

OPINION



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BEHIND THE NEWS

‘Those guys shouldn’t have been cops’

The message might not fit neatly on a protest sign, but Ron Louie, a former Astoria police chief, believes mandatory accreditation has the potential to make the biggest difference in law enforcement.

Accreditation could be the framework to help ensure reforms to discourage police misconduct actually happen.

Louie, who teaches criminal justice at Portland State University and Portland Community College, signed on to the Law Enforcement Action Partner-

ship’s recommendations to transform policing in the wake of the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police.

The ideas for Congress include a national public database on officer misconduct, requirements to collect data on police stops and the use

of force, a national standard for the use of deadly force and an end to qualified immunity that prevents police from being held legally accountable when they break the law.

“One of the biggest problems that we have is we don’t test for emotional intelligence. We don’t test for adversity quotients,” said Louie, a former hostage negotiator who wrote the book “Tactical Communication in Crisis Incidents.” “And the reason I’m telling you this, is if you take a look at all the instances of misuse of force, those guys shouldn’t have been cops. They lack that ability.”

“From Michael Brown (in Ferguson, Missouri) to Rodney King (in Los Angeles) to what we’re seeing now with George Floyd, if you really had to say what’s the biggest impact in the future, stop having those people wearing guns.”

Louie, a Chinese American who served in the U.S. Marine Corps, was the police chief in Astoria from 1987 until 1992 before a long stint as the Hillsboro police chief. He and his wife have homes in Hillsboro and Astoria.

In an interview, Louie talked about the movement to defund police, the protests across America and the pressure on police officers to respond to social issues.

Q: Some of the protesters nationally are calling on cities to defund police. Your thoughts?

A: It runs the gamut. It runs from the extreme — ‘We don’t want any police,’ ‘We want our neighbors to respond to calls’ — I mean, I’ve even heard that.

But I think the City Council president of Minneapolis — she was interviewed over the weekend and I listened to her — she backed off on that by saying, ‘We have the policing over here, but we need to take some of those resources and put them over here and invest in mental



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Ron Louie, a former Astoria police chief, teaches criminal justice at Portland State University and Portland Community College.

‘THE MORE THAT YOU SEE A MORE OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS, THE MORE YOU ARE GOING TO SURFACE QUESTIONABLE USE OF FORCE.’

Ron Louie | former Astoria police chief

health, invest in housing, in care. All the things over here.’

Unfortunately, defunding has become a political issue ... What’s happening is defunding has become a political catchphrase where they’re taking from the police and moving it somewhere else. Do you know what I mean? They shouldn’t be doing that.

Have we defunded police in Oregon? Yeah, we have. Guess where? Cornelius.

They had a lot of problems with the police department internally. City of Cornelius went out of (the police) business and just said, listen, we’re going to contract with Washington County, but these are the measures that we want to look at as you come into our town and police us.

So Cornelius, Oregon, is now run by Washington County. The department was defunded, so to speak. But it wasn’t because the money is still going down to Washington County.

Q: Are you surprised to see protests in predominantly white cities like Astoria with no recent history of police misconduct?

A: Someone that looks at strategic planning will look at what are triggers, what are benchmarks and what are watersheds.

We didn’t see that from Rodney King when I was a cop. We didn’t see that with Michael Brown. We didn’t even see that

with James Chasse, who was mentally ill (and killed by Portland law enforcement in 2006). But we did see the federal government, by the way, come in, look at Portland, and say, ‘You mistreat. You’re now in a consent decree.’ So we did see that.

But, now, I think that we see police officers — as well as nonimpacted communities, middle class, white middle class; not just white liberals and guilt liberals — you’ve got those, but you’ve got people over here now protesting, saying, ‘Oh, my God. We must make a change.’

So I’m surprised, but pleased, to see that.

Q: Over the past few years, we have had two police shootings in Seaside that were ruled justified. There were no significant calls by government or the public for better training or more accountability. The default position was to support the police. Do you think that’s going to change going forward in those types of situations?

