

PSU Police

continued **▲** from front

program.

He said the proposal has escalated, "from a poor idea into the outrageous realm."

"The national trend is that people of color and those from the Middle East, and many others, who know they are marginalized and are profiled by police, are pushing back and they are finding more allies," he said.

Hastings said authorities across the county are finding that what's needed for public safety is training for police to learn de-escalation, how to handle mental health issues without using lethal force, and how to learn some cultural respect and sensitivity.

"The police who are armed tend to rely on their intimidation; police who are unarmed learn these other skills more often and do far less damage," he said.

Student groups voicing their opposition also say that PSU needs to change how it thinks about safety rather than increasing police power on campus.

"We should focus on restorative justice," said Deyalo Bennette, a member of PSU's Black Student Union, who calls for the university to work more with social workers, doctors and mediators engaging in conflict resolution.

Bennette says adding a police force would be a step back to a pipeline-to-prison system that does not fix the root cause of social ills.

"Shooting someone definitely does not fix the root cause," he said.

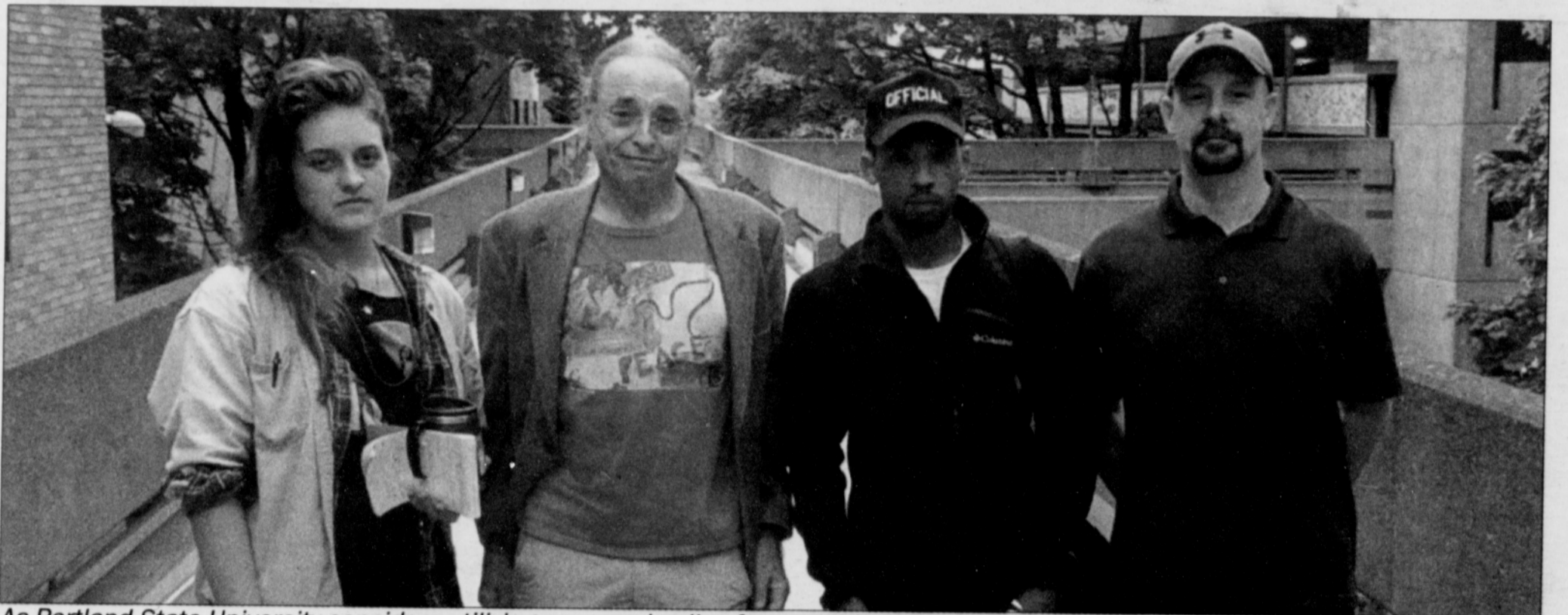
While the task force recommends expanding the authority of campus safety officers, Bennette contends that additional police power will not make students feel safer.

"The ability to make arrests... for people of color, that's frightening," he said, adding that he knows several students of color who have had negative interactions with campus safety officers and worry about worse interactions with a deputized police force.

Leona Kindermann, a member of the PSU Student Union, echoed the importance of a shift in thinking about campus safety. "It's an attitude of everyone being involved in security, not this 'someone's coming to save us' idea," she said.

Kindermann envisions an undergraduate class that teaches students conflict resolution tactics, which students could then employ as part of campus security. PSU's existing Conflict Resolution program is well-known for being an example for other universities.

"On the West Coast, when people think about conflict resolution, they think about PSU," said Adam Vogal, a member of PSU's Students United for Nonviolence group. The university has an opportunity to act as an example of how alternative security measures can function on a college



As Portland State University considers utilizing an armed police force, students and other civil rights activists are raising concerns.

campus, he said.

Vogal and Hastings are both involved with the Portland Peace Team, a volunteer group that "provides nonviolent nonpartisan conflict transformation services for the public," according to its Facebook page.

The group often works at local protests and rallies, mediating potential conflicts as an alternative to police intervention. While the group does not have a direct relationship with PSU, something similar could form on campus.

"[Nonviolent security] can be done. We see it happen all the time with the Peace Team," said Vogal.

While it is possible that campus officers could become deputized without being armed, it is unlikely the school will go that route. That would do little to address some of the very issues that are bringing on this proposal, such as an active shooter situation or other violent crimes, said Gallagher. But if the board approves the proposal for sworn campus police, not all officers would be armed.

"The plan would be to have some deputized, some a continuation of the current public safety office, and therefore not deputized," said Gallagher. This would allow the campus police to send unarmed, non-deputized officers to assist with safety escorts, and other lower-risk services.

Still, for Hastings and the other student leaders, an expansion of police power on campus is a move in the wrong direction.

"The Portland Police have a very poor record of beating mentally ill people to death, of shooting unarmed people of color, and receiving no indictments and paid vacation," said Hastings. "Now they want to bring this out to our campus?"

The board of trustees' Special Committee on Campus Public Safety will meet this coming Monday, Oct. 27, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. in the Willamette Room at University Place Hotel, located at 310 S.W. Lincoln St. The committee will discuss the task force's recommendations. The meeting is open to the public, and there will be an opportunity for public comment.

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