

Public Testimony #1

Hi,

This is my testimony of the night Tony Sancho was arrested and abused by Jackson county officers.

I was with Tony at a donor dinner at the Ashland Springs Hotel for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival with a group of Senior Citizens from Oakland.
We had a lovely dinner shmoozing donors.

We then went to Sakana to hang out some more.
I believe it was Tony, me, and a few others.
After our second dinner, I went home because I was exhausted.
That was probably around 9pm.
I could be mistaken, but I think it was around that time.

And that's the last I saw Tony.
To my recollection, no one was drunk.
It was all very chill and tame.

Tony is a great guy and for this to have happened to him is appalling and the ones responsible need to be held accountable.
I hope the city Ashland doesn't let us down.
It now feels like us actors in Ashland can't feel safe anymore.

Thank you so much,

Román

Public Testimony #2

Hello,

My name is Mica Cole. I am a former employee of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and former resident of Ashland.

On the morning following the arrest of Tony Sancho, I received a panicked phone call from his wife who told me that Tony had been arrested. As the producer of the festival, I was responsible for not only making sure that the shows started on time, but to help ensure the safety and well-being of the artists who move to Ashland to work for OSF. Therefore, I immediately reached out to the chief of police who informed us that Tony had been picked up in response to a 911 call about an individual who had been laying drunken in the street. He informed us that Tony had been belligerent and had resisted arrest, which is why he was taken into police custody. He subsequently invited my colleague Sharifa Johka and I to come down to the police station to review the body cam footage.

I will not go into all the details of what I witnessed — it was completely unacceptable in my opinion. I suggest that the council request to review all body cam footage to get a sense of how the officers handled the situation and how that might have contributed to how the Jackson county deputies responded to the situation.

Upon reviewing the body cam footage, several things came up which call into question the integrity of the Ashland police and their actions:

— When the body cam footage begins, we see Tony walking away from the officer. The officer stops Tony to question him. It is not immediately clear why the officer has approached Tony since Tony was not, in fact, laying on the street.

—What was positioned to us as a welfare check, turned into at least four officers arriving on the scene, unnecessarily escalating the situation. One officer can be seen and heard antagonizing Tony, threatening him and using profanity toward him completely unprovoked.

—Tony was not belligerent. He was clearly afraid.

—At one point, one of the officers says that he had seen Tony walk into a bar earlier in the evening. Why was that officer watching Tony? Did Tony match the description of the person lying in the street? Has the transcript of that phone call been reviewed by the council?

—When the officer decides to put handcuffs on Tony, he tells him that they are required to use handcuffs anytime someone enters the back of a police vehicle. The Police Chief later told us that this was not true. Why did they elect to apply non-existent rules to Tony?

—Four officers physically wrestled Tony to the ground, the searched his pockets and his wallet. This was entirely unnecessary.

—At no point did the officers tell Tony that he was under arrest.

—At no point did the officers read Tony his Miranda rights.

—Tony was a mere two block from his home. Of all the folks walking out of bars that night, why did they stop him from going home?

Finally, please note that the police chief did not ask for the charges to be dropped of his own volition. We spent hours with him and his deputy reviewing the video in painstaking detail, pointing out questionable actions and behaviors and calling into question the motives of his officers. While we were initially met with arguments about the legality of their actions, he ultimately conceded that the officers could have and should have responded differently, though he maintained that he would publicly defend their actions were this situation brought to public awareness. What we know from the larger discourse about police brutality and excessive force is that what is legal is not necessarily just. And that silence and solidarity from appointed and elected officials makes them complicit in upholding a system which targets those who are most vulnerable among us.

Please get all of the facts in front of you. Please feel free to reach out to me directly.

Sincerely,
Mica Cole

Public Testimony #3

Council Members and Mayor,

In 1870 our forefathers passed the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendment into the constitution, it then wasn't until 1964, 94 years after the passage of the 15th amendment when our nation would take additional action on racial injustice, and now 52 years after the passage of the 1968 Civil Rights Act is our country is finally taking action once more. These long periods of injustice are without question, horrendous. To that end, where will you stop? Will, you stop with the "eight can't wait"? Will you stop with the passage of the George Floyd Act, or Justice Act? Or will you stop when the public outcry stops? Is that when you will slink back into the shadow of injustice; when no one is looking? I hope that you will not stop, but if history is any teacher, I know that to be a lie. To that end, we must, you must, provide and create safeguards for the future that ensures the noble work of creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive society prevails until we reach that sacred destination. So I urge you from the tips of my toes to the top of my head, to the center of my heart and soul create these safeguards. Create a department of diversity, equity, and inclusion that identifies equity gaps in our community and then fills those gaps with equality. That provides resources to citizens of Ashland on the topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion, such as community lectures, fairs, and events such as a Southern Oregon Person of Color Exposition. Make the director of the department of diversity, equity, and inclusion an ex officio member of the city council, present at every meeting so even at those high levels they can identify equity gaps. Mandate diversity, equity, and inclusion courses for every member of the government from the Mayor to the Custodian, there can be no position too small or too large. Prepare our community for the future that is to come, and give us the tools to fight racism, injustice, bigotry, and prejudice. Ensure that we will not stop.

Thank you.

Luke Williams

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Luke Williams

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