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OPINION

Disarm Portland State Campus Police Now

More guns multiply the risks

BY LEW CHURCH

Jason Washington: Say his name! At Portland State this summer, Jason Washington, an African-American grandfather and a 20-year-veteran worker at the U.S. Post Office, was shot and killed by two campus cops outside the Cheerful Tortoise bar. As I said on my KBOO radio program, this shooting makes me ashamed to have gotten my Masters degree (M.Ed., 2005) from what activist students now call "Police State University."

There will be a community forum on police accountability and interactions between the homeless and immigrant communities' vis-à-vis local police on Saturday, Aug. 25 at 4 p.m. at the PSU Chit Chat Café, 1907 S.W. Sixth on the Green Max next to Hot Lips Pizza. The speakers and invited speakers include Luis Balderas-Villagrana, president of the Associated Students of PSU and a Dreamer; city council candidates JoAnn Hardesty and Loretta Smith; police officials Chief Danielle Outlaw

and union president Daryl Turner; Kayse Jama of Unite Oregon; representatives from houseless groups Sisters of the Road and Street Roots; and Jason Washington family members. The forum is structured to be a polite conversation, with Q and A, focused on compassionate solutions.

Since the death of Jason Washington at PSU, Don't Shoot Portland and Black Lives Matter, along with PSU Student Union, have advocated for disarming the campus police force. Students advocated against arming the campus cops three years ago, but were overruled by then-university president Wim Wievel. After the shooting, students activists protesting the misuse of force at school joined city council candidates JoAnn Hardesty and Loretta Smith in a protest at downtown Portland's Pioneer Square.

Jason was the one person trying to defuse a fight situation outside the Cheerful Tortoise when he was killed, yet the decision was made to shoot the peacekeeper in that situation. In her excellent commentary (Arming Teachers Makes Matters Worse, Portland Observer, Aug. 1 issue) Basura Ismail, a conflict resolution student and mother of two, eloquently pleads for sensible gun

laws, including less guns at our schools. As we know, the Trump-NRA forces have argued -- incorrectly -- that putting more guns at schools will "improve" an already unsafe situation.

The shooting this summer at Portland State also demonstrates why it is a mistake to even put guns into the hands of campus safety personnel. As a grad student in the PSU School of Education and someone who has been on the inside teaching history at two schools with hundreds of students each day, Benson and Franklin, more guns and more bullets only serve to multiply the likelihood of injury or death.

One of the reasons we held a pro gun control conference at PSU, funded by a grant I wrote from the McKenzie River Gathering Foundation, was to broaden and deepen the efforts started by national gun safety groups like Sandy Hook Promise and Everytown for Gun Safety. I also was able to go with Portland Moms Demand Action (six moms plus me) to Earl Blumenauer's office to present thousands of postcards for gun safety and speak with the congressman for a half hour in his office.

At PSU, Black Lives Matter!

And the two campus cops who shot Jason Washington -- Shawn McKenzie and James Dewey -- are still on the PSU payroll, as of this writing. What's wrong with this picture? Moreover, Portland police union president Daryl Turner recently stated that believes, due to the homeless problem, that Portland has become a "cesspool." Mayor Ted Wheeler has come under fire from both police and protesters -- for not doing enough. As we enter the campaign for the November General Election, there is even a pro-profiling ballot measure on the ballot, against Oregon's sanctuary city law -- a law which Republican gubernatorial candidate Knute Buhler says he supports!

Are immigrants, houseless folks, and black and brown people simply being marginalized, even more than in the past, by the Trump-NRA alliance? It is little surprise to some of us that Trump's largest corporate donation in the 2016 presidential election -- some \$30 million -- came from the National Rifle Association, now headed by the notorious Oliver North.

But what is to be done, and who is responsible in the case of Jason Washington? First off, firing the

two officers is the first step. Secondly, Wim Wievel, the former PSU president who pushed to arm campus police, bears responsibility, although he has switched jobs and now makes \$600,000 a year as president of Lewis and Clark College.

