

## EDITORIAL

Women religious stand tall  
with community's support

Since the early 19th century in the American West it was nuns, not the bishops that laid the foundation for many of the institutions that make up the world we live in. Built on the backs of these women were hospitals, foundations and universities that exist to this day.

In this edition of the paper, we talked with local women religious, priests, and others working in a different kind of frontier, the one laden with poverty, homelessness and conflict. It's a grey world, fraught with challenging options and no easy answers. In this world, there is birth control, gay rights, even abortion — and almost as important, there is

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community organization, political empowerment, and partnerships in advocacy and social justice.

So when the Vatican issued the edict to reform the progressive sisterhood of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, it

seems almost as if it's coming from another world, far removed from reality. It is a move by bishops in Rome to clamp down and reverse the gears of the national organization, its 1,500 members, and the 50,000 women religious they represent.

Judging by the backlash from inside and outside the Catholic Church, it will fail.

The bishops' move to take over the organization has drawn protests from Catholics across the country, and allied organizations to speak out on behalf of the nuns, their work and their message. The bishops themselves defend the individuals, and say this action is only against the organization. However, the nuns have come together in solidarity around the LCWR, speaking as one voice through the organization that was created to provide leadership and develop leaders on the ground. And on the ground, everyone is in agreement: The work in the trenches will go unimpeded.

In fact, the only visible support for the takeover is ultra-conservative commentators on websites seemingly dedicated to the liberal purging of the church. It's a landscape Street Roots has traveled through before, having been targeted by conservative Catholic watchdogs for our Rose City Resource, a pocket guide of services and agencies for people experiencing homelessness and poverty. As a result, Street Roots was cut off from funding from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development because the booklet listings include Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest provider of medical care for low-income women. For the same reason, that booklet will no longer be distributed by Providence Hospital, a Catholic institution, for fear of appearing to endorse Planned Parenthood, an abortion provider.

Fear is a challenge in any frontier, and the nuns should be commended for not letting that stand in the way of their work with people, one on one, amid the reality on the streets. Whether it fits religious doctrine or not, that reality exists for thousands of people in Portland, deserving of both a church and organizations that are brave enough to speak out against injustice. We commend the nuns and womenpriests for all of their hard work and courage.

## Lose the filters and let the story be told

Imagine if social service workers were allowed to Twitter, Facebook and Instagram their experiences (with permission) through the process of getting

someone into housing. The systems level approach to social service work that is so hard to communicate to the broader public would be boiled down to narratives and visuals of people's hardships and successes. It

could change public opinion. It makes more sense to Tweet 100 pictures of people getting an apartment with a key in hand over the course of six months than try to explain to the public in one shot why \$1 million dollars will house 100 people they don't have any connection with.

There is a generational and technology gap between the leaders and the workers of many nonprofits on the poverty front. Many nonprofits and government institutions are more concerned with controlling a specific message than trusting their workers, or the people they serve to use social media and letting the narratives and visuals speak for themselves.

By not allowing people to share their experiences day-in and day-out, nonprofits working on the poverty front are falling woefully behind. It's a disservice not only to

the people involved in doing the work, but also to the broader public. Thousands of people would instantly feel more connected to helping fight homelessness and to the work non-profits do by understanding the experiences their peers have on the streets.

At the end of the day, what the general public sees is not the stories of poor people. They see the stories of poor people filtered through through the lens of public relations departments and press releases that the media often times reprints verbatim. Having a message is great, but if people aren't accessing that message and are turned off by the status quo, what good is it? Our movement doesn't have the money to buy the message, and it's illegal for nonprofits to buy politicians. Open-source technology and social media are tools of social change. Being creative and using these platforms can help level the playing field, while offering people an organic way to engage.

I cringe when some of the smartest minds in our city tell me they can't access their organization's social media, or can't blog about a successful experience on the streets because of their organizational policies. It's time for non-profits to turn the page and give their workers and people they serve more of a voice in a larger community vision to combat poverty. It's time for nonprofits on the poverty front to join the 21st century. If you listen closely, there's a story to be told.

DIRECTOR'S  
DESK

By Israel Bayer

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

## My motivation

By Shima Haydarzadeh

I am an independent young lady  
I ain't a ho anymore.  
"Oh no, ho"  
Get it right, oh please

I'm just getting my life straight  
Strictly for real

I feel I'm no thang without him  
Things change, my days pass by  
Each day with sadness

Then I sit on a ground  
Leaning against the wall  
Smoking my cigarette.

He told me never cry,  
Keep my head up  
My eyes filled with tears  
Remembering his words

Then I yell, I ain't gonna give up!  
I'm going to embrace everything that I got

Dis is my motivation.

## 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.