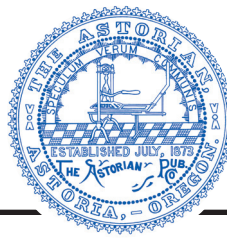


OPINION

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the Astorian

Founded in 1873

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OUR VIEW

We should demand that they stop

George Floyd's death at the hands of Minneapolis police in May forced all of us to examine our attitudes toward institutional racism.

Protests around the country, from big cities like Portland to small towns like Astoria, are a potential turning point. White people who live in communities with very few Black, Hispanic or other people of color are confronting issues that for generations have been convenient to ignore.

One of the most difficult is that the police act on our behalf, using force derived from the governments we elect.

We have been fortunate on the North Coast that protests have been mostly peaceful.

In Portland, protests over the past several weeks have often spiraled into violence. Scenes of vandalism and looting, along with police overreach in attacking journalists and legal observers, have been shared across the United States.

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives people the right to peaceably assemble, but in nightly clashes downtown near the Multnomah County Justice Center and the Mark O. Hatfield U.S. Courthouse, demonstrators and police have struggled to find the line between protest and riot.

We trust Portland — the people who live there, the police, the mayor and other city leaders — can find that line.

Unfortunately, the Trump administration's misguided decision to deploy militarized federal agents has



Dave Killen/The Oregonian

Police respond to protesters during a demonstration in Portland on Friday night.

dragged the entire country into the streets of Portland.

Last week, a federal agent — acting on our behalf, using force derived from the government we elected — fired a less-lethal round at a protester's head, causing critical injuries. Oregon Public Broadcasting and other news media have reported that federal agents are patrolling in unmarked vans, snatching protesters who do not appear to be immediate threats to federal property.

The New York Times reported that federal agents on the ground in Portland were not specifically trained in riot control or mass demonstrations.

Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum filed a federal lawsuit to try to prevent federal agents from detaining protesters in Portland without identifying themselves or without probable cause or warrants. The lawsuit names the U.S. Department

of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the U.S. Marshals Service and the Federal Protective Service.

The lawsuit alleges their tactics violate the First Amendment right to peacefully gather, the Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable seizures and the Fifth Amendment right to due process.

"Citizens who are reasonably afraid of being picked up and shoved into unmarked vans — possibly by federal officers, possibly by individuals opposed to the protests — will feel compelled to stay away, for their own personal safety, and will therefore be unable to express themselves in the way that they have the right to do," the lawsuit states.

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler and Gov. Kate Brown have made it clear the federal agents are not welcome. The federal elected officials who represent us — U.S. Sen. Ron

Wyden, U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley and U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici — demanded the Trump administration remove the forces.

Wyden, in an op-ed for NBC News, faulted President Donald Trump. "Not content with simply dropping squads of federal agents into my hometown to clash with peaceful protesters, as he first did in early July after signing an executive order to supposedly protect monuments from protesters, Trump and his acting secretary of Homeland Security, Chad Wolf, have now unleashed these agents like an occupying army — complete with fatigues, military-style equipment and tactics that are utterly unacceptable in an American city.

"These invaders are mounting this assault against my city on the flimsiest of justifications: While Acting Secretary Wolf rants about law and order, most of the incidents of 'violent anarchists' he cites are actually graffiti, or low-level vandalism."

Portland was chosen as a stage for the Trump administration to make a political statement in an election year. But it would be a mistake to view what has been happening on the streets only through a partisan political lens.

Just like nearly everyone familiar with Floyd's death saw the injustice, anyone looking at what federal agents have done in Portland should see the assault on our civil liberties.

They are acting on our behalf, using force derived from the government we elected. We should all demand that they stop.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Blindness

Two recent stories demonstrate to me, and perhaps many others, that The Astorian suffers from gender bias. The June 30 article, "PAC lands on its feet," highlighted that bias for me.

It took 26 inches of text before identifying the woman who stepped forward to purchase the Performing Arts Center from Clatsop Community College, assuring the PAC remains an iconic asset in Astoria. That woman and community leader is Constance Waisanen.

Further, it took 38 inches of text before announcing that the PAC was renamed in honor of another local leader, Charlene Larsen. I hope readers hung in there to learn of the gifts of these movers and influencers in Astoria's business and cultural scene.

I believe that if a man had done for the community what Constance Waisanen did, his name would have been in the opening paragraph. Further, if an historic and significant community treasure like the PAC had been named after a local man, his name would have been in the opening paragraph. It took a combined 64 inches of text to name Constance Waisanen and Charlene Larsen.

Exactly one week later, a front-page article on the marvelous fireworks display identified the donor in the first two words of the article. I am not disparaging the gracious act of this man. I am simply deeply disappointed in The Astorian's blindness toward its own journalistic gender bias.

The power of your messaging, the influence on our youth, historians and the general public is being greatly diminished because of the gender bias shown in your reporting.

KAREN HAINES
Astoria

Total failure

I wondered how President Donald Trump planned to cover his disastrous handling of the coronavirus in America when the election came around. Well, while it is beyond disgusting — he apparently plans to make it all Dr. Anthony Fauci's fault.

Dr. Fauci is an American physician and immunologist. He has served as the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases since 1984. I know you know that, but suddenly he is being accused of getting everything wrong.

People seemed to forget who he is, and how he has been guiding us along with the truth, while Trump and his administration have tried to convince the public that every-

thing was fine, and we do not need masks, and we can open up businesses and schools.

