

Police Action at March Criticized

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

One arrest was of an adult male who identified himself only as “Jake,” whom police said was using spray paint to deface the bridge. He was pepper sprayed after initially resisting arrest, officials said. But the arrest that drew the ire of the president and chief executive officer of the Urban League, Nkenge Harmon Johnson, and Commissioner Hardesty was videos showing officers “pushing through a crowd of white teenagers to pull a black teenager from their midst.”

Johnson accused the public safety officers involved of “unacceptable behavior toward our young people.”

The videos were viewed more than a half million times on social media, according to reports. One video showed officers trying to get two young people down from a metal railing on the bridge, and another showed the officers later pushing through a group to arrest one of the teens who had earlier been standing on the railing.

“I’ve said it before and will say it again. The Portland Police are out of control and need to be reined in,” said Johnson, as quoted in the Willamette Week.

Hardesty also said the action from police recorded in the videos was disturbing.

“Every encounter with the public is an opportunity to show community trust, yet this is how these officers chose to interact with children peacefully engaging in direct action,” Hardesty said. “I am so proud to have witnessed the power of our youth at last Friday’s Global Climate Strike and it’s unfortunate that the conduct of Portland Police officers during the protest—rather than the amazing show of power and resolve our youth showed that day—is what we are now talking about.”

The Portland Police Bureau defend-

ed its actions immediately after the Friday march. The department stated that the young black man they arrested had been leaning out into the traffic lane on the bridge, causing some vehicles to slam on their brakes. When they tried to arrest him, others in the crowd pulled him away and police backed off, but followed him “to a safer location” where he was arrested, police said. The third person arrested was another teen who tried to interfere when the first boy was arrested, authorities added. Both were later released “to the custody of responsible adults.”

The Police Bureau said safety was the utmost importance to police officers at the time and defended the officers using a common tactic to delay arrest to a time when it was safer to avoid a flashpoint and avoid the risk of having to use even greater force.

The PPB also said these were just a few selected arrests in a large scale event involving thousands of people spanning several hours.

“We are sincerely appreciative of the vast majority of participants who were entirely peaceful as they exercised their free-speech rights,” a news release from the police bureau concluded.

The march across the Hawthorne Bridge lasted about two hours as participants poured onto the OMSI grounds, where some heard speeches in an area surrounded by a chain link fence. There was no way for all the marchers to fit in that space, and many stopped to eat snacks they’d brought along and then left the area.

The march included many creative signs, including one held by a toddler that read, “3-Year-Olds for Earth Justice,” and another held by a teenager that read, “I See a Green Future and I’m Color-Blind. Why Don’t You?” Another popular slogan was “There is No Planet B,” and a couple of women dressed as nurses got their point across



PHOTO BY BEVERLY CORBELL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

There were three arrests during Friday’s Climate Strike march from downtown Portland to the east side near OMSI, including this one of a man who only identified himself as “Jake,” accused of spray painting graffiti on the Hawthorne Bridge. The two other arrests of young people, however, brought complaints of police brutality from the Urban League of Portland and City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty.

by carrying a stretcher with a giant, dead bumblebee on it.

The worldwide Climate Strike march was inspired by the Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg’s original solitary sit-in outside the Swedish parliament building, estimated by USA Today to include as many as four million people, likely the largest climate rally

ever, “from New Delhi to Antarctica” to draw attention to the climate crisis ahead of the United Nations Climate Action Summit, which started Monday.

“This is the biggest climate strike ever in history and we all should be proud of ourselves because we have done this together,” Thunberg was quoted as saying.

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