

# Solidarity with Charleston

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Theologian and civil rights activist Rev. Osagyefo Sekou, who is coming to Portland this Monday to speak about the dangers of police violence and racial tensions throughout the United States wrote to his social media followers on Thursday, "Dear God: They kill us in your house."

Similar sentiments were shared by thousands of people across social media, with many asking: where are black people to congregate or seek hope, faith, healing, or justice, in a time when acts of terrorism prevent them from even turning to churches for sanctuary?

Portland leader of the NAACP Jo Ann Hardesty met with the Portland Observer the day after the shooting, originally to discuss Sekou's upcoming visit and the panel both leaders would be on. The conversation could not help from shifting to the devastating events of the shooting the night before.

"It is a community failure," said Hardesty of the entire event. "That doesn't happen in isolation. I find it incomprehensible that a 21-year-old would possess such hate. We are collectively responsible for that. That is not an accident."

Hardesty, like many leaders, knew she would be asked to re-

flect on an attack that she had scarcely come to terms with, and she tried to prepare herself and measure her words to respond to questions, just as they would come whenever any other racialized story hit national news.

"It's not an isolated incident," she said. "It's really part of a system that we have all had a hand in creating. My compassion goes out to those nine people who lost their lives and their devastated community members who are left to pick up the pieces. These people were connected to their community."

Giovanni McKenzie, a young black activist and founder of a Portland non-profit that focus on LGBT youth, Queer Intersections, echoed the sense of fatigue.

"This act of terrorism should be a wake-up call for white America to understand the impact of all its words and actions," he said. "I live in a world where I constantly have to prove that my life matters."

McKenzie expressed his tiredness of hearing media descriptions of the serial killing suspect as a 'lone gunman,' with some commentators speculating that mental illness could have made him 'snap.'

A vigil was held at the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in northeast Portland on Thursday evening, where hun-

dreds of community members and faith leaders of all backgrounds came to show solidarity for the Charleston victims and survivors.

The African-American pastors asked for many things – that the community hold hope strong, that they drive out hate from their communities and that they invite forgiveness and peace into their hearts.

But there was also another cry that was echoed by leaders outside the vigil: That white community members would reach out to fellow white people and guide them through discussions of race, and teach them about social justice and the dangers and history of white supremacy.

Hardesty hoped for this as she finished up her coffee outside a Stumptown cafe in southeast Portland.

"White people can take this opportunity to talk to other white people," she said. "I think that the best that can come of this is that everyone will talk to their children and make sure that people are having conversations in places they find most comfortable about race. And maybe, people will re-engage in their local NAACP chapters, people will find a civil rights organization near them and reach out, realize these organizations are still important and we still have so, so much work to do."



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## Free Fishing Event for Kids

Young fish enthusiasts are invited to come fish at the 25th annual Junior Fishing Clinic on Saturday, June 27 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Trillium Lake on the Mt. Hood National Forest, about 3 miles east of Government Camp.

The clinic is free and intended for kids 13 and under, but

young adults and parents will also find it fun and interesting. There will be prizes for biggest fish caught and first fish caught, as well as raffle prizes throughout the day.

Children should bring lunch, warm clothing, a rod and reel if possible, and a cooler to bring home their catch of

the day. Limited quantities of rods and reels along with bait will be provided.

The clinic is sponsored by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, area merchants and the Mt. Hood National Forest. For more information, call the Zigzag Ranger District at 503-622-2006.

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