



Oregon Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Issues Statement In The Wake of Police Violence Against Black Americans

July 23, 2020

The Oregon Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights offers this statement¹ as we mourn with the families whose loved ones have died at the hands of police violence, followed by further violence against those who protest the killings. These recent killings are only compounded by the tens of thousands of deaths in the Black community due to structural racism and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19. It is beyond time to stand up for Black lives and for justice.

Black Americans are disproportionately affected by police violence across the United States. Since January 01, 2015, 4,728 people have died in police shootings and around half, 2,385, were white. 1,252 were black, 877 were Hispanic and 214 were from other racial groups.² While this is the case, Black Americans account for less than 13 percent of the U.S. population, but the rate at which they killed by police is more than twice as high as the rate for white Americans.³

As a Committee, we call for swift, full, and impartial justice for victims of police violence including George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and Elijah McClain. We call for the immediate arrest of all of the officers involved in their murders and demand that these officers be held accountable. In addition, we call for lasting changes that include:

- end of qualified immunity⁴ in excessive use of force cases;
- federal, state, and local governments to issue states of emergency declaring racism a public health crisis, and to develop targeted policies to address this crisis; and

¹ On July 23, 2020, the Oregon Advisory Committee approved this statement in a 10-0 vote and one member abstained from voting in advance of their meeting on July 23, 2020.

² "Fatal Force," Washington Post. Accessed on June 26, 2020
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Qualified immunity is the legal doctrine that shields government officials from being held personally liable for their actions. See *Harlow v. Fitzgerald*, 457 U.S. 800, 818 (1982) ("[G]overnment officials performing discretionary functions, generally are shielded from liability for civil damages insofar as their conduct does not violate clearly established statutory or constitutional rights of which a reasonable person would have known.").

- Oregonians to commit to working to dismantle systemic racism that has enabled this scourge of race-based violence to grow unabated.

In addition, we call for the removal of federal law enforcement officers from the City of Portland to the extent that they are infringing on the civil rights of Oregonians and their ability to assemble and associate with others who are exercising their freedom of speech, while protesting the murder of George Floyd, decades of police brutality, and the militarization of the police.

Serving as the eyes and ears of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in Oregon, our mission is to investigate the deprivation of civil rights on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, and national origin or in the administration of justice.⁵ To that end, we will focus our work on issues of racial equity and access to justice in Oregon in the area of bail reform. Our committee plans to engage with Oregon legislators, community organizations, law enforcement and the justice system to deepen the understanding of civil rights in our state and to progress reform. We invite our fellow Oregonians to engage with us in our work by providing us with your feedback and ideas during our monthly meetings. You may subscribe to the Commission's page on the [federal register](#), or visit the State Advisory Committee Meeting Calendar on the [USCCR webpage](#) to learn about our upcoming meetings.

⁵ 42 U.S.C. 1975a(a)(1), (d); 45 C.F.R. § 703.2.