

Leaving

by Kareem Ali

Outside
The breath of your smile
Lingers,
Past the well soaked Sunday papers
Then onto the awfully wrapped winter flowers.

Beyond that one
Unshowered night
Your face appeared as a form of mystery,
As a task of remembering
Past the broken lakes
The drunken blue jays
Only whispered,
Rising on crutches of air.

A vendor's observation on better days

I have observed standing on my corner at 12th and Couch at Whole Foods that being homeless, having no full-time job, and living under a bridge, I'm happier than 85 percent of the people who walk by me every day. I say "hello" and "good morning." I don't get any response. But, I keep trying. I have noticed that the happy people, the people who are OK with themselves and with this person standing on the corner, sometimes buy a paper from me. The sad people don't. But I keep trying, saying "hello" and "good morning," trying with a smile, to help someone have a better day.

—ROBERT S.



Art that can kill

By Fay Kaylius

James Chasse was kicked to death by police on the corner of 13th & Everett
James was killed in front of Blue Hour, Wyden & Kennedy advertising and PICA
The Portland Institute of Contemporary Art.
PICA changed this old working class neighborhood
This place where James walked and did his work, underground art
The contemporary artists were the first to gentrify this area around James & the local underground
Rents go up, buildings torn down and the poor artists are forced onto the streets, here
Wyden & Kennedy for NIKE, here.
Nike provides riot gear for police
Blue Hour restaurant foie gras
Investors built their new high-rise condos
Where those old artist spaces use to stand
Art & the state embedded ...
The spectacle of terrible acts
Like a concrete skull held up high
On a pike for all to see
This, the price James had to pay
The police are the rabid dogs for the city, and contemorary art is gentrification
There is the consequence for art with nothing to say
The underground artists and musicians of Portland stand with James Chasse and
Underground artists and musicians of this place
The Underground declares an art war on the corner of James & 13th
If artworks are a mirror held up to reflect the ills and ideals of a society
Than in this neighborhood that surrounds the intersection of James & 13th
The mirror shows an ugly image of boutique and state-sanctioned murder of Portland's underground art scene.
Indifference and capitulation of the corporate art world does not go unnoticed
The state dogs will kill you too if given the opportunity
Artists are workers
Artists always work
Art can be powerful
And bad art can kill!

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and looking at how the state addresses mental illness, addiction and foster care.

"There are a lot of churches that are already involved in these issues and that's great, but there's not enough," Currie says. "And there are a lot of churches out there that are interested in these issues, but they don't know how to get involved. So part of issue is bringing people to the table who have started programs and helping train other churches on how to replicate those efforts and expand on a statewide levies."

The event is being organized by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, and is sponsored by several faith-based groups from the Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities.

Dona Bolt has been Oregon's coordinator for homeless education for nearly 23 years, and 18,000 was the highest number she's seen in her career, but she hasn't finished compiling the 2009-10 figures yet.

"There's no indication that the numbers are decreasing," Bolt says. "In fact, it's likely that they will be going up."

The state's count of homeless students includes runaway youths who are couch

surfing and students living in motels, Bolt says, a population not picked up in the one-night shelter counts. "It's still a form of homelessness as far as children are concerned," Bolt says. "Because we're really interested in stabilizing their education in one school for as long as possible."

The same year Oregon first learned it had 18,000 homeless students, it also received \$1 million in recovery funds from the federal government to address the crisis. That was a one-time infusion that has long been spent. And while the state of Oregon doesn't fund services specifically for homeless students, Bolt foresees that looming state budget cuts to other support services will have a detrimental effect on the youths.

"It's going to take a bite," Bolt says. One of the new efforts at the statewide level this year is to start counting preschool children, ages 3 to 5, who are homelessness, and then use that information to prepare Head Start and early intervention programs for the youths in need.

"Although we're not going to have total statewide data, it's preparing for the fact that we're going to have a lot of really young kids," Bolt says. "And the developmental delays caused by environmental factors is

just ratcheted up. And due to environmental stresses, parents begin to get stressed out. It's just a real critical time for these kids to have stability. And when you're homeless, that's the one thing that you lack."

With money for social services on the decline, and the number of students experiencing homelessness on the rise, Currie and others within the interfaith community are pushing lawmakers in Washington, D.C., to channel funding toward schools and programs.

Currie and others are pushing for the passage of the Educational Success for Children and Youth Without Homes Act, which both Oregon Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden have co-sponsored. The Act, introduced near the end of 2009, would dedicate more funding to public schools to support the needs of homeless students, and ensure that course credits are preserved as students change schools, and support additional transportation needs.

Janet Byrd, executive director with Neighborhood Partnerships, one of the sponsors of the summit, says there are plans being made for a push for additional state funds when the Legislature convenes in February 2011. "There will be efforts at the

state level to support a safety net for very low income families, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Earned Income Tax Credits. At the federal level, there are a number of promising opportunities to increase funding that would support families – through the HEARTH Act, the National Housing Trust Fund, new stimulus resources, etcetera."

Canon hopes that as the faith-based community becomes more informed on the situation, more can be done to change it. "We have to realize that we have some power and we have to raise our voices and advocate for these changes. Otherwise, the people who we're trying to help have no voice."

On an issue like this, says Currie, the newspapers and others like to play up the differences of people of faith. And there are many, he concedes. But there are also a lot of things held in common.

"There is more agreement between us than people oftentimes understand or appreciate," Currie says. "I'm glad we have the chance to come together on this, but how successful we are will show in time, and it won't be anything immediate, and that's the terrible tragedy."