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I.B.: *Some progressives say Oregon won't succumb to right-wing rhetoric concerning anti-government messaging and framing that has engulfed other regions, but in this past election, Portland lost a school levy without any organized opposition, and Clackamas County voted down building a construction bond for the Sellwood Bridge that would have cost individuals \$5 a year. The following is quote from an organizer who helped defeat the bridge levy in the Oregonian: "This grassroots effort showed the big money and big unions that they cannot push us around. This is a strong statement that people are really concerned about where their money is going. We should not be forced to pay for somebody else's bridge, the same as you should not be forced to pay for your neighbor's roof." What are your thoughts?*

J.B.: Again, I think people are afraid, and people are really hurting economically. We need to consistently and persistently articulate how public investments in our institutions benefit all of us. At the same time, we need to be willing to admit where our public institutions have not met their mission while still upholding their important role.

For example, we should all be horrified at the graduation rates in Portland Public Schools, particularly in communities of color. We all benefit from a strong system of public education that will graduate talented and creative and capable young people, equipped to take on the challenges of the future. We cannot accept a system that fails our children, and we must all commit to doing what it takes to help children succeed.

I.B.: *A lot of what many social justice groups talk about is a response to how government addresses a specific issue. In today's climate it seems like for many, talking about government programs turns people off. How to we get around this?*

J.B.: Government is invisible for many people. We forget that it's government that gives us sidewalks and street signs as well as invisible infrastructure like the Federal Communications Commission and services like animal control.

Government is also disconnected in our minds from community. We need to name and illuminate the vital systems and

structures that are how we live together in community and how we reach our communal vision.

I.B.: *The concept of obtaining racial, class, health and/or gender equity, and how we use this language has become a key goal for many organizations and institutions. Is there a disconnect between what actually happens internally with many organizations and institutions surrounding equity, and how we are actually communicating and inspiring people to create change and leadership on the ground?*

J.B.: Talking about equity challenges us in many ways. Talking about equity can trigger lots of unspoken frames, and so folks need to initiate these conversations deliberately.

Conversations have different goals. It's possible, and important, to decide what your goal is. Are you calling someone out for bad behavior? Are you trying to persuade a group to be sympathetic? Are you talking to policy makers about a specific proposal? You'll want to frame your statements differently based on your goal, think about how you're structuring the conversation, and think about how you can articulate a collective goal or benefit.

If your goal is a policy change, and you need widespread public buy in, one tested strategy is to articulate the benefit to the whole community to making the change. So the focus is not on the racialized outcomes, or the disparities, but on the ways the change will strengthen the community.

At the same time, we can't let go of the outrage that we absolutely must feel at some behaviors. Housing discrimination based on race, racial profiling by police officers — these deserve to be called out immediately and forcefully as unacceptable.

We fail at these conversations about race and equity on many levels in Portland, and I definitely include myself in the group that has failed, and, I'm afraid we'll fail again. But we can't avoid or delay these conversations. We live in a city, county and state that has systems that not only fail to provide opportunity to all of our residents, but systems that stand in the way of success. We all lose when we aren't capturing the energy and vitality and talent of our neighbors towards making a better future.

I.B.: *You wrote an indepth paper along with the Heritage Consulting Group in 2003 on funding strategies for Portland related to a housing levy and bond. In Seattle, they have been very successful with a housing levy. Why do you think they have been successful and we have not even tried?*

J.B.: Seattle issued a housing bond in 1981, and when the bond began to run out they launched it as a levy. Portland has at various times funded housing quite substantially, but policy makers have always prioritized using other tools to do housing development. Urban renewal has been a major source, there's been a lot from the General Fund, and there were bonds used that didn't require a public vote.

I'm excited to hear a broader group of advocates thinking about a levy that would include housing. There are a lot of possible approaches that could resonate with people all over Portland and Multnomah County, tying housing to common values and widely helping community priorities. Having a broad conversation makes a lot of sense, getting ideas and interests shared early so that there's a strong base of support to build upon.

I.B.: *You've been doing community development work for more than 30 years. How have you seen the climate change surrounding social justice issues?*

J.B.: People are both more connected and less connected. The incredible access to cell phones, the Internet and social media makes it easier to reach people, yet at the same time we are all bombarded with incoming information and opportunities for diversion.

We need to lose some old habits and get better at simplifying our message so that people can hear us. And we all need to listen more closely, so we can discern what the conversation is really about.


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