The administration is trying to confuse the public by quoting Dr. Fauci, but blurring the time it was actually said, so it sounds as if he made mistakes.

Trump, who has used the Defense Production Act in other instances, has mostly refused to use it in the pandemic, so we continue to have inadequate testing and serious lack of protective equipment for our health care workers. He seems incapable of comprehending the problem, or just doesn't care.

Trump has totally failed at leading this nation during this crucial time, and I hope the voters will show him what they think of his performance come November.

JEAN HOOGE
Astoria

Pride in Astoria

The weather has become so lovely and warm, and I am seeing more neighbors and visitors walking through the neighborhood. Some ask directions. Some see me with my dog, and realizing I'm a resident, ask if I know any of the history of a certain home.

We all admire the residences and gardens. But our city sidewalks leave much to be desired. People walking to the Cathedral Tree trailhead will find no sidewalk east of 24th Street on Irving Avenue. There is not even a safe shoulder to walk on. People speed on this Marine Drive bypass, and the corners and hills make visibility difficult.

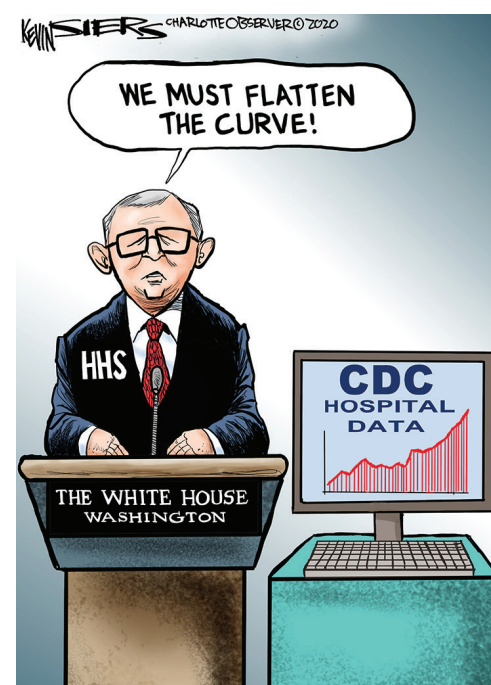
In other areas a sidewalk is present, but very uneven, with the occasional pothole or completely overgrown with grasses. Some sidewalks are in good shape, but obstructed by shrubs and hedges, making passage challenging.

I don't know anyone comfortable with walking in the street on Eighth Street. Other people seem to believe the sidewalk is a good place to have their workshop, with lumber and tools forcing passersby onto lawns or into the streets.

The sidewalks are a public right of way and, as such, should be passable. Property owners are responsible for the care and upkeep of the sidewalks bordering their property.

We are able to admire the pride of ownership when looking at our historic homes and gardens. It's so sad the pride doesn't extend to the walkways and the safety of the admirers.

MARCIA FENSKE
Astoria



Angered

I am angered, but unfortunately not surprised, over the Warrenton Police Department's decision to clear Officer Robert Wirt of any wrongdoing and allow him to return to work.

I'm concerned for the young man who said he heard him callously mocking George Floyd's killing, was brave enough to report it, and is now receiving death threats and being painted as a liar.

I'm no detective, but it seems clear to me that in a case of one person's word against another's, you would consider who has the vested interest in lying. Who has more to gain from being dishonest about this? A police officer whose job is on the line, and his friends at his local bar; or a witness who has absolutely no reason for, or benefit from, making the story up?

I realize that a video has been offered up as evidence of Wirt's innocence, but if it doesn't have audio, it is useless in determining what he did or didn't say. This is just another example of what I'm calling performative policing — appearing to care about protecting and serving all citizens, while in actuality doing next to nothing for many of them.

We saw it in the violent attack on peaceful protesters in Astoria last month that the officer who was standing right beside it "didn't see," and in the Astoria Police Department's apparent lack of action since then in holding the offenders accountable.

If the police want our trust, I suggest they start the process by being more transparent and trustworthy.

TERESA BARNES
Astoria



Patriotic

In 1999, Oregon became the first state to fully implement vote by mail. I was apprehensive because I enjoyed going to my polling place, waiting in line five minutes and voting.

Presently Washington, Colorado, Utah and Hawaii also vote by mail. Today, in many states, waiting in line to vote can take hours and hours.

Is vote by mail open for fraud? No system is perfect, but if you research Oregon's safeguards that protect its election integrity, they are impressive. Every county in Oregon has to submit its election security plan annually to the secretary of state. That means better safeguards, if approved, can be implemented yearly.

In Clatsop County, vote by mail costs less, is free of electronic hacking and leaves a full audit trail. So, we: Receive our ballots; mark our ballots; mail our ballots. Take that, coronavirus. What's not to like about a secure, convenient method of voting?

Research shows vote by mail raises turnout approximately 10%. At 50% voter turnout in Oregon, that equals about 170,291 more votes. I don't know about your state, but Oregon is about 170,291 votes closer to reflecting the true will of Oregonians. Really? Yup.

However people legally vote, it's patriotic. If you live in a state that doesn't vote by mail, you might consider convincing your legislators and request it. There's probably a few states where it won't be hot, cold, raining or snowing during elections. Maybe.

Oregonians may have webbed feet, but we don't stand in the rain to vote.

CARL DOMINEY
Astoria