

EDITORIAL

Proactive housing strategies can't wait

Some disturbing trends surrounding housing have come to light in the past two weeks. Trends that unfortunately have been known on the ground for years, and many people have experienced throughout Portland's troubled history concerning race and housing.

A U.S. Census report and the Oregonian recently revealed that more than 10,000 people of color, mostly African-Americans left Portland's urban core between 2000 and 2010.

Another report compiled by the National Low Income Housing Coalition (see pg 13) shows that

What's the point in having money go toward blighted areas if the neighborhoods we create don't actually hire people of color and support poor and working people to rent and own a home in the urban core?

rents have continued to rise regionally and around the state despite high unemployment, foreclosures and the downed economy. The report reveals that to afford a two-bedroom apartment and utilities on the private market a person would have to make \$15.81, 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year —

nearly double Oregon's minimum wage.

Couple these reports with a recent study by the Oregon Fair Housing Council that found that 32 out of 50 tests based upon race and national origin revealed different treatment by area landlords for people who were African-American and Latino, and one is left shaking his or her head in disgust.

It would be easy to chastise local government for its lack of vision through urban development concerning working with people of all colors. We could point out any number of flaws concerning systems and institutions locally, and conservative business strategies that have been more concerned at times with sidewalk laws and panhandling than with smart and creative economic development for all.

The city of Portland and its business leaders need to take bold leadership concerning a number of issues outlined above.

We can start by having the city and the Portland Development Commission be more proactive to promote the hiring of minorities at the businesses that benefit from urban renewal areas. What's the point in having money go toward blighted areas if the neighborhoods we create don't actually hire people of color and support poor and working people to rent and own a home in the urban core? The city must continue to dedicate 30 percent of urban renewal revenues toward affordable housing, and ensure that people of color living in the urban core are being hired by local businesses, making it a true neighborhood renewal.

The mayor needs to fund the Portland Housing Bureau's request to develop a region-wide housing strategy, and fully fund the rent assistance pool.

We won't be able to solve the housing crisis without a clear vision and strategy. We can start by prioritizing getting people inside.

The Portland Housing Bureau, and Commissioner Nick Fish say they are exploring options education and enforcement against landlords who discriminate against renters based on race or national origin. It's the right move, and will send a clear message to institutions that discrimination around housing will simply not be tolerated under any circumstance.

We believe Portland's leaders do care deeply about people of color, and housing and employment and how it relates to creating an urban core that is vibrant for everyone. In fact, we know they do. If they choose to lead on the issue, Portlanders will follow.

STREET ROOTS' EDITORIAL BOARD

The views expressed in the editorials in Street Roots are the consensus of members of the editorial board and contributing volunteers.

Share your view on the larger vision

In October 2010 Street Roots began to notice an increase in paper sales from between 7,000 and 9,000 papers being sold every two weeks to 11,000 and 12,000. The increase in newspaper sales has remained steadfast for nearly six months.

Being a small non-profit, it's hard to be able to understand the increase in sales. We know that SR vendors are doing an

amazing job at creating community relationships on street corners throughout the city. We also know SR has some very loyal readers and supporters. These relationships coupled with quality content and solution-based advocacy is paying off in a multitude of ways. From in-depth investigative reporting to highlighting different community voices and those on the streets, the newspaper is becoming a vehicle for education and real change in the community.

On the advocacy front SR has led efforts

to work with government and the medical examiners office to better understand how and why people experiencing homelessness are dying on the streets. We have also led efforts to push government to think about a housing levy or bond — which we continue to do. We are currently involved with a campaign to assure that Oregon families are able to maintain stable housing through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF.

SR believes that by making calculated decisions about what advocacy efforts to apply and when, we can build a real movement that will push a housing agenda forward in the region. This, along with the newspaper, the vendor program and the Rose City Resource guide, has led us in a direction that involves a larger vision about movement building and how we play a role. We believe we are on the right track, but always value input from readers and supporters a like. If you have thoughts about the direction you see SR going, we would love to hear from you. Feel free to drop me a line at streetroots@hotmail.com. Thanks friends, and we appreciate the read.



DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

Israel Bayer is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach him at streetroots@hotmail.com.

LETTERS

Threats to TANF will lead to desperate measures

I really feel strongly and oppose the cuts to TANF. ("Multnomah County Commissioners vote to oppose TANF cuts," Street Roots, April 29) The cuts would cause more children to enter the foster care system. The TANF program prevents families from becoming homeless and in many cases living back with an abusive partner. What are the single parents, mostly mothers to do to support their families if they have little skills and support? One can only guess, and these guesses aren't positive such as get involved with selling drugs, prostitution, strip clubs, etc. I have worked with many families and I think the governor is very uninformed! The TANF program is a safety net program to provide support and structure to families that have nowhere to turn! Please think about the prevention of child abuse when thinking of the TANF program. It will make families desperate to hold onto their jobs including using unqualified childcare providers, many parents are desperate enough to go on TANF, I don't believe this is the answer for a more efficient future for these families!

KIM DUNN
Portland

connections. Those discussions shouldn't exclude class, sex, race, and sexual orientation because the most likely to be poor in this society are women, people of color, and as the cover article explains members of the LGBTQ community.

There does need to be more forums for people of the underclass and homeless population to talk about their issues and what should be done.

EMMA ALLEN
Radical Women, Portland

The movement has to work with us, not without us

Yes! It is time for progressives to recognize that elite, highly educated, white men are missing the mark and losing ground and time. ("Lose the rhetoric, gain a movement," Street Roots, April 29) They cannot "will" change to occur, they have to take to the streets, maybe get dirty (literally, suffer a little) and realize that they cannot make it without us, and without working for and with us.

KERRY BASSETT
Portland

We need more forums for people to connect

As a long time reader of Street Roots I really enjoy this paper. It has news that doesn't get printed in the rest of the local media outlets on the real struggles people are dealing with and how they organize.

I was moved to respond to the editorial for the April 29th issue of Street Roots "Lose the Rhetoric, and Gain a Movement". I disagree that we should shy away from using the terms "socialism" and "capitalism" with the masses. There's an assumption that people have made up their minds about these words. Is this also saying that the masses are too stupid to have their minds open to the idea of socialism or a world beyond capitalism and what that can look like? How do we work for a society where there's a permanent end to homelessness? How do we talk about people's struggles without a context of what this for profit system is doing to make us all disposable?

I do agree that we need to go beyond rhetoric. People need to talk to each other about their lives and struggles which can lead to a broader discussion on the crimes of poverty allowed under capitalism. The left needs to use less academic language and find ways to relate to people and where they're at. It's not hard to make the

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Street Roots encourages readers to submit letters and columns for publication. Send letters to the editor to the Street Roots office, 211 NW Davis St., Portland, OR 97209, or e-mailed to streetrootsnews@gmail.com.

Al-Jondi column inspires reader to make a difference

I want to let you know how much I loved the column by Sam Al-Jondi, "Make your impact happen." (Street Roots, April 29) I was moved and inspired by his words and sweet stories about some of his experiences with individuals who touched his life and made a difference that helped him feel better about himself. It is so true that it is those little moments of connecting and really seeing each other are valuable treasures. We have the ability to give those treasures to each other every day helping us all feel better about ourselves and making the world a better place. Thank you, Sam, for your well written reminders and your expression of appreciation.

I moved to Portland a year ago from California and during that year I've been buying Street Roots biweekly. I appreciate your paper and the people who distribute it so much! It contains real stories about real people which have given me a better understanding of homelessness and the challenges so many of us face on a daily basis. Keep up the amazing work!

PATRICE HANSON
Portland