

OPINION

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Inquest Jury: Police Reforms Needed

Portland Bureau can do better at training and minority recruitment

Editor's note: The following statement is from the inquest jury which heard three days of public testimony in the March 28 police shooting death of James Jahar Perez, an unarmed African-American motorist:

As members of a randomly selected jury, we differ in gender, ethnicity and age. After hearing nearly 40 witnesses under oath, we write as one to state our observations about the death of James Jahar Perez.

We do express our deepest sympathy to both the Perez family and to the two police officers involved in this tragedy. The Perez family lost a loved one and has many

unanswered questions. The officers did not come to their shift that night expecting this would happen. Now they must deal with psychological problems that can drive officers in their situation from the profession they intended to make a lifelong career. We hope the City of Portland will ensure that the Perez family and the officers receive any help they may need to withstand the emotional toll they have suffered.

As to public policy, we realize we have no special expertise for drawing conclusions. Nevertheless, although our verdict was limited to four narrow questions and based upon the facts presented to us, we

wanted to offer some broader thoughts and observations in the hope that this regrettable incident may result in positive change.

It seems to us, from the detailed information we received about the events that led to Mr. Perez's death

involvement.

While again noting our lack of specialized knowledge, we can only wonder what the end result would have been if tactics and training called for the officers to back off and radio for support when Mr.

police officers' ability to articulate racially neutral reasons for traffic stops like this one. We think the officers in this case suspected that illegal drug activity was afoot. This suspicion was ultimately confirmed. Yet, they seemed surprisingly unable to directly state that suspicion.

There is an understandable tension between a community's need for aggressive law enforcement - using technical traffic violations as a tool when necessary to ferret out suspected criminal activity - and the need for law-abiding members of a community to know they are not being targeted for improper reasons. We understand from you, Chief Foxworth, that the Portland Police Bureau has a process to examine these kinds of traffic stops for racial neutrality. We further understand there are active recruitment measures to draw officers from a full spectrum of Portland citizens. We urge that these efforts and the results be shared with the public. We also urge that consideration be given to having an independently

selected police commissioner.

We learned a great deal about the risk police officers face and the training these men and women receive. The public at large should be similarly informed so that citizens may better understand the dynamics of policing a community made up of all kinds of people.

We encourage the Portland Police Bureau to follow up with experts, such as the ones we heard, to test the effects of cultural differences on the reactions of both police officers and suspects in real life situations to determine if other kinds of training are necessary. We also endorse Chief Foxworth's planned expansion of taser availability and training.

In closing, we have learned much from our service on the inquest jury. We hope the Portland Police Bureau and the community will benefit as we have.

Shonnet Brand; Donna Byrd; Samuel Hand; Sarah Jensen; Arsenio Medrano; Marcelino Perez Jr.

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and from the general knowledge we have of the circumstances of the shooting of Ms. Kendra James last year, that the Portland Police Bureau needs to make a fundamental re-examination of its tactics and training for officers in traffic stops of uncooperative motorists - particularly those suspected of drug

Perez chose to clearly affirm his lack of cooperation by putting up his tinted window. While not wishing to engage in second-guessing, we firmly feel the need for the best minds to re-examine existing policy and the implementation of policy through training.

We were concerned about the

'We Will Build Public Trust'

Editor's note: The following statement is from Portland Police Chief Derrick Foxworth in response to issues raised in the letter by jurors in the James Jahar Perez inquest:

I want to thank the inquest jurors for issuing this letter and for their commitment to the inquest process. They are community members who served on the first inquest in 20 years and I'm sure it was a very

stressful and somewhat overwhelming experience for them. This letter contained some observations that also represent some common community concerns.



or above national standards.

There is a common tendency to intertwine racial profiling and pre-text stops. These are two separate subject matters. Pre-text stops are when an officer makes a lawful stop of a person in order to investigate a potential crime unrelated to the stop. This is a valuable tool for officers, which is used to respond to criminal activity or behavior in order to reduce crime and improve neigh-

We acknowledge that there have been reported cases of racial profiling that have occurred in some police agencies in this country.

I cannot say that out of the hundreds of thousands of contacts Portland Police Officers make every year, that racial profiling has never occurred in Portland. However, racial profiling is not, and will not, be tolerated in the Portland Police Bureau. If anyone feels they have been the subject of racial pro-

The Portland Police Bureau does not train, teach, endorse, support or condone any type of racial profiling.

— Portland Police Chief Derrick Foxworth

In regards to training, the Portland Police Bureau has always, and will continue to constantly develop and review its training, because we want to offer the best training to Portland Police Officers possible. As I said in the inquest, the Police Bureau has had considerable community input into our current policies and training, and now we will look at the best practices on a national level to ensure we are aligned

borhood livability.

In regards to racial profiling, I want to emphasize the definition: It is the use of race as the sole basis for justifying traffic stops or other police action. The Portland Police Bureau does not train, teach, endorse, support or condone any type of racial profiling. This is a practice that contradicts our organizational values and community policing philosophy.

filing, then I urge them to come forward to the Independent Police Review Division with their complaints.

The Police Bureau will continue to look for ways to better communicate and educate the public in why we do what we do. In doing so, this will create and enhance the public's understanding and trust in their police.

Jurors' Concerns are Helpful

Editor's Note: The following statement is Mayor Vera Katz's answer to the concerns of jurors in the James Jahar Perez inquest:

Thank you for your thoughtful letter of May 5, regarding your impressions and recommendations developed as a result of your service in the public inquest regarding the death of James Jahar Perez. You certainly did not have to take this additional step after your jury duties were discharged. Your desire to be part of a constructive dialogue around the issues raised exhibits a high degree of civic responsibility.

As you note in your letter, some of your suggestions are, of course, already being considered. We review on an ongoing basis how our already stringent police

training can be improved. The City is committed to recruiting officers from all segments of our community and we have reviewed

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our commitment to a community policing approach that emphasizes the importance of personal relationships between officers

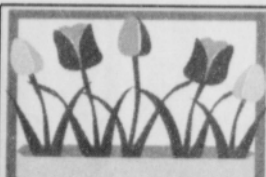
and the community they patrol.

Clearly, the shooting deaths of Kendra James and James Jahar Perez have raised questions that need to be addressed. Chief Foxworth and I welcome those questions and we welcome the type of thoughtful recommendations you have developed.

Your comments regarding the scars left by this tragic incident reflect how seriously you undertook your duties. Thank you for your valuable service.

The inquest, for all its limitations, greatly informed our community, not only about the case at hand, but also regarding such issues as police training and policy. It was very helpful and has established a useful precedent.

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Humboldt Elementary

Tue, Thu, 6-7pm, Keller

Low Impact Aerobics

Daniel's Memorial Church

Tue, 7:15-8:15pm, Granville

Water Aerobics (Contact AAHC)

Salvation Army

Matt Dishman

African Dance

Matt Dishman

Sat, 10-11am, Addo

Body Conditioning

Wild Oats Market

Sat, 9:30-10:30am, Nickerson

Pilates

Matt Dishman

Mon, 12:15-1:15pm, Jenkins

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(Class courtesy of Matt Dishman)

Matt Dishman

Tue, Thu, 7-8am, Lois

Walking Group

Peninsula Park

Sat, 12:30pm, Woods

Weight Mgmt./Conditioning

U. of Portland Indoor Track

Tue, Thu, 9-10am, Hasan

Yoga

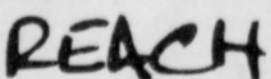
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Tue, Thu, 7:30-8:30pm, O'Rourke

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