

EDITORIAL

Times are tough — and ripe with opportunity

According to the U.S. Census figures, the nation's poverty rolls increased last year by 2.5 million people. That's on top of millions more who have fallen into poverty in what the New York Times is now calling the "lost decade."

The numbers show that poverty has increased in the U.S. to the highest rate since 1993. As Chuck Sheketoff with the Oregon Center for Public Policy rightly points out, "Our safety net for poor families with children was better in the early 1990s. We had a more robust program for families with dependent children, a more robust jobs program. We are serving a smaller percentage of the poor than we used to and we're giving them less."

It's during times of crisis that many people come together, and sacrifice for the betterment of their neighbors and friends. It's also a time when some of the best ideas and plans are put into place to help maintain a healthy society.

The results are more people ending up in extreme crisis situations.

The 211Info and Referral line, along with mental health groups and services such as Human Solutions, which works with women and families, are being overwhelmed. Street Roots and others organizations are seeing

more and more people from middle-class backgrounds entering homelessness each week. Resources continue to decline, and the need continues to skyrocket.

For too many of our neighbors, these figures mean survival in its most raw form, and survival often means doing anything necessary. That's not a good place to be.

The 2013 Oregon Legislative session needs to be ready to make human and basic services its top priority. Legislators let them fall to the wayside in 2011, and the results are devastating. The city and county must stop merely talking about a strategic plan to build more revenue for housing and services, and show actual leadership, even if that means taking calculated risks. People are dying in the streets, literally, and beginning to turn in masses to the black market and other, less healthy means to make ends meet.

Saying that, it's time for all of us in the region and around the state to build a coalition of the willing. Often times, especially during election cycles we look to candidates, office holders and government bureaus to have the answers to all of our woes. The reality is, it's the people who will move these agendas forward.

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Organizations around the region and state need to be working together to push the poverty agenda forward. That means working together to create a community mobilization across issues, and thinking about how our own self-interests may or may not move these agendas forward.

The environment today is ripe for organizing, be it affordable housing and homeless groups, immigrants and refugees, people of color and private partners, transportation and equity groups, unions and neighborhood groups. It's time to seize the moment and support one another from the ground up. Because the top down approach has gotten us nowhere.

Change is in the air — thanks to you

Welcome to the new page two of Street Roots. We have moved the editorial and my column, along with letters to the editor, to the front of the newspaper. Street Roots editorials have received a lot of play over the past two years, and it only makes sense to bring the opinions of the organization and readers to the front of the newspaper.



DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

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

The newspaper continues to grow and become part of the fabric of this community. On street corners throughout the city, vendors, readers and businesses continue to have healthy and inspiring relationships that develop into a real change in the lives of people on the streets.

"The newspaper helps me keep a positive outlook, knowing that regular readers and others in the neighborhood are friendly and not judgmental of me," says vendor Mitch DeSousa, who sells at the Starbucks on 28th and East Burnside. "It helps keep my self-esteem alive out here, and that can't be underestimated."

Street Roots is playing a leading role in building relationships across issues and class lines in our community. We believe that to mobilize community members and to stay engaged in issues facing poverty, not to mention giving people hope and immediate income to people who have little or none, we must do the best job we can to offer readers a wide variety of content.

By highlighting different voices in the community through the opinion pages, and providing road-map journalism that highlights a problem and gives readers a way to stay engaged in solutions, we are making a difference.

We will never be able to create lasting change in a vacuum. It takes all of us, with different interests, experiences and perspectives to create a healthy community. We are so grateful for your loyalty and readership. One vendor and one newspaper at a time, we are making buzzwords such as "hope," and "change" a reality. We couldn't begin to do this without you.

We hope readers like the new arrangement, and we encourage individuals to write to the newspaper and sound off on issues that matter to you.

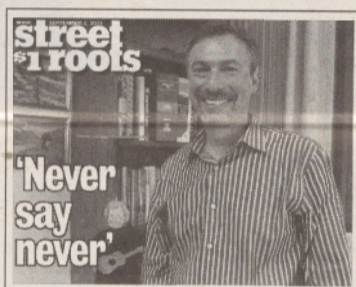
LETTERS

Office of Equity and Human rights — the proper pairing

The Office of Equity and Human Rights is what the title should be (Re: Street Roots, Sept. 2). The Office of Equity is paramount in including the Portland Human Rights

Commission. Furthermore, it is imperative that the Human Rights Commission is not marginalized nor ostracized in the move to create this new office. The mayor and City Commissioner Fritz were at the last Human Rights Commission meeting on Wednesday, inviting the cooperation of the Human Rights Commission. The commission seemed receptive in spite of the very cold shoulder and left out of the discussion, feelings that they all have.

PTERY LIEGHT
Portland



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send letters to the editor to the Street Roots office, 211 NW Davis St., Portland, OR 97209, or e-mail to streetrootsnews@gmail.com.

Yes, the city needs to start showing some commitment to equity and human rights. I think the level of change needed will involve much, much more for it to really work. As long as there is "majority" rules type voting, there will be majority ownership of solutions to those whose votes add up to minority counts. Thus, the burden of proof will lay with those who experience oppression, while the burden of doing something about it through policy lies with those who are majority. This does not work. The majority should not make these decisions.

— JOE ANYBODY
Portland

Democracy is not majority rule. Democracy

Taxpayer money should help the poor, not privileged

Please publish the full story "Never say never." (Sept. 2, Street Roots) It's an awesome piece of journalism. Portland is really a city of apartheid. The rich people live in the core and get PDC money. That taxpayer money should rebuild services for the people who need it most in the outer edges of Portland and Gresham. We are building lavish German beer pubs for hipsters in Mississippi rather than get basic food and health for people outside the 205 and 405 freeways. Portland is a model for apartheid sold as a green city. It's the height of hypocrisy. The only socialist thing about Portland is our great wall of power for those inside 205 and 405.

BARBARA R.
Portland

Our mission

Street Roots creates income opportunities for people experiencing homelessness and poverty by producing a newspaper and other media that are catalysts for individual and social change.

Street Roots publishes every two weeks, launching on Fridays, and is available exclusively through our street vendors or by subscription. We are proud members of the North American Street Newspaper Association and the International Network of Street Papers.

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Street Roots Rose City Resource

Street Roots publishes the Rose City Resource, a comprehensive booklet of services for people experiencing homelessness and poverty. To inquire about getting an order of the Rose City Resource for distribution, please write to pdxrosecityresource@gmail.com. Resources are also available online at www.rosecityresource.org.

Vendors

Street Roots vendors buy the newspapers for 25 cents each, and sell them for \$1, keeping the 75 cents in profit for themselves. In order to keep the cost low to our vendors, we receive additional support from donations and in-kind contributions.



75¢
goes directly to the vendor
who sold you the paper

25¢
goes toward
printing costs

Vendor orientations are at 1 p.m. every Monday Wednesday and Friday at the Street Roots office.