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New space to strengthen community ties

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Bus Operator of the Year

TriMet driver takes pride in serving public

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Committed to Cultural Diversity

Masked Up for Protest

Do concealed identities embolden the violence?



AP PHOTO/DAVE KILLEN

Mask-clad people on the political spectrum, from the extreme left such as Rose City Antifa or the far right like the Proud Boys, have become routine during protests in downtown Portland, including the demonstration on June 29 (above) that later turned violent. Police Chief Danielle Outlaw has raised the issue of the concealed identities as emboldening some of the violence that has been occurring, but would banning masks violate constitutional protections? The Portland Observer looks at the issues.

BY DANNY PETERSON
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Would the elimination of masks at Portland protests make demonstrations more peaceful? That was the suggestion of Police Chief Danielle Outlaw in response to violence that has been occurring at political rallies and demonstrations in recent years, in which right-wing participants, and left-wing counter-demonstrators, have been engaging in bloody street brawls.

Mask-bans are nothing new in the United States, with around 15 states and some counties and cities having

some kind of regulation on the hiding of faces during a protest. Many of the anti-mask laws around the country were passed in response to a wave of violence perpetrated by Ku Klux Klan members wearing hoods between 1920 and 1950.

Dr. Leroy Haynes, a black pastor and the chair of the Albina Ministerial Alliance Coalition for Justice and Police Reform, pointed out the stark contrast between the peaceful, non-violent heyday protests of the 1960s civil rights era he'd participated in since he was 13, in the tradition of the philosophies of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.,

compared to today's both right-wing and left-wing counter-protestors having been documented wearing masks and occasionally engaging in violence with each other.

"We were willing to be beaten if it was needed...we never wore masks, we wanted people to see that we were willing to take an open stance and see our face in those situations," Haynes said.

When multiple groups, including the right-wing Proud Boys, a designated hate group by the Southern Pover-

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