

BLM

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These peacekeepers said they were sympathetic to the demonstrators’ cause and agreed that Floyd’s death was unjust and that America still has a problem with racial inequality.

“There’s racism out there,” Greg Jackson said. “We all have to admit it.”

Jackson said the racism goes “both ways.”

“I’ve traveled all over the country, and I’ve seen black racists, I’ve seen racist against Chinese, Japanese and, you know, Asian races,” Jackson said. “Everybody’s racists. Birds of a feather flock together.”

He said the racism is not so bad in America that it justifies the rioting and the looting that has taken place in many American cities.

Jackson said, while he thought the violence could happen in John Day, it was unlikely it would. He said he was also concerned the organizers would bus in outside protestors.

“I don’t understand why they’re coming to John Day,” Jackson said. “We obviously had nothing to do with George Floyd.”

Jackson said he supports a protest if there is a reason for it.

“I think we’ve been, should have been, doing a lot more protesting with the shutdown,” Jackson said. “Because that was constitutionally illegal, in my opinion.”

Durr agreed with the protesters’ sentiment regarding Floyd.

“To me, I find it embarrassing for my profession that we have people that do that,” Durr said. “We’re not out there to punish people. We’re out there to hold them accountable,



Justin Davis, left, and Ashley Stevick Friday after the Black Lives Matter rally in John Day.

and there’s a big difference between that and what we saw on the video.”

Durr said all Americans should also be embarrassed about the violence and the rioting that took place during some demonstrations.

“One of our constitutional rights is to protest peacefully,” Durr said. “And I am really disappointed when a portion of the crowd decides to burn buildings, cause property damage and loot. I don’t see any excuse for that.”

Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer said he did not see the images or footage of Floyd’s arrest and death. As the march winded down, Palmer said the protest overall had been “quiet.”

Another small group of counterprotesters also gathered downtown. When asked what they thought of the situation, Evan Hodge said, “I think these dumb (expletives) need to get the (expletive) out of our town. And if you’re one of them, you can get the (expletive) out too.”

Stevick said out of the nearly 140 people who gathered together, fewer than 10 were not from Grant County,

and they had ties to the area.

Stevick said there was a definite distinction between the peacekeepers and the counterprotesters.

“While it was physically uncomfortable to walk past citizens and their guns, and while I do think it was meant to be intimidating, I also understand that they were afraid,” Stevick said, referring to looting and violence in other locations.

Stevick said a few of the armed peacekeepers came back to her house and talked with the protestors afterward. She said it was very encouraging.

“I ask now that we don’t antagonize and that we engage in thoughtful discussion without demonizing either side,” she said.

Stevick said afterward that the demonstration had been peaceful, and the group shined a light on the racial inequality across the country.

Shaun Robertson, the president of the Grant County Farm Bureau, said he believed the protest was hypocritical. In town shopping, he said he joined friends among the counterprotesters and stayed because he “wanted to see the

demonstration of hypocrisy” himself.

“Some of the marchers are the biggest bigots in Grant County,” he said. “Teachers who plaster their walls with so-called ‘progressive’ messages, lecture on their personal opinion not within their curriculum and then bully students who have contrary opinions. Government employees who hide behind their employment protections and use their power and privilege for retribution against critics. Elitists who lecture about inclusiveness and respect for diversity but treat locals with disdain and contempt and who really only consider more extreme versions of their own voices.”

Robertson said news of looting and violence elsewhere was concerning. He said “extremist groups will resort to anything to disrupt other people’s lives.”

He said he was not aware of police brutality being an issue in Grant County but misuse of police powers for personal agendas was a problem.

“Apparently, since that discrimination is directed at white people, it doesn’t fit the marchers’ narrative and doesn’t war-



Contributed photo/Liz Aleman
Kate Cueno, left, and Darin Toy march with their two kids along Third Street toward Chester’s Thriftway Friday in solidarity with Black Lives Matter.

rant their attention,” he said.

Robertson said he saw the footage of Floyd’s death.

