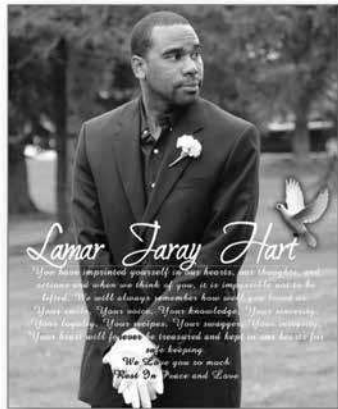


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Adding Insult to Injury

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

ing attendant when the officer screamed 'gun,' Lea told the Portland Observer.

He said Steinbron and other officers then pointed their weapons at him and instructed him to drop to the ground, all while shouting expletives. Lea complied with the orders, and tried to explain that the gun they saw in his car was owned by him and he was fully licensed to carry the weapon, having a permit in his back pocket.

Steinbron, a long time police officer who was involved in an officer-involved shooting in 2006 that resulted in the death of a 37-year-old Navy sailor at the Eastport Plaza Military Recruiting Facility, proceeded to arrest Lea and charge him with recklessly endangering another person.

Lea said while being driven to jail, Steinbron lectured him about how he shouldn't be allowed to carry a gun. He said the officer told him that his arrest was for endangering the public by leaving his firearm inside the vehicle, but said the car was locked.

After being processed and booked at the Justice Center jail, however, Lea was released without being charged. By the time he'd been released, his booking photo had already been published in the local tabloid known as "Busted."

Lea eventually sued for \$65,000 for the emotional distress caused by his unnecessary arrest. His case proceeded all the way to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, which ultimately found that Steinbron was within his rights as a law enforcement officer to detain Lea.

The city had offered Lea \$20,000 to settle before the case went to trial; however, Lea opted

to bring the case before a judge. Now that the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled in favor of the officers, Lea is responsible for paying the city's court fees, which total just under \$8,000.

A memorandum prepared by the court says that while "The officers' approach was perhaps an overreaction," that "Steinbron's use of force – which resulted in no physical injury to Lea – was reasonable."

Lea, however, still describes the behavior of Steinbron and the other officers as dangerous. He says that interactions like his can only serve to damage police-community relationships.

"I was still taken to the ground with guns to my head, even though they had my concealed carry permit in hand," said Lea. "I didn't know whether he was going to kill me at the time."

Lea says that he was seeking a public apology, not money, by pursuing the lawsuit against the city.

"I went to jail for nothing, I was in 'Busted' and I wasn't treated fairly," said Lea. "He didn't have a right to do that."

Lea, who has accrued misdemeanor charges in the past, adds that there is a double standard for law enforcement officers who intimidate and racially profile suspects.

"When I used to be in the street and did things that were wrong, I had to stand up in court and apologize," Lea explained. "That's no more than they should to a citizen, right?"

In a statement issued to the Portland Observer, Rob Yamachika, the Deputy City Attorney who litigated the case, defended the court's decision saying that it would not be fair to pass the legal

fees of the case on to Portland's taxpayers.

Lea, however, says that he is a taxpayer.

"I've worked most of my life here in Portland," Lea said. "I pay my taxes like everyone else."

The city has offered to reduce the court fees to \$5,000 if Lea agrees to pay it in two installments before the end of the month. Lea says that he's refusing to pay the fees, because that would acknowledge wrongdoing on his behalf.

"I did everything that I was supposed to do as a citizen," Lea said, adding, "It can be erased if you can take it from \$8,000 down to \$5,000."

In a letter addressed to Yamachika stating that Lea is rejecting the City's offer to reduce the court fees to \$5,000 his attorney, Benjamin Haile, explained that Lea wants to see police officers held accountable for unnecessary escalations.

"Lea brought this case against the city because he cares about improving his city and changing patterns of racial profiling by the PPB," Haile wrote.

Lea says that the City Attorney's office has rejected his requests to arrange a meeting with Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler. Yamachika responded to Haile's letter by stating that while he empathizes with Lea's attempt to improve the city, he didn't see how the case was racially motivated.

While he is grateful that the incident in 2011 didn't result in his death, Lea says that he feels stymied by a court system that is punishing him for reviewing a police officer's unnecessary use of force.

"It's about that officer apologizing to me," said Lea. "I pay you guys, just like everybody else around here."

Common Goals

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

son last month, were mentioned as examples of escalating violence impacting people of color.

The gathering also covered ways that the city's black community can fight back against gentrification and displacement from inner north and northeast Portland. Herndon called on community members to come up with specific policies and steps that local governments could take to help black residents return to their inner-Portland communities.

Education issues were also addressed at the meeting. Herndon said that Portland Public Schools should let black students attend Jefferson High School, regardless

of where they live. He also said that the district should renovate the school's building, even though it was not part of the bond measure passed by voters last month.

The need for Portland's black community to come together to fight back against white supremacist violence, gentrification and educational disparities was emphasized.

Hopson and Herndon also urged attendees to show their support at last weekend's annual Good in the Hood festival, which had been targeted by racist threats. The three day event and parade drew widespread support and was held under added security, including local and FBI law enforcement, without any incidents.



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