

OPINION

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Derrick Foxworth: Start with Candor

The following is an editorial of the Portland Observer:

On Saturday, leaders of the Albina Ministerial Alliance spoke plainly about problems they uncovered in the shooting death of Kendra James, the unarmed African-American woman killed by police in a traffic stop last May.

The African-American ministers and a panel of citizens did not mince words in finding fault with police in James' death and the official investigations that followed, including the review by the Multnomah County District Attorney.

From the start, it seems the number one objective of police has been to protect their own and discredit James.

Bishop A.A. Wells, who chaired AMA's citizen-led investigation of the shooting, said police officers have an "us vs. them" mentality that builds distrust.

Our hope is that incoming Police Chief Derrick Foxworth can help change that attitude and speak with candor to the problems in the ranks.

Scott McCollister, the rookie officer who shot James was reprimanded for putting himself in the position of having to draw his service pistol. But it took a public records request to City Hall to get details behind the suspension made public.

Foxworth can do better. He has met with the AMA and pledged to meet again in the coming days to discuss bureau changes.

African American leaders are calling for better officer training to de-escalate tense situations and asking for new restrictions on the use of deadly force.

One suggestion is to give rookie cops extended training with a mentor officer for one year after beginning active duty. Another is to end to the practice of police shooting into moving vehicles unless officers are under fire.

It's a sad fact that most of Portland's police officers don't live in the city, let alone the neighborhoods they patrol. The bureau and law enforcement community can do more to connect these officers with the multi-ethnic populations they serve.

Welcome Police Chief Foxworth

Change needed to strengthen police accountability

BY VERA KATZ, MAYOR OF PORTLAND

When I made the announcement in July that I would not seek a fourth term as Mayor, I said at that time that one of my priorities for the remainder of my administration would be to strengthen the police bureau organization.

It was very clear to me that I had to do three things before the end of next year: Recommit the bureau to community policing. Review the bureau's administrative, investigative, discipline and training policies, and make changes where appropriate and make them now. And rebuild the trust between the bureau, its officers and the community.

Though our crime rate has dropped, issues related to law enforcement over the last few years have dramatically polarized the city.

As mayor, I must do whatever I can to focus discussion on what we do and how we do it.

I have named Assistant Chief Derrick Foxworth to take the helm of the Police Bureau and become its next Chief of Police. Chief Foxworth was born here, went to school here and his home is Portland and the Portland Police Bureau.

Chief Foxworth joined the bureau right after graduating from the University of Portland 22 years ago. He served as a street officer, as a Gang Enforcement Team member and as a Drug and Vice Officer, as Chief Tom Potter's Public Information Officer, Northeast Precinct Commander, and last year began serving as Assistant Chief.

Chief Foxworth is respected and highly regarded in the community and within the police organization. He is a focused individual who is very hands on and is very committed to community policing.

I have worked with Chief Foxworth over these many years and feel strongly that he is the right

person for this time in the bureau's history.

On Thursday, the City Council heard a report from the Police Action Resource Center that reviewed police shootings and in-custody deaths. The PARC Report was initiated by the City and is an important piece of our effort to maintain accountability in the Portland Police Bureau. The recommendations identified in the report will enable the bureau to continue improving its administrative practices and procedures following officer-involved shootings.

I am committed to ensuring that the issues identified in the report will be addressed, and in fact the bureau has already implemented 28 of the recommendations. Working with the Chief, we will prioritize the remainder of the recommendations and start immediately on the ones that are the utmost critical in nature.

My hope is that even in the next couple of months we can bring many of the recommendations back for implementation.

To the Editor: Time to Rebuild Schools

Oregon schools narrowly escaped a crippling financial blow this legislative session. Time to breathe a sigh of relief and go back to business as usual? Definitely not.

Now's the time to rebuild, not just Oregon's education system, but also the pride and involvement Oregonians have traditionally had in their school system - prior to Doonesbury, shorter school years, and uncertain funding. It's time to look beyond how budgets, government and teachers are singularly impacting the education process and figure out how best to

help our kids move forward.

Better education is not only a pocketbook issue - our children thrive and achieve when they are supported by an engaged and caring community. When individuals get involved, the results are real and powerful. Through programs such as SMART (Start Making A Reader Today), where volunteers give an hour each week to work with children in one-on-one reading sessions, success speaks for itself. Independent research shows that SMART students develop key reading skills significantly faster than their peers and maintain these

gains even after leaving SMART.

Volunteering for programs like SMART doesn't involve a major time commitment, special skills or financial obligations. But dedicating just one hour each week to connect personally with children and help our schools is priceless. It's not only schools and kids that benefit. The pride that comes from working to make a positive difference builds hope and strength - something Oregon desperately needs now as we look to the future.

Mary Jubitz, Oregon Children's Foundation

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