

## GOOD MONEY AFTER BAD

Seattle puts \$8 million behind grassroots initiatives to stop youth violence on the streets

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# Living between two worlds

*African refugees battle cultural isolation as they try to adapt to their new home in Portland*

BY MARA GRUNBAUM  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

On a toasty Tuesday afternoon, Suleqa Ismail wears the trademarks of two different continents: her dark, shoulder-length headscarf reflects the tradition of her native Somalia, while the purse she carries – white with a sequined Minnie Mouse appliqué – is classic American. The split runs through her family, too: The oldest of Ismail's four children, 9-year-old daughter Fartun, was born in Africa, but her 17-month-old son, Fuad, is a

stateside native.

There's even some ambivalence to her experience in the United States. Although Ismail and her husband, Saleman Adan, are infinitely grateful that they were able to leave war-plagued Somalia and come here as refugees four years ago, the challenges they've faced since have made their transition less than smooth. They're one of many

African families in Portland who've run across serious housing hurdles since arriving in the U.S.

Since January of 2007, Ismail and Adan have lived with their children at the New Columbia, the Housing Authority of Portland's sprawling low-income housing complex in North Portland. They pay a third of their income for rent, which was adjusted down when Adan was laid off from his job with a rental car company in February of last year.

This spring, they received a letter stating that the clutter in their yard was in violation of their lease, but because they can't read English and speak only a Somali dialect called Maay Maay, they didn't realize the notice was important, and it was forgotten.

In July, to their surprise, Ismail and Adan received a final eviction notice. The couple was baffled.

"We just never understood what the problem

*Suleqa Ismail and daughter Fatheya, 6, have lived in Portland for four years but still find limited resources or opportunities to fully engage the larger community*

PHOTO BY KEN HAWKINS  
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## Distict judge green lights lawsuit against city's camping ordinance

STAFF REPORTS

A district judge has given the green light to a group of people experiencing homelessness to go forward with their class-action lawsuit against the city of Portland's camping ordinance.

In a decision reached Friday, District Judge Ann Aiken ruled against the city in its effort to dismiss the grounds for the lawsuit, concluding, in laymen's terms, that the suit – which seeks to declare the city's no-camping ordinance unconstitutional – has the muster to go forward.

The group of four homeless individuals say that the city's enforcement of no camping and temporary structures ordinances "criminalize the status of being homeless, singles out the homeless

for disparate treatment, and prevents the homeless from traveling to or residing in the city of Portland." Three of the four plaintiffs have physical disabilities that prevent them from securing full-time employment, according to their suit.

Altogether, attorneys with the Oregon Law Center argued five reasons why the lawsuit should go forward. Judge Aiken supported two – that the ordinances violated their rights to be free from cruel and unusual punishment under the Eighth Amendment, and their rights to equal treatment under the law. The judge dismissed their claims to defend their rights to free travel, freedom of movement, and due process.

Monica Goracke with the Oregon Law Center

says that the judge's ruling allows the case to proceed.

"The next step is to exchange information in the discovery process," Goracke says, which will mean several more months will pass before there is any further decision on the plaintiff's claims.

The city prohibits camping or the construction of temporary structures on public property. However, those ordinances may be lifted by the city in "extraordinary circumstances."

Street Roots was unable to reach the City Attorney's office for comment by press time.

In a recent report from the federal Department

**The city prohibits camping or the construction of temporary structures on public property.**

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