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How many Portlanders are serious cyclers – maybe one out of 40, if that? What elected officials have done is to move transportation alternatives like bicycling to the forefront of the city's mindset and now cycling is a part of everyday life. Portland is now a national model for transportation alternatives and livability. So that one out of 40, or whatever the ratio might be, now affects the entire city.

One out of five Portlanders is foreign born. So if our collective communities can do the same thing as the bike community has done – the newcomers to Portland can shift this entire city's ethos.

Then we become the new Portland – not immigrants or refugees. We are Portlanders. If we can get rid of these lexicons and come to a place where we embrace a new Portland. Imagine the possibilities.

But it has to be the entire community. It can't just be one person dashing around holding hands with cops, with Park and Rec and other politicians. I'm a policy guy. I'm happy setting and brokering relationships and helping getting things rolling. But it's not just my job. It's your job. It's everybody's job. That's new Portland.

The old Portland simply doesn't work. It breaks people's hearts. For example, where I come from we have lots of homeless people, but it is unthinkable to treat a homeless person badly. Don't give them money if you don't want to, but never mistreat them. Are you nuts? What kind of world are you from? Didn't your mother teach you any manners?

In the old Portland it was OK to dehumanize people. In the new Portland we have to have mutual respect economically, racially, and socially. We have to absorb these values coming from different parts of the world as a community.

I.B.: How do we begin to walk down that path to a new Portland?

P.C.: We have to become engaged and people have to be engaging. Being a part of the immigrant community is not a spectator sport – you have to participate and communicate with one another. For example, Portland has the Sunday Alternatives.

One Sunday every month, the city shuts down city streets and asks people to come

out of their houses to walk or ride bikes together. There's lively music and community taking place. This is something the city does very well. (The Office of Human Relations) felt like we needed to engage different populations to be a part of these exciting events.

We asked the East Precinct commander, a great guy, if new Portlanders could help out.

The newest newcomers to Portland have been coming from tribal communities in Burma. There are six ethnic groups – they have been living and fighting the military regime there since 1958 – two generations of traumatized people living in guerrilla or refugee camps. Not urban, but in rural camps – they are not shopping or schooling. They have now been dropped in East Portland. We are talking about traumatized human beings who have been living without running water. They have no concept of schooling or getting a credit card or a new car to get around.

So we have worked with the police in East Portland to reach out to these different ethnic communities and we invite people into to meet the police. Precinct Commander Mike Crebs talks to the parents and kids and says, "Welcome, this is your police station. These are your policemen. If you have problems and need help, call us and the police will be there." Back home, if you see a gun or a uniform, you run. We're educating people.

Now the police are working with Burmese kids and Sunday parkways. These kids with vests on and little badges are out there directing traffic. They may not even be able to speak English, but they are a part of the community in a way that wouldn't be possible otherwise. There's many ways we can organize people to be a part of the community. And that's what we're working towards.

We're looking to lead. We've tried letting white folks lead, and we cannot be patsies anymore; it's too painful. For us, the worst thing we can do is to create a culture of assistance, a culture of co-dependency. We have to break out of this pattern. We have to be able to take leadership roles and act upon them.

I.B.: Why are people coming to the new Portland?

P.C.: People end up here because Portland has the infrastructure and has

historically been kind to refugees from around the world. And if you get 10 families then all of the sudden you have a hundred families because people follow one another, right? Portland has the 11th-largest refugee population in the country.

I.B.: What are some of the biggest challenges facing the immigrant community today?

P.C.: Jobs. If you look at refugees – refugees get eight months of federal assistance – so they have an eight-month window to create an American way of life. Most of the low-income jobs that would normally be available to immigrant or refugee families no longer exist with the economy. Folks want to work. They will work three jobs. It's not that the jobs don't pay enough. They just aren't there.

The extraordinary joy of being able to work when you damn well please is amazing. Many places around the world there are no jobs. No one is going to pay you a wage by the hour. Work hard or not you get paid – really? It's unthinkable.

The next thing that people need is to have their own businesses – especially if you have a skill and an ambition. It's crucial that we develop micro-enterprises and micro-loans for people to start their own businesses and mentors to help with this process.

Back home you get yourself a wok and a propane burner and you make the best damn fried rice on the corner. Then you move from a wok and burner to a cart, from a cart to a stand and from a stand to a restaurant. We have to give people to opportunity to lift themselves up.

Lastly, and maybe the most important, our schools are failing our kids – specifically the ethnic and minority kids. You take the kids from Burma, for example. We have 18-year-old kids coming to the country with a fourth-grade education. You put an 18-year-old in a large high school in Portland and they are not going to last. They are going to get frustrated and quit, especially our young men who need their macho on. They are going to get made fun of and made a fool. They don't last long. Our system is failing.

The schools recently aggregated 25 years worth of data. It had never been done before. Don't ask me why. In 25 years, the ethnic minority in Portland has been growing, while the staff at the schools working with these kids has seen no growth.

In 25 years! There's no accountability there. We have one of the richest school districts in the country, yet nearly half of our students are failing and/or dropping out of school. Something is wrong with this picture. Unbelievable.

You look at the people working in the schools, and they are great human beings, smart, energetic, but we still can't seem to account for the system failing. There have to be changes.

I.B.: Tell us about your experience at *The Asian Reporter* and your take on the media.

P.C.: Media is real important. Without that voice it's very hard to make a common cause. I think what you do really well at *Street Roots*, and what I would like to think we do well at *The Asian Reporter*, is to create a narrative and then push the narrative. If we leave that to someone else, it's not going to be pretty. The people on the ground have to control the narrative.

Your people on the corners are a fabric of our community. You've had bad guys in the past and really good guys, and that's just something we all have to deal with. It's about hope. And that's what to me *Street Roots* stands for. We try to capture the same at *The Asian Reporter*.

I.B.: Do you see yourself running for public office anytime in the future?

P.C.: No. I come from a line of men whose job is to reconcile things. That's my place, and that's my plan for the future. We solve all of our problems around the kitchen table. You get your big uncles and aunts and mothers and daughters. Everybody contributes. One individual can talk to God, this guy can cook really well (laugh), and this woman can talk to my enemy and so forth. We all have things that we do to contribute. So the idea of being a leader and having people elect me because they like me is foreign to me.

Saying that, we have many people that are being trained to become future leaders in our community. We need to be running three to four candidates at all times because it's about the conversation. Winning and losing doesn't matter so much, because we're all going to win if we have people talking about our demographics.

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