The current PSU president, Rahmat Shoureshi is responsible, ultimately for everyday campus safety and allowing campus security officials to "carry" on campus. The best defense PSU has is a statistic: 90 percent of 3,000 colleges in Estados Unidos have cops with guns. But, like Trayvon Martin, and the far too many others like him, and now Jason Washington -- people who are shot and killed by either private security guards, college cops or regular police -- are not statistics!

Jason was a real person and he will live on in the memories of friends, family and coworkers. But no matter how much people will treasure his memory that is but cold comfort to knowing that Portland State chose to enable this unacceptable loss.

Lew Church is coordinator of Portland Gray Panthers and founding publisher and editor of the activist papers, PSU Rearguard and PSU Agitator.

Moral Imperative to Support Refugee Resettlement

Grave concerns about the soul of our nation

Editor's note: The following commentary is from Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon:

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon—a statewide, ecumenical and interfaith organization—along with Catholic Charities and Lutheran Community Services have been resettling refugees in Oregon for many decades. Religious organizations dedicate themselves to this work because each of our traditions speaks with moral clarity about our responsibility to love, to protect, and to welcome the "stranger" in our midst.

As people of faith, this is not an option, it is a command. The Bible says in Leviticus, "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do them wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love them as yourself."

As Americans we value charity, hospitality, tolerance and justice. Read the words enshrined on

the Statue of Liberty, the United States' great symbol of welcome to the refugee: "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free ... Send these, the homeless, the tempest tossed to me ..."

Today we come together with grave concerns about the very soul of our nation. The number of displaced people in the world has nev-

er been higher. By the end of 2017, there were over 68 million forcibly displaced people in the world, including 28.5 million refugees.

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er been higher. By the end of 2017, there were over 68 million forcibly displaced people in the world, including 28.5 million refugees.

Yet, in each year of his presidency, Donald Trump's Administration has drastically reduced the number of refugees who are allowed to seek safety in our country, as they flee persecution, oppression and war.

In just two years, the number of refugees allowed to resettle in the United States has been cut dramati-

cally. During the 2016 fiscal year, under the Obama Administration, 110,000 refugees were resettled in the United States. Last fiscal year, the Trump Administration reduced that number to a historic low of 45,000.

In Oregon, over 67,000 refugees have been resettled since 2003. However, those numbers have fallen sharply since the Trump Administration's immigration policies took effect in 2017. During the 2016 fiscal year, 1,780 refugees were resettled. At the end of June 2018, with just three months left in the fiscal year, only 465 refugees have been resettled in our state.

It has recently been reported that the Administration is considering lowering the number of refugee arrivals to the United States in the coming fiscal year to anywhere from 15,000 to 25,000. Make no mistake, the Administration is

seeking to dismantle the entire refugee resettlement system in our country. This is un-American, and it is unacceptable.

It is unconscionable that the United States, in a time of unprecedented crisis, should turn its back on the suffering of ordinary people fleeing extraordinary adversity. We implore the Trump Administration to increase the number of refugee

arrivals to 75,000.

Our refugee resettlement agencies provide vital and on-going services to our refugee population once they arrive. This marginalized community has many barriers to overcome in order to reach their full promise and potential in their new homes. If refugee resettlement agencies are forced to shut down, the safety net for our refugees will be gone.

To deny the world's most vulnerable people their last hope of

living and thriving in safety is to deny our common humanity. This is not who we are. Our hearts are heavy for refugees who believed our promise to them; for their family members who are here and desperately waiting to be reunited with their sister, brother, parent or child; and for the spiritual poverty of a nation that would close its borders to a world in need.

We are resolved today to continue standing in solidarity with our refugee and immigrant brothers and sisters. Together with our partners and the many communities of welcome across the country, we will not waver in pursuit of all options at our disposal, so that we can continue serving and protecting refugees, regardless of where they are from or how they pray.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is a statewide association of Christian denominations, congregations, ecumenical organizations and interfaith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians through community ministry programs, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, environmental ministry and public policy advocacy.