

EDITORIAL

Camp sweeps shouldn't be inhumane

Lawsuits seldom provide the most compelling reads. But the stories told in the recent filing by the Oregon Law Center are personal and disturbing.

It tells the story of several Portland men and women experiencing homelessness, who after losing everything lost it again under government authority. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of the men and women who lost their belongings in what they claim was an illegally conducted sweep by the Oregon Department of Transportation, which owns the property. They are suing ODOT and Multnomah County for failing to comply with the terms for notifying people when a camp is being cleared out, and for storing non-garbage property for the requisite time after the sweep.

Going weekly will give vendors a stable income week in and week out — something that will no doubt change the lives of people who sell the newspaper for the better.

It's unfortunate this suit had to come about, both for the impact on the plaintiffs and the fact that this was supposedly settled years ago. In 2011, a lawsuit on similar grounds was settled with an agreement to post notices of camp sweeps at least 10 days before the action, and that property would be stored for at least 30 days.

The camp in question was posted for the sweep on Sept. 30 and was cleared three days later.

But the story is much more personal than its logistics. On the morning of Oct. 3, Tammi Carr woke up to find trucks and a work crew outside of her tent. Police officers told her she had 15 minutes to leave. She left, not knowing that her belongings were being removed, only to return two days later to find nothing but debris left behind, according to the complaint. She had lost everything she owned, she says — everything she had to clear out of a storage unit she used to hold her belongings since becoming homeless last year.

That night she slept near a bridge in a borrowed sleeping bag.

Brian Shipley woke up to the same situation, not knowing about the sweep and told he had 15 minutes to pack up and leave. After that time, work crews began bagging up and tossing camping items into the dump trucks. Shipley says he lost his tent, his sleeping bag, clothing, a duffel bag, shoes, books, a bike and bike trailer, a Coleman lantern and more. He slept that night in a field with a sleeping bag someone had given him.

One man had left the camp on Sept. 30 for work building a deck at the coast. He returned Oct. 4, the day after the sweep, to find all of his belongings, including a large chest he used to store his tools for his trade, gone. He was only able to recover a few of his tools, and never saw the chest, among other belongings, again.

Another woman — who had just gotten into housing the night before the sweep occurred — says she lost her birth certificate, her marriage certificate, prescription medication, a medical brace for her leg and foot, cookware, and much more.

Regardless of the legal rights or justification for this camp to be cleared, this suit should give everyone pause on how we treat people pushed to the edge — literally and figuratively. In the end, they're suing to be treated like humans, rather than an invasive species. Without a universal standard that everyone understands, with support from social services and resources from all government agencies involved, we're needlessly perpetuating this tragedy.

Help lead the way to a weekly paper!

Nothing about publishing a newspaper is easy. Being able to maintain a timely and informative product that engages and educates the public is even harder.

Street Roots works tirelessly to bring readers insights and stories that represent the community we serve — readers and people experiencing

poverty alike.

We hope that readers who have not donated this year, or ever before, will help us on our journey. Street Roots finds itself at a crossroads in wanting to go weekly this time next year. In order to do this, we need the support of the community.

A one-time or recurring donation to Street Roots will go a long way in helping us realize our dreams. More importantly, it will help increase vendors' income by up to 70 percent. It will act as a stabilizer their lives to be able to work towards real individual and collective change.

Simply put, a donation, large or small, will mean giving people a hand up.

It will mean giving people on the fringes a voice through the newspaper and online. It will mean holding government accountable on the poverty and social

justice front. It will mean giving people of color, those less fortunate, those with innovative ideas and dreams, a platform to tell their stories and for the general public to understand how we are all connected.

I've said it before, but it's true. Street Roots is a small train that carries a heavy load in the community. We are all Street Roots — readers and vendors alike.

The heart of what we do is supporting people experiencing poverty and homelessness to get back on their feet. We play a role in facilitating people's access to housing and other services with an array of social-service providers and partners. This year, Street Roots will have given more than 400 people an opportunity to prevent or work toward getting out of homelessness.

By helping us go weekly you are joining the Street Roots team and saying, "I believe in something more, something good, something powerful and growing in our community." We can't thank you enough for your support.

Give today by going to www.streetroots.org or at the Give Guide (www.giveguide.org) or by writing to us at 211 NW Davis, Portland, Ore. 97209.

Have an amazing holiday and we thank you for the love!



DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

Israel Bayer is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach him at israel@streetroots.org or follow him on Twitter @israelbayer.

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

Walking Through My Many Shadows

by Phoenix Key

Walking through my many shadows
I hear the past creeping hollows
Calling out, calling out, calling me out
Am I to blame if I go insane?
Wild little running man
Take me as I am and I'll do
The same my friend forever
We're all actors and yet we're also
The Audience
Laughing and crying together
Telling whole lies and half truths
For each other
Calling out, calling out, calling me out
As I walk through the valley
Of my second death, do I learn
The lessons of the first?

Taken by the fall, hit the wall
Can you see I'm calling you out
This time around?
Hear that sound, it's you in
The mirror looking back at me
Painfully in love with life's bereavement
Calling out, calling out, calling me out
I turned to leave, but couldn't
Being pulled back to your stare
The only way out is to run through
The glass, shards of pain now
Show on my face
Am I now in the right place?
When I leave will there be a trace?
Of his loving grace
Calling out, calling out, calling me out

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 guides, call 503-228-5657. 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.