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PORTLAND

# The real people behind months of Portland ICE protests

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Familiar faces at ICE protests include, clockwise from top left, Sgt. Dan DiMatteo, Jamie Enea (second from right in family photo with U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem), Sky Yonally and Rhys Scholes. Photos by Oregonian staff and courtesy of Jamie Enea



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By [Fedor Zarkhin | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#), [Zane Sparling | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#), [Zaeem Shaikh | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#) and [Matthew Kish | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

Among the crowds of protesters outside the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement building in South Portland are several people who have been returning regularly, some for months.

They are not the one-dimensional characters that President Donald Trump conjures when he dismisses protesters as violent rioters ruining the Rose City. Nor are they universally the peaceful demonstrators Oregon's Democratic leaders cite when countering Trump's false and fiery rhetoric.

Here's a tiny sampling of people you might find outside the immigration facility on a typical night, describing why they're there and what they hope others can learn from them. Excerpts from their interviews have been condensed and edited for clarity.

## **Sky Yonally, 49, protester**

Yonally, a molecular biologist who works at a biotech company, has spent most nights since the Fourth of July at the protest. She has three children, 15, 18 and 29.



Sky Yonally stands outside the ICE facility in South Portland during a recent protest. She said pretty much everyone she has talked to about her decision to join protests outside ICE nearly every day since July has been very supportive. "I don't really have to explain why I feel like I need to be there, because they are just as upset as I am," she said. Fedor Zarkhin/The Oregonian

"The first night I went down was July 4th, and I've been going almost every day since. And it's mostly because of, well, the dramatic increase in ICE arrests, the fact that they're arresting people without warrants, without due process, without giving them an opportunity to speak in trials, and sending them to what seems to me to be concentration camps.

And I felt pretty helpless, just watching it happen on the news or, you know, reading about it. And so I started going down there to complain to the people actually doing it.

I feel like there's a lot of people that are as upset as I am about what's going on, but they don't know what to do. And I thought the more that I go down there and protest, and the more I can bring some sort of awareness of what's happening down there and also kind of humanize the resistance and the protests and put a face to it — someone that people might feel comfortable talking to or might feel like is more like them — then maybe more people would come down and protest.

If enough people came down and enough people were upset about it, I feel like people would have to pay attention and start to take action about it.

I've seen the aftermath of vandalism and graffiti and stuff, but I've never seen anybody doing it. Even though I'm there until like 2 a.m., a lot of times I've never seen anything dangerous and I've never felt any sort of danger, negativity or violence from any of the protesters down there. All of the violence, 100% of it, has come from the feds, and it's been brutal."

### **Jamie Enea, 38, citizen journalist**

Enea, a registered nurse, owns a health care business that supports senior citizens. She's attended about 30 protests, sometimes with her teenager in tow, and occasionally livestreams from the protests on her X account, "Based in Portland." She was with her husband and their four kids when she met U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem at the ICE facility in Portland on Oct. 7.



Jamie Enea (second from right) poses with U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem at the ICE facility in Portland on Oct. 7 with her family. "They got to meet her, and they got to have pizza with all the agents who were there," Enea said. "That was really special for my kids." Courtesy of Jamie Enea

"One of the things that we've really taken away from going down to the ICE building is that neither conservative or liberal-leaning media are representing the actual truth.

A lot of the conservative journalists down there will livestream during the moments of escalation. But in reality, there's hours of just First Amendment protected free speech going on, and that's not always shown in context.

I have children who are homeschooled and believe that they need to be made aware of different political opinions.

When the tear gas was deployed (on Oct. 4), that was very surprising for me. There was no order to disperse. I didn't see any illegal behavior in the moments before that happened. It was actually very peaceful.

I'm registered as an independent voter. I would consider myself a citizen journalist. I even went undercover as antifa. It was made very clear to me that if I needed any supplies, if I needed any help, that they had options at their disposal, including supply stashes nearby.

