

# OPINION

## Letters to the Editor

### Change Police Culture

The City of Roses has not been so rosy when it comes to its African American citizens and police relations.

During the past five years several African Americans have been shot by Portland police officers including three unarmed black citizens who were fatally wounded.

Unfortunately, this trend tends to be a nationwide epidemic!

The state of Oregon has an African American population of roughly 2 percent; 8 percent in the city of Portland. However, police shootings of African American citizens and other citizens of color occur more than 5 times that of white citizens whose population in the state of Oregon of Oregon is over 80 percent.

Is this a coincidence? Is it an accident? Or is it indifference when it comes to the well being of citizens of color? Particularly African American citizens.

Recently, 25-year-old Aaron Campbell was shot in the back by a Portland police officer while attempting to surrender. Campbell's hands were locked behind his head and he reportedly was walking backward complying with police com-

mands. However, something went terribly wrong and Aaron Campbell was shot dead. He was unarmed!

Did the color of his skin play a significant role in the actions of a white police officer? Was there a devaluation of life because Mr. Campbell was black? Maybe there was just a communication breakdown. However, the aforementioned questions must be asked again!

The civil rights of African American citizens have been breached in this country and the city of Portland for decades. Time is way over due for the citizens of Portland to speak honestly to the injustices to people of color by the power structure of this city.

We need honest, harsh and "real" communication to affect cultural change in old police policies and practices. We need police officers trained in mental health as well as cultural diversity. And the city must make a serious effort to recruit and retain African Americans and other people of color on a "new" police force.

For Aaron Campbell and those who perished before him, it's time to make the necessary police bureau changes concrete and substantial!

**Jimi Johnson**  
Northeast Portland

### Dysfunctional Police Bureau

It's ironic that Portland's high definition assaults, killings and immorality emanate from our own police department.

The former chief of police had to be forced out of office by a sensational sex scandal involving a police subordinate.

A citizen who was assaulted trying to film a police action was awarded \$50,000 for being attacked by a police officer. A slight 21-year-old female Portland Community College student was pummeled by an officer for walking in the middle of a deserted street.

Kendra James, James Jahar Perez, James Chasse and most recently Aaron Campbell, all unarmed citizens of this city, have died at the hands of the Portland Police Bureau.

It is also ironic that the City Council has failed to rein in an out-of-control police force and police union, despite two major critical reports by the Los Angeles-based Police Assessment Review Commission (in 2003 and 2005).

Jesse Jackson, the national political activist had to be called in by a desperate citizenry demanding a radical change in the philosophy and practice of our tax paid police force.

### Anti Black Bias

I challenge an Oregon letter writer's assertion that "the majority of citizens of this country are not racists," and his "doubt the police officer was concerned about the man's color when he shot him in the back."

I must remind people that a majority of those killed by Portland police in recent years have been black, even though they make up less than 8 percent of our residents.

Public opinion surveys show that 6 in 10 whites,

Some major reforms should include:

1. A change in state law denying the authority to kill based on fear or imagination.
2. Appointment of civilians (preferably social-psychologists), instead of police officers to be to chiefs of police.
3. Screen out sadistic, racist and emotionally unstable police applicants.
4. Require all police officers to be residents of this city.

The benefits of these reforms would include:

- a. The residential presence of 400 or more police officers and their patrol cars would provide a significant deterrent to criminal activity.
- b. The police officer ranks would tend to foster a more ethnically diverse membership.
- c. More resident police officers would be paying property taxes and help support our local economy.

The City Attorney's office told me that, contrary to Commissioner Dan Saltzman's denial, these positive changes that can be accomplished simply by passing a city ordinance.

It's time for the City Council to stop dallying and start taking control of the dysfunctional Portland Police Bureau from the president of the Portland Police union.

**Charles E. Long**  
Northeast Portland

by their own admission, believe at least one negative racial stereotype about blacks. According to the National Opinion Research Center, a majority of whites believe blacks are lazier, more prone to violence and generally less intelligent. Psychological tests, like the Implicit Association Tests, show that 90 percent of whites harbor anti-black bias, whether conscious or subconscious.

Please, let's not pretend that police racial profiling is "firmly behind us."

**Jamie Partridge**  
Northeast Portland

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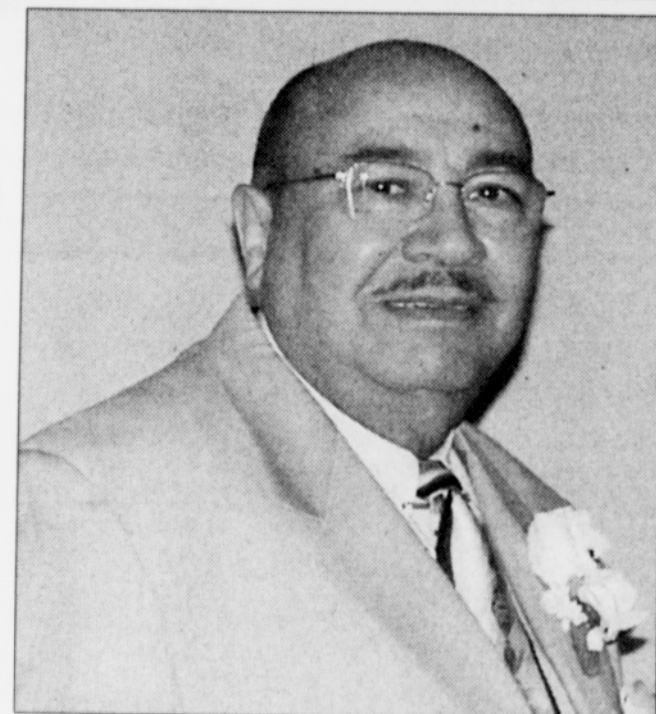
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**Portland Public Schools**

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**Dr. Raymon H. Edwards, Sr.**

*For President*

GENERAL BAPTIST CONVENTION OF THE NORTHWEST

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Hosted by the True Vine Baptist Church  
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