

Guest View:

Is Eugene turning into Ferguson?

By Ibrahim Coulibaly and Brian Michaels

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Did you notice? Did anyone notice? After years of refusing to hold police accountable for violent acts, Eugene has finally slipped into the Ferguson club when some weeks ago an unarmed, peaceful man of color was shot to death by police in North Eugene.

According to the state, his only offense was walking in the street, while wearing a hoodie (Trayvon Martin?), requiring him to be stopped, grabbed, taken down and eventually killed.

Separately, the state chose to inform us drugs were found in the victim's system, yet declined to report what drugs were in the police officer's system. The victim in this case was not the aggressor, just a lone Latino man minding his own business, walking down the street, searching through garbage for help. What possible relevance is there to know what drugs were in his system? Ironically, it is prosecutors accusing defense attorneys of blaming/trashing the victim.

Blame does not fall to the district attorney, though. By now we must recognize this is their job. [Here's what Eugene Police Chief Chris Skinner said](#): "I absolutely want officers stopping and having conversations with individuals that look like they're *not in the place they're supposed to be*, whether it on foot, on a bicycle, in a car *in these neighborhoods*." [emphasis ours]

Is Eugene now under a "stop-and-frisk" policy? The same policy former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg recently apologized for as being racist and violent? Which people do you think Skinner means by

“individuals that *look like* they’re not in the place they’re supposed to be,” and which neighborhoods do you think are “these neighborhoods?”

And when he was asked if Officer Samuel Tyko did everything to de-escalate the encounter Skinner said, “That would be a focus of the coming administrative review.”

At a recent trial accusing Eugene police officers of excessive force against an African-American mother and her 19-year-old son at their home after calling EPD for help, several police witnesses testified under oath that Eugene Police Department training allows for officers to escalate a situation, rather than be limited to de-escalating violence.

If escalating a situation is consistent with Eugene police training, and any administrative review will be kept from the public, what do you say about that?

Recall years ago when Eugene’s citizens successfully passed an initiative to establish a real citizens review board. Despite the sanctity of the initiative in Oregon, our city council eviscerated our initiative into a review board in name only.

The citizens of Eugene were so appalled at what was done that a *second* initiative passed. Yet again, our city council similarly eviscerated this initiative into ‘newspeak.’ If there had been a real citizens review board this man could be alive. Our citizens could have operated over the years to eliminate or de-escalate further violence by police.

This is what we propose: subpoena power, at least one member of the NAACP appointed by its president and drug testing each police officer involved in a violent act (conducted in a manner described by the citizen committee).

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