshow distraction to Measure 105

It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.

If ever there was a time to aspire to that philosophy, it is now.

On Saturday, the so-called Proud Boys and Patriot Prayer movement will be busing in people from out of state to stage a

demonstration, or judging by their rhetoric, instigate a fight, on Portland's waterfront.

There's no question that violent provocation is the goal, given

language used by followers of these groups, and despite claims to the contrary by its lead instigator. It's a shipped in demonstration intended for a televised audience of the opposition, all with a title suggesting it's a campaign rally for someone who is not even running for office in Oregon.

What this really is, however, is a stunt to incite violence and fabricate a victimhood for the same white nationalist, anti-immigrant minority that is also fueling the efforts in Oregon to change our rules around local law enforcement.

That's the root of Measure 105, which will appear on the Oregon ballot in November. Measure 105 would repeal what's become known as Oregon's "sanctuary law," a statute passed three decades ago to end the practice by local officers of racial profiling people of color under the guise of immigration enforcement. Because that's exactly what was happening three decades ago in this state.

It was also intended to prevent federal policy from usurping local resources, and ordering them to act outside of their purview of enforcing public safety. At the time of its passage, it wasn't framed as a sanctuary policy at all, but rather common sense.

Oregon law states: No law enforcement agency of the State of Oregon or of any political subdivision of the state shall use agency moneys, equipment or personnel for the purpose of detecting or apprehending persons whose only violation of law is that they are persons of foreign citizenship present in the United States in violation of federal immigration laws.

But contrary to much of the rhetoric used

to draw support for Measure 105, Oregon law already allows local law enforcement officers to communicate with immigration officers when an actual criminal offense has taken place. And local law enforcement officers can arrest anyone who is charged with a criminal violation of federal immigration laws, or subject to arrest for the crime under a warrant issued by federal magistrate.

The suggestion that our state's policy allows police and the public to harbor criminals, as proponents of Measure 105 put forth, is bogus. This isn't really about crime at all.

But that's what you're likely to hear Saturday when the rally comes to town. Hubris parading in place of the real issues.

We support the individuals and organizations that will be standing there to confront – if recent history bears out – the white supremacy, Nazi salutes and racist taunts expected at this Saturday. It's necessary we stand up against hatred.

But we also need to rise above merely cursing this darkness. Getting lost in the tactics of arguing only detracts from the issues at the root of the argument. It conflates what should be the real debate: the need for authentic immigration reform and justice, not this phony wrestling match. To this, we need to bring out the best Portland has to offer, not the worst.

Rather than letting them draw us into a bloody brawl – adding to their propaganda – perhaps it's time to bring out the trombones and tubas and give the noise a run for its money. Onward March Fourth! Viva le Elvis! Calling all Unpipers! Bring on the kazoo band, break out in a chorus of song, send in the clowns! That would be a fitting response to this low-rent sideshow.

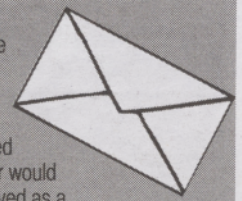
But most importantly, vote. Because Measure 105 is no joke. Its passage would clear the way for racial profiling, extracting local resources to enforce aggressive and controversial immigration policies, and unraveling a system put in place to ensure all of us equal rights under the law. And check with the elections office first to confirm your eligibility to vote. It can't be taken for granted.

Wherever you stand on immigration reform, and much needs to be done, this measure is the worst response. Make your stand.

EDITORIAL

Write in

If you would like to have something that you've written published in our pages, or would like to get involved as a member of our reporting staff, contact Executive Editor Joanne Zuhl at 503-228-5657, joanne@streetroots.org. We ask that all submissions include the author's name and contact information, if available.



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Demonstrators at Occupy ICE event in June.

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