I am impressed with the work of Donald Trump. I do believe in what ICE is doing. It's just unfathomable to me to allow people into the country that aren't screened. Many of them came with good intentions, but unfortunately that's not how you're supposed to come to the United States.

My hope is that (the National Guard) will enforce the rule of law, continue to allow protected First Amendment free speech, but uncover the funding sources for the folks who continue protesting day after day. If this free speech is being supported by external organizations' funding, then I think that separately needs to be looked at."

## **Sgt. Dan DiMatteo, 16-year Portland Police Bureau veteran**

DiMatteo is a familiar face at Portland protests, including at ICE. He is one of several "dialogue liaison officers" whose job is to communicate with protesters or event organizers and de-escalate conflicts. The Portland Police Bureau expanded the program in 2024. Liaison officers wear police vests on top of white shirts.



Sgt. Dan DiMatteo has worked for the Portland Police Bureau for 16 years, most recently as a dialogue liaison officer. Zaeem Shaikh/The Oregonian

“We’re out here to help facilitate First Amendment speech. We’re going to tell people that, you know, I’m not going to agree with their speech versus another person’s speech. I’m going to defend everybody’s right to have those opinions. So you can be left. You can be right. You can be Republican, Democrat, doesn’t matter.

It’s not what you’re saying that I care about. It’s more the fact that you want to get your opinion out, and we’re going to help defend that.

Some people think that we’re not real cops because we have a different uniform. And no, I still can go arrest anyone that I need to out here. A lot of times what we’re going to try to do is reserve that for intervention that’s needed now, usually life-safety stuff.

But I mean, I could arrest somebody if there’s an assault. I could arrest somebody for vandalism. A lot of times, though, I’m going to call the bikes over because if they arrest them, then we can help facilitate the dialogue. Like, ‘Hey, here’s why this happened.’ Because a lot of times you have the misconception about, ‘Why did they arrest this person?’

Now if I'm doing it, I'm trying to arrest and explain at the same time. Somebody else does it, I have a much easier time explaining while they're doing that."

## Rhys Scholes, 72, peacekeeper

Scholes worked for Multnomah County for 20 years, mostly in the chair's office, but also in finance and government relations. Now he spends many of his days as a volunteer with a Portland Quaker church serving lunch to homeless people. By night, he keeps the peace among protesters and counterprotesters, mediating arguments and encouraging people to walk away from potential conflicts.



Rhys Scholes, 72, from a Quaker Friends meeting group, stands near Portland's ICE building on Monday, October 13, 2025. Scholes is wearing a reflective vest that says, "Love Thy Neighbor," on the back. He and a fellow Quaker walk the area to try to de-escalate any conflicts they see. Maxine Bernstein | The Oregonian/OregonLive

"I am deeply afraid that our president is trying to start a civil war, and he has figured out that Portland is probably one of cities where he got the lowest vote total, and there's been protesters out here for over 100 days, and I think it was his opportunity to send a message to other

Democrat-run cities that he's coming to get 'em and he's going to be very brutal.

My son was down here before I was. He told me what gas mask to buy.

It is surrealistic, the strange interface of the brutality with Portlanders having a good time, with dancing and animals. There's been three different DJs down here, and they trade off.

A lot of people are having a really good time. And the people who are on the other side of the political spectrum, they don't dance. They just look grim. But we love them all, and I'm just trying to make sure there isn't violence, trying to reduce the likelihood of violence. And there are a dozen other people who are doing what I'm doing at different times.

It's not a war-zone. People who seem to be under orders from the White House have come to Portland to try to make it look as violent as possible and as they have been unsuccessful, they are increasing the violence.

One of my most joyful duties down here was a TriMet guy who said, 'We're having trouble. The frogs are getting in the way of the bus.' So I went over and talked to the frogs about that, and they have very limited visibility, so they couldn't see the bus, and they were very grateful to be told when the bus was coming."

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