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Pressure Mounts for Police Reforms

Monday sees rowdy protests and second visit from Rev. Jesse Jackson

BY JAKE THOMAS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Activists mounted rowdy protests and the Rev. Jesse Jackson returned to Portland Monday after another shooting death at the hands of Portland police.

Jack Dale Collins, a 58-year-old white transient, died March 22 in a confrontation with a police officer at Hoyt Arboretum in southwest Portland. The officer encountered Collins after he emerged from a bathroom covered in blood and wielding what police described as a "razor knife." According to the officer's account, Collins continued to advance toward him, ignoring his commands to drop the knife.

The incident followed February's death of Aaron Campbell, a distraught and unarmed African-American man who was shot by the police after a tense standoff in outer northeast Portland.

The most recent shooting has triggered protests tinged with some violence. During a demonstration last week in southeast Portland, a group of about 50 mostly white activists marched to a police training building on Burnside Street and a protestor hurled a bike at a police officer, and is now facing some hefty charges.

On Monday, a larger protest of again, mostly white protestors erupted downtown. The demonstration, which lasted several hours, ended with a window smashed at Bank of America branch and eight people charged with crimes including Disorderly Conduct, Criminal Mischief and Riot; and three officers injured.

Earlier in the day, Rev. Jesse Jackson, a national civil rights leader, was meeting with local leaders and community members for the second time in the last few weeks confronting police accountability issues.

"We want them to have to stop the excessive use of force, but also we want a fair share of police: men, women, black, white, and brown to represent the city,"

he told KATU news.

Jackson also discussed setting up a Portland office for his PUSH/Rainbow Coalition as part of an effort to establish a greater presence in the Pacific Northwest.

He said that the more recent shooting reflects a larger trend with the police, both nationally and locally, that can be remedied

A vote on the ordinance was delayed last week over objections by Commissioner Amanda Fritz that Police Chief Rosie Sizer should have an opportunity to weigh in on it, as well as the city's Human Rights Commission's Police Community Relations Committee.

During the meeting, several police officers expressed concern about the ordinance, finding it unnecessary and unsettling that it was introduced at such a tense



National civil rights leader, Rev. Jesse Jackson.

by better training and efforts to ensure that law enforcement is more representative of the community it serves.

He noted that the poverty and lack of opportunity faced by many black citizens leads to confrontations with the police, some of which end in tragedy.

During his previous visit, Feb. 16, Jackson met with the mayor and police commissioner, and called the shooting of Campbell an "execution."

City Commissioner Randy Leonard has since introduced an ordinance that would give the Independent Police Review Division a broader scope in investigating allegations of police misconduct and give it a greater role in imposing discipline of officers.

Sgt. Anthony Passadore said that he understood that there were people in Portland who felt they were unduly the object of suspicion.

"Well, I'd like to submit to you that I belong to one of those communities," he said.

Assistant Chief Brian Martinek expressed concern that the ordinance would undermine the independence of the review division and would only encumber the Police Bureau.

Kathleen Saadat, a member of the committee, said what was happening was a clash of cultures between the Police Bureau and the citizenry.

"Your culture has a gun on its hip. I don't have one. And that makes a big difference when we try to talk," she said.