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PHOTO BY DANNY PETERSON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

County Clark Sheriff Chuck Atkins joins a group of law enforcement leaders in Vancouver speaking out to denounce hate, racism and prejudice, a sentiment that is being shared by local civil rights groups, representing communities of color in southwest Washington.

United Against Hate

Clark sheriff, others speak out on racism

Clark County officials in southwest Washington want the public and its employees to know that it rejects hate groups that propagate violence and discrimination, a message that's now being shared by civil rights groups representing black and Latino communities in the area.

On the heels of recent violence attributed to extremist right-wing groups in Vancouver and the region, as well as a former Clark County Deputy Sheriff who was let go for her affiliation with one such group, Clark County Sher-

iff Chuck Atkins released a joint statement with Prosecuting Attorney Tony Golik to denounce prejudice in all forms.

"We reject hate, bigotry, harassment, violence or the inciting of violence, and all actions intended to harm or intimidate others based on race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, or any other attribute which serves to marginalize people or groups of people," said the statement, issued earlier this month.

In response, a joint statement was released from the Vancouver NAACP and League of United Latin American Citizens expressing appreciation of Atkins, Golik and other community members who stand up against hate, as well

as calling for greater scrutiny of background checks for incoming and current law enforcement employees, among other concerns.

Atkins told the Portland Observer there wasn't a single incident in particular that spurred the statement, but an accumulation of hate-related incidents or movements in general over the last year and a half or so.

Right wing Patriot Prayer was one such protest group, which had a penchant for assembling in Vancouver and transporting themselves to downtown Portland.

Atkins, who was elected Sheriff of Clark County in 2015 and has a career in law-enforcement there spanning 35 years, said there's

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Hardesty Disputes Smith Charge

Portland City Council Candidate Loretta Smith accused her November election opponent Jo Ann Hardesty of theft by mismanagement of funds Tuesday after a story on Oregon Public Broadcasting about a lack of fiscal oversight at the Portland NAACP

when Hardesty served as president of the organization.

According to the OPB story, Hardesty helped revive the civil rights group after it become defunct, but records and interviews with people both inside and outside of the organization raised

questions about its financial oversight and record keeping during Hardesty's term as the former president of the organization.

The Hardesty campaign called Smith's allegations a desperate attempt to tarnish Hardesty's credibility.