

On North Williams, build a movement, not just infrastructure

If you ride a bike, you probably spend a lot of time telling people about the value of bicycling. You describe the benefits for individuals and the community as a whole. You explain that Portland is a wonderful and safe place to ride a bike, but it could be safer.

HEALTHY STREETBEAT

Bicycle
Transportation
Alliance



Healthy Streetbeat is a monthly column for Street Roots written by the Bicycle Transportation Alliance (BTA). Our contributors are Rob Sadowsky, executive director, and Margaux Mennesson, communications director.

Chances are you've got friends and relatives who think you're crazy for riding a bike to work, or who don't understand why transportation dollars should go to bike infrastructure. And chances are, you've had a few people come around. I've had a few friends and relatives go from grumbling about Sunday Parkways a few years ago to now saying, "Portland should do more of those!"

In my experience, people aren't convinced by a single conversation. Most people aren't convinced by traffic counts, crash statistics, street designations, or carbon savings. We evolve in our view of the world by sharing stories, getting to know one another, finding common ground, and discovering shared beliefs among other people we trust. The statistics help support conclusions we're already inclined to draw.

Having observed the traffic conditions on North Williams every afternoon as I biked

home from work, it seemed like there should be an easy solution to get people to slow down, make it safer for people crossing the street, and reduce bus/bike conflicts. Those were some of the safety concerns identified when the North Williams Traffic Safety Operations Project kicked off in April.

Over the course of several months, I have realized that the best design solution is not necessarily the right solution. I am grateful to have the chance to learn an extraordinary amount about race, history, and gentrification on North Williams from community members who bring different perspectives and experiences to the conversation.

My colleague Susan Peithman, who represents the BTA on the Stakeholder Advisory Committee, has shared with me of the stories she's heard from residents, church leaders, business owners, families, and people who travel on North Williams.

Collectively, we are beginning to rethink our definition of success.

The BTA cannot speak to the priorities of every person who rides a bike. But as the leading bicycle advocacy and education group in the region and the state, our goal is to lay out an inspiring vision for bicycling that everyone can get behind.

Our vision for bicycling has always been part of a much larger vision for a healthy and just community. Our work to make bicycling safe and accessible is connected on

many levels with the efforts of countless other individuals and organizations who are working to transform communities.

So what if we see this as an opportunity to build a stronger, more inclusive movement, and not simply an opportunity to build infrastructure?

We might be successful.

Dr. Tim Keller, the Senior Pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Manhattan describes a successful movement as one that is marked by "an attractive, clear, unifying vision for the future together with a strong set of values or beliefs."

And "in a successful movement, the accomplishment of the vision is more important than power and position. So people are willing to make allies, be flexible and cooperate with anyone sharing the basic vision and values."

As we listen, as we hear stories, the line between those who support and those who oppose has started to blur. We don't have to decide whether the issue is about either traffic safety or social justice. It's not just about the destination, but also about being open to an alternate path forward.

Bikes are economic engines and tools of empowerment. Bicycling is an affordable, healthy mode of transportation. Bikes connect people to jobs, to physical activity, and to other people.

But bikes themselves simply are not that powerful. The power is in the movement.