A: I think, going forward, you’re going to see a different kind of scrutiny. It may not necessarily end in any change in support.

But here’s my point — and this is part of the recommendations for transforming police of which I have been proposing for years — is you will see the investigation taken over on a state level, not on

a local level.

And that’s one way to help build trust, by the way. This is fundamentally a trust issue, anyway ...

The more that you see a more objective analysis, the more you are going to surface questionable use of force. And when you do that, people may be upset. But they also, at the same time, when they’re going to be angry, that’s going to go up. But you know, believe it or not, what quietly goes up? Believe it or not, trust.

Quietly, trust goes up. No one talks about it.

Q: We have heard from law enforcement that they often feel pressure to respond to social issues beyond their control, from alcohol and drug abuse to mental health to homelessness to racism. How do we fix that?

A: You have smart resources allocated to those areas specifically — substance abuse, homelessness, domestic violence, those issues.

You have smart resources focusing on that, such that you don’t end up with 911 over here ...

Here’s the problem: Communities across America do not see harm reduction as their No. 1 goal. Some cities do, like in homelessness ...

The more a city takes on harm reduction to its community, the less we will see police engaged in where they shouldn’t be. The more harm reduction here also means reducing the overrepresentation of minority youth in the criminal justice system.

Q: Do you fear we are going to make the job of a police officer impossible?

A: Right now, it’s getting close to that ...

It’s going to be very, very difficult to do policing when everybody is on your shoulder. I retired in ’07. I got called back in 2013 to Hillsboro just to take a look at why the chief was moved out, why was the department demoralized ... It was a huge difference being a chief then, or a cop, because now on a daily basis I had people screaming for my emails and how I did.

The answer is, it’s going to be very, very difficult to be a police officer because so much is being scrutinized. We have 700,000 cops and we have a handful doing horrible things, and all the 700,000 are now impacted.

So it’s getting very, very difficult. So I think you will sadly see good people, also, leave the force or not want to join. And those are the people I want on the force. I want assertive people, not aggressive people. I want people, again, that have really good, mindfulness-based quotients.

It may be hard to get them.

Derrick DePledge is editor of The Astorian.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Menaced

Last week, I witnessed several peaceful protests menaced by a group of agitators, primarily comprised of Proud Boys and Patriot Prayer affiliates relocated from the Portland metro area, one of whom awaits trial for violent felony charges.

Clearly, these antagonists aim to bully, intimidate, suppress peaceable expression and sow chaos and violence — as they have elsewhere.

I’ve seen despicably cowardly, anti-social behavior tolerated in public spaces. While protesters wore face masks and tried to maintain distance, unmasked aggressors yelled in people’s faces, spewing germs, and used megaphones to agitate and silence protesters.

Grown men berated teenage girls and mothers carrying babies, encircling them while exposing firearms. They spouted sexist and racist slurs, labeled community members as terrorists and flashed white power gestures at children.

Haven’t our youth been through enough already, as they’ve sacrificed for the health of our community, particularly for our elders? In turn, will we stand up for the security of our children and other community members?

We need safe spaces to express disagreement without severing our basic bonds of community. We must unite and persevere together to comeback from this COVID-19 crisis.

Agents of social division seek to transplant their vitriol to Clatsop County when we are vulnerable. If we allow this hate group to gain traction, it will have terrible, lasting repercussions.

Regardless of our politics, we must unite around protecting our children and the essential fabric of our community, and completely reject the unwanted presence

of any group seeking to poison our home with hate.

TROY HENRI
Astoria

Words are powerful

Please don’t call the rioters, looters and thugs protesters. I’m looking at you, and you ... and especially you, news reporters.

Peaceful protest is an important element of our society. We need it.

Lumping the protesters together with the destructive thugs is counterproductive. You might as well call the protesters thugs.