“I was as horrified as when I watched the video of LaVoy Finicum being murdered by white police officers and the unnamed Asian shopkeeper being beaten with two-by-fours yesterday by five black people and the internet videos of white cops being shot and killed by black drivers pulled over on the freeway,” he said. “The justice system will judge the four officers (charged in relation to Floyd’s death), hopefully with more veracity than the court of public opinion comprised predominantly of people who protest for entertainment but really do nothing to solve true social issues have.”

Robertson said he has “experienced firsthand the bigotry and discrimination directed at all colors of people by all colors of people; nobody has a monopoly on racism. That’s why I believe it’s primarily about abuse of power rather than race. When people have nearly unchecked power over other people, abuse is certain to follow. These protest marches are distractions from getting

at the real heart of the issues.”

John Day resident Justin Davis, who is black, said, while he does not speak for all African Americans, he felt compelled to participate in the protest.

“I’m not going to try and speak for all black people because I don’t,” Davis said. “But I am the only one here, and if these people are here doing this for me, I could show up.”

Another African American resident who requested not to be named had a different view.

“I do realize some people are trying to help, and I appreciate the efforts they are making for change, but at the same time in my eyes, what are a few white folks from John Day going to change?” he said.

He said he had been pulled over three times this month, and every time, the officer walked up with a weapon drawn even when both of his hands were on the wheel.

“I don’t even own a weapon,” he said.

He said on multiple occasions in Grant County, he has heard residents refer to “colored people.”

“I had an older lady come into my work with her husband, and when I was done helping them, the lady said to her husband as they were walking away she didn’t like a colored person serving her food and that they needed to come back when I was gone,” he said.

But he said he felt like the protest in John Day was people jumping on a trend on social media — virtue signaling, at best.

He said the gun-carrying “peacemakers” also weren’t helpful.

“How is someone of color supposed to feel when, whether it’s at work or on the streets or at home, someone is carrying a gun?” he said.

Store

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access approach to U.S. Highway 26.

“From my understanding with conversations with the Zarembo Group is that this proposed investment and purchase of the land has already been approved by the Dollar General Corporate Office,” Green said. “It’s real. People always wonder if this is real, and yes, this is real. They would not be applying for a site design review if they were not ready to make the investment.”

Right now the preliminary plat and the final plat for the

land Dollar General is going to build on has been approved by the city.

“As a result of our efforts, we’ve got a new Dollar General that’s gonna go in across Napa, and I’m not talking just the city’s effort, I am talking about the community at large,” Green said.

Green added that the city spent the past four years planning and financing various public improvement projects such as street improvements, downtown improvements and the new wastewater treatment plant to try and encourage private sector investment.

He also said the city is working with local land developers

and firms like Iron Triangle, Len’s Drug, the Sheedys, the Friday hotel group and other business owners to encourage and incentivise growth and revitalization along Main Street and that it’s great to see these projects coming to fruition.

“There’s always some tension between new businesses coming in and our existing businesses,” Green said. “I want to recognize the efforts our local businesses are putting in to improve our community as well. These investments will benefit all of us in the long run by increasing our land values, widening the tax base and making our community more attractive to new residents.”

Reopening

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Oregon Health Authority Director Patrick Allen said that the state would come up with the guidelines, but it would be up to local school districts to decide how best to implement the rules.

“Every school and every school district is different,” he said.

Decisions on colleges and universities have not yet been finalized. Phase 2 would allow for sports training by college football teams and others, following rules on social distancing and contact. But Brown said she wanted “our Ducks and Beavers ready to tackle the Huskies and Cougars” anytime the OK was given for games.

Dr. Dean Sidelinger, the state’s health officer and epidemiologist said the state

would be watching statistics in each county closely. If goals are not met, he said the counties would not revert to Phase 1, but would have to institute heightened measures to curb any problem areas.

“Reopening is not an on-off switch,” he said. Upticks in any numbers would be a “caution light.”

“We may need to dial back permitted activities,” he said.

In earlier phases of the crisis, the state urged people to stay at home and not venture out for any but the most crucial needs such as medical appointments or buying food. Sidelinger said that if people do leave home, they should enjoy the outdoors, where transmission of the virus is less likely.

“Being outside is safer than being inside,” Sidelinger said. “We’re very good at doing that in Oregon in the summer.”





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