Veterans converge in Portland for their national convention

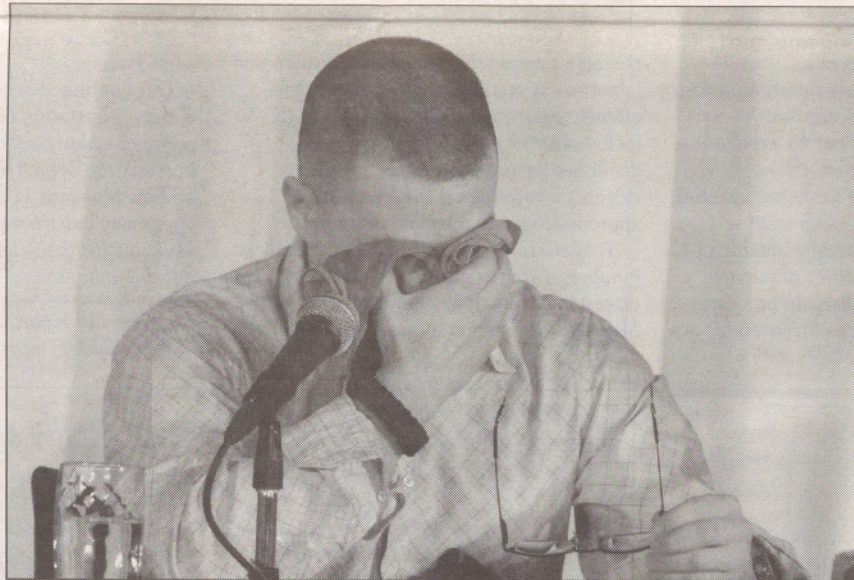
BY BECKY LUENING
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It is well known that many men and women who have served in the military, whether they served in WWII, Korea or Vietnam, or more recently Iraq and Afghanistan (many of the latter having served multiple tours), return home emotionally battered and beaten. Many struggle with drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment, homelessness, depression

or other mental issues. Others suffer serious physical injuries like Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), loss of limbs and severe burns. A beleaguered and overtaxed VA system is hard-pressed to meet all the demands for care for their returning soldiers. Some veterans find themselves caught up in the criminal justice system. Too often, disturbed and drugged, veterans and

active duty soldiers find peace by committing suicide. Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has become a household word among those who know combat veterans.

What isn't talked about is the hidden trauma veterans experience from having served their country for dubious reasons and not being able to talk about it. Throughout their service soldiers are strongly programmed to obey, not to criticize or question. In many cases the soldier's experience on the battlefield is in direct conflict with the public perception of war, yet it is extremely difficult for veterans



Domingo Rossa, member of Iraq Veterans Against the War, testifying at Winter Soldier Hearing, Silver Spring, Maryland, March 2008.

to air feelings of betrayal or contrary political views that have developed from their raw military experience. This lack of permission to tell their stories or to ask discomfiting questions in public, especially when their ideas conflict with existing norms of society, is extremely invalidating.

This phenomenon may be the explanation for the strong sense of camaraderie veterans find in groups such as Veterans For Peace (founded in 1985) and Iraq Veterans Against the War (an organization of both Iraq and Afghanistan vets who have served post 9/11), where they find not only the permission to voice their dissent but support for taking positive action to challenge the madness of war and militarism. These ex-soldiers know more than anyone that being against the war does not mean being against the soldier. Rather

their strong desire to bear witness stems from a deep sense of moral conviction. In their minds, their peace work is a life-saving mission.

This coming weekend (Aug. 3-7, hundreds of veteran members of VFP and IVAW, along with associate members and military family members, converge in Portland to attend the concurrent national conventions of the two organizations. The weekend is jam-packed with plenary speakers, panels, workshops and films on a large variety of topics under the general theme of "Resilience, Resistance and Nonviolent Revolution."

One of the strong threads of the convention is PTSD, with author David Philipps and Professor Bud Brown presenting on veterans in the criminal justice system; Dr. Edward Tick presenting

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on transformational healing for combat vets; Marine Corps veteran Jessica Goodell, author of *Shade It Black*, presenting on the emotional aftermath of serving in a military mortuary in Iraq; and Oregon filmmakers Kim Shelton and Bill McMillan screening of their film, "The Welcome," a documentary about veterans trying to find their way home at a healing retreat.

Another thread confronts nuclear war, with the film "The Forgotten Bomb" being screened by Director Bud Ryan; a workshop on "VFP's Role in Nuclear Disarmament Education" being presented by Bill Wickersham; and the veterans' participation in the Portland community commemoration, "How Can We Create a Nuclear-Free World? Not Another Hiroshima, Nagasaki or Fukushima," taking place from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Japanese-American Historical Plaza (more info at oregonpsr.org).

A listing of VFP convention events open to the public can be found at vfpnationalconvention.org under the "public events" tab. These include a special art show, "The Tenacity of Hope" on exhibit at the Littman and White Galleries at PSU's Smith Memorial Student Union, and a list of free films playing during the four days of the convention.

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