TERRY JAMES ERICKSON
Astoria

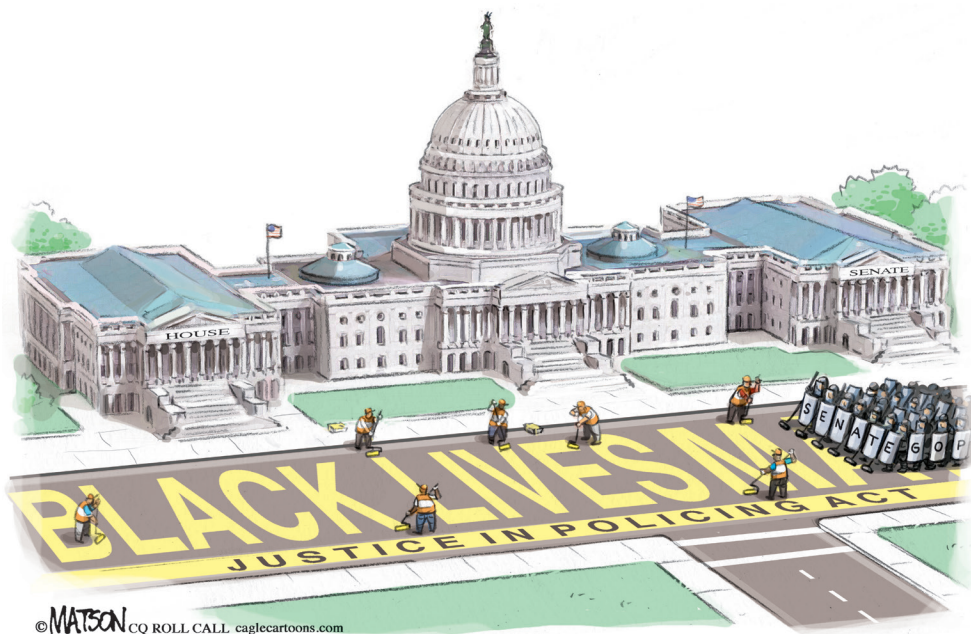
Domestic terrorists?

We just learned that our firebrand-in-chief, President Donald Trump, plans to label antifa (slang for anti-fascists) domestic terrorists. One hopes he walks back this ill-informed tweet, as he has many others.

He also labeled “both sides” of earlier violent protests as “fine people” — when did that change? How can any reasonable American support fascism?

Fascists were the target of the Greatest Generation in World War II. Hundreds of thousands of American lives were lost in that struggle. We find it notable that the current cabal of fascists cynically waited for the Greatest Generation to pass away before exposing their hateful tactics and racist rhetoric.

We also find it notable that today’s American leaders vilify current protesters across the nation the same way they cursed black ball players peacefully protesting



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police brutality by taking a knee on live TV before sports events.

We propose that the people of the U.S. declare the Republican Party anti-American for their opposition to universal health care, civil rights, immigrants, care for the unemployed and seniors and child care, and blind faith in corporate largesse saving us all.

The current executive branch could easily be branded as domestic terrorists, using and hiding behind Immigration and Customs Enforcement and a compromised Justice Department and stacked judiciary.

We speak for our family, many friends and many neighbors.

R.D. SMITH
Gearhart

Act of insurrection

Concerning President Donald Trump’s threat to use military action against citizens exercising their constitutionally protected right to protest, it appears the

majority response by the country includes a chorus of Bronx cheers, and a collective middle-finger salute.

Is America becoming great again?

DONNA LEE ROLLINS
Astoria

Courage and leadership

Interesting photo in The Astorian on June 6 of a diverse group of mostly young people protesting against racial injustice in our country. They were being harassed and shouted at by large, white, male thugs.

I have never been more proud of the young people of our community, who are the future of our country. The Pledge of Allegiance states, “with liberty and justice for all.” Thank you, young people, for your courage and leadership.

As someone recently said, “When the power of love overtakes the love of power, then we will have change!”

TED MESSING
Astoria