

Behind the Scenes of Don't Shoot PDX

Activists join forces in fight for change

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The civil rights movement is at the forefront of the national conscience with the recent release of the movie Selma, not to mention the never ending stream of protests for police reforms over the deaths of unarmed people of color at the hands of law enforcement.

In Portland, a group of activists going by the name of Don't Shoot PDX has emerged as one of the leading voices in the cause. After attending one of their recent meetings, I have a better understanding of how far too many Americans get it wrong by looking at the struggle for justice from the Hollywood perspective. We have not come as far as we should have from the days of Selma.

Don't Shoot PDX is more than a group of people who are concerned about police brutality, poverty and the root causes of both and how they disproportionately affect the black community. Don't Shoot PDX is a movement that brings people of all colors, and from different community organizations, together to fight for change in the city of Portland



'Don't Shoot PDX' activist Teresa Raifford (center) and Malcolm Chaddock of Veterans for Peace (right) meet with other activists emerging in the fight for justice to end racial profiling and the shootings of unarmed black people by law enforcement.

While they are not a legal entity, discussions have taken place about making the organization into a legal entity, as a measure to protect its members, affiliates and allies. The group meets once a week to discuss issues plaguing Portland. The group also takes direct action and organizes marches and discussions

that put our elected officials in a position to acknowledge harsh realities.

Even the highest ranking elected officials are being held accountable. When U. S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., held a town hall meeting on Jan. 3 at Portland Community College's Southeast Campus, the group mobilized to confront him

and force him to have a dialogue.

Unpredictable turns are a hallmark of the group's activity.

In another protest, the activists put their numbers behind a group supporting a \$15 minimum wage as a living wage. "15 Now PDX" was scheduled to protest at the McDonalds near Portland State University but protested at a nearby Subway instead. This unpredictable movement can confound authorities that might be trying to monitor the group's movements in an attempt to preempt them.

Don't Shoot PDX eventually made its way to the original target, where another activist group which goes by the name "PDX Bat Signal" was waiting to shine its beacon onto the building across the street.

The PDX Bat Signal is run by a local anonymous individual who has been described as a fairy godfather to Don't Shoot PDX by Teresa Raifford, one of the black community leaders helping the Don't Shoot PDX cause.

The same individual also provided the public address horn that Rev. Jessie Jackson utilized when he spoke at one of their rallies, and has picketed with displays of "Don't Shoot PDX" as well as

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