

EDITORIAL

The alarm has sounded. Are progressives listening?

It's easy to think that in a country as massive as the United States, individuals are alone and isolated from doing anything to really alter the course of the current state of affairs, here or abroad. The momentum for the progressive movement feels almost nonexistent.

That is until you look beyond our own city on a hill to realize that the world today is actually alive with progressive social movements — it's just a matter of having the right set of circumstances and group of people willing to sustain them. When does enough become enough?

No one expected the masses (helped by technology) in Egypt, Syria and Palestine to create non-violent social movements that would turn their own countries and the world upside down.

The protests aren't so much a response from Wall Street directly, but a distress call to the rest of the country to respond.

And while it's true that the outcomes are still unknown in those countries. What is known is that when people unite behind each other, and support one another's

collective will to say enough is enough, big things can happen.

Why not dream big?

When you look at the current Occupy Wall Street actions that are taking place, it's almost as if progressives are collectively holding their breath, hoping something more will happen. Will it amount to anything? What possibly could come of a small group of people waving banners and chanting, "No justice! No peace!" Well, not a lot. Unless that group swells, and enough are willing to carry on.

That's what is happening in New York currently where thousands of people are simply not leaving Wall Street. From faraway Portland, a city that once knew a thing or two about non-violent direct action, it feels like the protests aren't so much a response from Wall Street directly, but a distress call to the rest of the country to respond.

The real question then isn't what the Wall Street protests mean, or how effective they will be in changing Wall Street, it is are we listening, and more importantly, are we willing to stand up and say enough is enough.

Other cities and countries have seen a spark — London, Paris and Madison. Nothing has stuck. As of press time, there are scores of cities around the country, including Portland, holding actions in solidarity.

Now, we know what you're thinking. Another protest, really? Won't it just be the anarchists and socialists and a bunch of poverty groups like Street Roots? Maybe it will and it will go nowhere. We hope that it would be more.

From the photos and videos we've all seen in New York, it sure doesn't look like just the typical riffraff out making a statement. It looks like common everyday folk — the same kind of folk that packed Waterfront Park to see Barack Obama speak three-plus years ago. The protests in New York look like the same people in Portland that are forced to choose between child care, bus transportation and being able to look for a job. The same people who have been on the unemployment lines for months, if not years, and have to choose between the water bill and not having a place to live.

It's high time we stood up and made a statement as progressives. Now is as good a time as any, and if we think things are bad now, wait and see what happens if we do nothing. Join in and make your voice heard in Waterfront Park, Oct. 6. Go to occupytogether.org to find out more.

A simple equation: We all play a part

The rainy season is upon us, and for people on the streets that means that survival now becomes a matter of life or death.



DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

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

The issue of homelessness for many is an issue of public safety, but in reality, thousands of people sleeping outdoors is an issue of public health.

Some people who are mentally and physically vulnerable and have no access to health care or a roof over their head, will get sick and die this winter. It's that simple and harsh.

It hasn't always been like this. Over the past three decades urban environments across the U.S. have experienced a massive rise in people experiencing homelessness. Many would have you believe that it's because of a person's individual choices, or simply bad luck — an urban myth that has been perpetuated by years of negative campaigns, ignorance and false assumptions against the homeless.

In reality, over the past three decades we have gone from a small portion of U.S. citizens sleeping outdoors to millions of people living without a safe and decent home. For years, the eroding of government institutions coupled with an array of social factors and corporate welfare has created a perfect storm for the modern-day downtrodden.

Many young people under the age of 35 have been born into a generation where homelessness is a normal part of society.

It's not normal.

When I speak to groups, I often start with trauma itself. When you strip back all

of the rhetoric surrounding the issue of homelessness, that's really what we are talking about: trauma.

Many people entering homelessness may have already experienced one or more nervous breakdowns on the way to the streets. Maybe it's an abusive partner, or it's their experience in Afghanistan. Possibly they lost it all — the home, the wife, the husband, and kids. Maybe the family is still together, but there's simply no place left to turn and living in the car is what life has come down to. Maybe you are coming out of the pen, or have been hitting life fast and hard and have burned every bridge from Sellwood to San Antonio.

Regardless of how one arrives on the streets, once you're down on the block, it's a hard-knock life. Street Roots witnesses some of the most beautiful acts of human kindness on one hand, and the cruelest form of survival on the other. Throw in the rain, the rats, the police and private security, the drugs and the endless uphill struggle to access services and housing, and who among us wouldn't crack, or develop some kind of mental disorder?

It's a living hell that becomes a thin grey line. When logic is found in the form of adequate services and housing, it still takes years to get back what has been lost both physically and mentally, if at all.

So the next time you see someone sleeping in a doorway, or a family living in their car, remember three things. One, it's not normal, and we shouldn't subvert to such a society. Two, it has been a long road for the many who sleep outdoors. And three, everyone deserves a safe and decent home. We all play a part. It's as simple as that.

LETTER

Reader support helps us stay the course

I just want to let you know that I love your paper. Hands down one of the best print publications in town, perhaps the best newspaper in town, and the best street paper I have read. Thank you so much for your informative, balanced and insightful reporting and interviews. It is a real pleasure.

I would also like to say that the poem, "I bought an eighth of smoke" featured in the Aug. 5 issue was really a standout piece. It is hanging on my wall. I only

wish the author was known so that I could seek out more of his/her work!

Stay the course!

DREW

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 joanne@streetroots.org.



Recent gang member turned educator Leo Rodriguez talks about the globalization of a violent culture.

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.