

**DIRECTOR'S
DESK**

By Israel Bayer



This will be my last Director's Desk. Due to the economic climate and my own inability to pay myself more than \$31,000 a year to work 60-hour work weeks and be available on a dime to individuals on the streets, supporters, volunteers, staff, nonprofits, news sources, and civic leaders – I'm taking a position with the city of Portland to work on the sustainability of homelessness. The goal will be to bring a fresh voice to City Hall to cover the issues of homelessness and housing and become so swamped and overwhelmed that my work will be seen as useless and sometimes reckless by advocates (including Street Roots' unrealistic editorials) and nonprofits. It's been a nice ride and I feel at this point in my life, it's time to become an adult.

I often times use this column to highlight the work that Street Roots is doing along with asking readers for money. Once in awhile I will actually talk about the politics of poverty and come out and say what 12 other nonprofit heads are saying behind the scenes but don't have the capacity or guts to come out and say in public.

Being that I will now be on the other side of the fence – I'll know exactly who those nonprofits are and will work to the best of my ability to avoid them at all costs, unless of course, there's some kind of political gain in it for me and my employer. It's nothing personal, it's just politics.

We do hope that you've enjoyed this edition of the paper. We hope that we have been able to make you laugh out loud (and possibly cringe on occasion). We take the time to poke fun at ourselves and at the hypocrisies of our great city upon a hill. We hope this edition of the paper makes you think and discuss these issues in a way you might not have before. The late and great Molly Ivins once said, "Satire is traditionally the weapon of the powerless against the powerful." We couldn't agree more.

We hope you know how much we appreciate you supporting your local neighborhood vendor and reading the paper – because we do! We also appreciate your support. During these hard economic times we do understand that if you don't have the Do Re Mi than you don't have the Do Re Mi, but if you do, please my friends, think about giving today. And please Act Now to save \$6.7 million dollars in the city's budget for housing and homelessness. We need your help now more than ever!

What's driving the Spring Fund Drive?

The irony isn't lost on us. As Street Roots celebrates 10 years of education, dialogue, and independence, the economy is creating a whole new wave of homelessness and poverty. Street Roots is seeing a ground swell of individuals walking through our door, looking for resources, answers, and a way to earn an immediate income to meet a pressing need.

In the last issue of Street Roots, Julie McCurdy describes her experience of suddenly becoming homeless for the first time:

"I am new. Portland may be my hometown, but suddenly it feels as foreign as some far-flung city in the Near East. Why? Because I am new to the streets. So many names for it – I prefer to say I am becoming an urban gypsy, not that I am exploring my inner bum. But these are just semantics. The fact is, I have become homeless ... At 45 years old, being gloriously round, semi-crippled, with grey beginning to dance in the strands of my hairline, it didn't occur to me that I would have to choose between protection and core values. Yet here I am – trying to still the icy tentacles of fear racing along over-exposed nerve endings."

While new faces are appearing, the economy is also hitting the organizations trying to meet those needs. We are all trying to do more with less, including Street Roots. Yet the organization is more relevant than ever. From in-depth coverage in the pages of the newspaper to the relationships built between vendors and customers, Street Roots reminds us that we're all in this thing together.

Your support this spring means that more than 250 individuals will secure basic human needs while reclaiming self-worth and human connections. It also means that Street Roots will stay in front of issues like affordable housing and mental health services, reporting the facts on issues that affect us all. Supporting Street Roots keeps the dialogue happening, and puts stories of people like Julie McCurdy in the public eye.

"I try desperately to sleep on this one street corner. I have turned down the dubious offer of 'protection' from the bleary-eyed, slack-jawed man next to me. I spent the last two hours before dawn shivering under blankets with wide-open eyes and a thudding heart. Quite frankly, I would prefer to click my heels and just go home. Oh yeah – right now, this is home."

Times are hard and everyone is stretched thin. But we're all in this together. Please think about giving today. We need your help!

**ACT
NOW**

Steps you can take to make a difference

What you can do:

Go to **streetroots.wordpress.org** and sign a petition and send a letter to the Mayor and City Commissioners today and tell them to save critical housing and homeless funding. You can also call their offices and ask to save critical services for people experiencing homelessness and poverty.

AT ISSUE: HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS**Restore critical funding for local services**

The Bureau of Housing and Community Development's proposed budget, including the \$6.7 million in one-time General Fund dollars is at risk of being cut. To preserve vital services and housing for people in crisis we believe that in this current economic climate it's critical that the City of Portland show leadership in funding and maintaining crucial services that impact low-income Portlanders.

Many social-service agencies are seeing an increase in individuals and families seeking services due to the economic climate. We trust that the City of Portland will find the resources to maintain these essential programs.

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Return service requested.

YOUR DONATION MATTERS

Street Roots is a 501(c)3, nonprofit organization. All donations are greatly appreciated and may be tax deductible. I would like to contribute:

\$10 \$20 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$ _____

Send your check to:

Street Roots, 211 NW Davis, Portland, OR, 97209

Donate online at www.streetroots.org