

EDITORIAL

Time to roll up our sleeves and put OWS to work

There's a lot of white noise enveloping the Occupy Wall Street movement, but one truth still resonates: OWS has awakened a sleeping giant, and despite tense confrontations, the menacing numbers of riot police, and even the immense gravity of the status quo – it is a positive force in which we can all find strength.

At its core, the movement seeks to reverse the policies that have resulted in mass foreclosures, rampant and unwavering unemployment, skyrocketing student debt, downward mobility and widening economic inequality for 99 percent of Americans. It is about the positive change people desire and deserve as citizens of the richest country in the world. It's about decency.

History has shown us that amazing change can occur when Americans put their mind toward righting social grievances.

The camp in downtown Portland sent a clear message that the massive march and demonstration on Oct. 6 was not a one-off, like so many other protests that bubble up and then simmer down.

This is a movement that is here to stay, even if the camp, for the long-term, did not. The camp was a place of daily meetings and consensus gathering, and academic workshops on political issues, including corporate personhood and economics. It wasn't perfect, but it made a statement 24 hours a day during its existence.

The camp is gone, but perhaps we don't really need it anymore. This movement has legs, across the country, and its future lies with people flexing their collective muscle. It's shortsighted to say, as one politician did, that the movement is "just anger and frustration." Still, that's a powerful combination, now shared by multiple nationwide unions, including the Teamsters, SEIU, AFL-CIO, United Autoworkers and National Nurses Union, among many other organizations. It is millions in solidarity on issues that are becoming common talking points in city halls and capital buildings across the country.

Mayor Sam Adams has said himself that he hopes the movement doesn't go away. And he can be a positive part of keeping it in motion. He can start by following through with talk of moving city funds out of the major corporate banks, including Wells Fargo, and into local credit unions. He has pledged to work to peacefully continue the message of the Occupy movement, and he should have the full support of the City Council to be bold, to be a leader within government. This includes passing a resolution calling for the end of corporate personhood policies that have corrupted our democracy and our economy, and overpowered the will of citizens who have been clamoring for change for more than a decade, but who only now have bent the system's ear.

We can also throw our weight behind the campaign finance reform efforts to end corporations' freedom to spend unlimited resources to influence elections. The same is true for putting real teeth into banking regulations that institutions have criminally skirted to their great financial gain and our peril. There's a lot of work to be done.

History has shown us that amazing change can occur when Americans put their minds toward righting social grievances. That giant has been asleep for 30 years. Now that it's awake, let's roll up its sleeves. Our anger and frustration may have gotten Wall Street and Washington's attention, but action is what will hold their feet to the fire.

Building something special with every edition

The Street Roots mottoes are "For those who can't afford free speech," and "Real news from the streets."

The content and investigative journalism in the paper provide ongoing narratives on a range of issues concerning poverty, including health care, immigration, housing, homelessness, public safety and more.

The newspaper offers solution-based models and pathways for the community at large – often taking very complex issues,

boiling them down and showing readers ways to be involved.

More than that the newspaper offers a voice to people on the edge, be it economically or socially. It offers a snapshot of life on the streets without apology, but always with a purpose.

One SR volunteer put it best when she said, "If the investigative journalism of the paper uncovers the way people are being marginalized, the personal side of the newspaper reminds us that we are all connected."

The vendor program is something more altogether. First and foremost, it's about basic survival and allowing people to access immediate income. For some that might mean a hotel tonight, out of the pouring rain, for another it might mean supplementing a small income to improve their quality of life. SR puts \$10,000 minimum into the hands of people experiencing homelessness and poverty every two weeks. Multiply that by 26 – and that's \$260,000-plus a year for people

to become self-sufficient. That's about the same amount of the annual SR budget. We are creating as much income for people in poverty as we are spending as an organization to publish the newspaper, the Rose City Resource Guide and offer a variety of services. It's a win-win.

Moreover, the SR vendor program is about creating relationships and building self-confidence. For many people, purchasing a newspaper from a SR vendor may be the only interaction they have with someone on the streets. For vendors selling the newspaper, it allows people to be part of the broader community and to not be reliant on the social-service continuum for their basic survival. Instead of hanging out all day among other people on the streets, many vendors are selling the newspaper and developing a relationship and customer service with businesses and individuals throughout the region. Beautiful.

SR, along with the help of people like you, has built something special in Portland. We are delivering readers some of the best news and commentary the city has to offer, all while giving people on the streets a hand-up and offering a healthy environment for bridging class and cultural lines.

SR can't do this without you. We ask that you make a donation to SR through the Willamette Week Give!Guide (see back page) or through the Web site at www.streetroots.org. No amount is too small or large, and with your donation you are helping SR remain strong and build capacity towards expanding our programs. With your support, dreams come true, and social change does happen.

Thank you for your consideration.



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DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

ESSAY

The war is over

BY JAY THIEMEYER

The old man with no color in his face wandered loosely down Lombard saluting every dark window he passed. It was approaching midnight, only a few weeks until Thanksgiving. A week from Armistice Day. 11-11-11. 11th hour, 11th minute. 11th day of the 11th month. The war in Iraq was over.

The old man saluted his reflection.

Everybody who thought they knew him said he was no damn Marine. He was just crazy. Been a drunk since before dirt. Been a familiar in St. Johns forever, walking and checking, walking and checking, never letting a pay phone get past him. Wasn't a coin slot that was safe when he was around.

They wouldn't even allow him in the bars these days. I saw him once try to get in Brad's, and even they wouldn't let him in. No neighborhood taverna to call home. Man, that's sad.

That's doing something. Getting barred from Brad's. For life! But he didn't remember.

Next night I saw him get barred again, like

nothing from the night before had registered at all. When he left that door, with that same bald-headed fuck yelling at him, telling him no one wanted him around, he checked the coin slot at the payphone he'd just passed and crossed the street.

I've seen him walk across Lombard in rush hour. Oblivious. But this night there were no cars. Everyone, it seemed, had disappeared. Only a ghost like him was about. The Spirit of Thanksgiving. Old St Bic, I called him. Don't ask me why. Maybe because his flame was out of fluid. Like his brain, it'd all leaked out.

And all he could come up with to do this Sunday night when he had the stage of Lombard all to himself, was thump on dark store windows, pound on locked doors and yell for someone whose name was unintelligible. Over and over till he came to the corner and turned.

God knows where he lived. When I'd asked him, to see if he needed help, he looked right through me. Like I was the ghost.

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.

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.