



OREGON JUSTICE RESOURCE CENTER STATEMENT ON THE ARRAIGNMENT OF JEREMY CHRISTIAN

May 30th, 2017

PORTLAND, Ore. – “We are deeply sorry for the loss suffered by the families of Rick Best and Taliesin Myrddin Namkai-Meche and hope for the swift recovery of Micah Fletcher.

As our community comes to terms with what happened on Friday night, Portlanders are understandably searching for ways to prevent such a tragedy from happening again. We at the Oregon Justice Resource Center believe we need to address the hate underlying Jeremy Christian’s alleged crimes but that pursuing the death penalty would do more harm to our community than good. We should always strive for fair, accountable, and evidence-based policies. By all metrics, both in Oregon and nationally, the failure of the death penalty as a deterrent and as sensible public policy has been proven.

While this case has shocked the nation, and generated huge media attention, if Christian is convicted and sentenced to death his case will play out in the same way as those of the people already on Oregon’s death row. We will spend as much as a million dollars more on his case than we would have done had he not been sentenced to death. These funds could be better invested in services to victims and their families. Christian will most likely die in prison since our state has not executed anyone against their will since Kennedy was president. Christian will be given the opportunity repeatedly over many years to draw the spotlight of media attention when his case returns to court for his multiple appeals, reopening the wound for victims’ families.

What we have learned about our criminal justice system in Oregon is that it disproportionately impacts communities of color, people with low incomes, and people who have mental illnesses, and the death penalty is no different.

If our goal is to deter others from carrying out similar acts, we will most effectively accomplish this by creating a change in the culture and values that allow islamophobia, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination to flourish. This is the time for Portlanders to ‘live their values’ by responding to these abhorrent crimes with a determination to root out bigotry and discrimination. Our society’s response to crime as expressed through our criminal justice system should reflect the principles we care about: holding perpetrators accountable and providing justice for victims and our community.”

Statement to be attributed to Bobbin Singh, Executive Director, Oregon Justice Resource Center.

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