

EDITORIAL

What we already know about domestic and sexual violence

If it didn't involve famed NFL player Ray Rice, and if it wasn't under the unblinking eye of today's omnipresent elevator cameras, the incident of a man beating his fiancé to the point of unconsciousness would be just another case of horrific abuse.

Just another case — like the tens of thousands reported each year in Oregon alone. By one national survey, one in three Oregonian women reported having experienced rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner. In Multnomah County, county records indicate that one out of every seven women aged 18-64 is physically abused by an intimate partner in the course of a year. That's 28,000 women in Multnomah County in one year.

We can ask why — why people do what they do in these situations — or we can listen to what we already know. Housing and safe shelter is an integral part of survival.

Unfortunately it often takes a novelty angle— like a celebrity player or an unexpected college setting — to elevate the issue of sexual and domestic violence to the public conscience.

But so be it. We're talking about it.

Beyond the sensationalist coverage is the ongoing reality that women and men of all backgrounds, education and class can and do become victims of domestic and sexual violence. And it is well established that homelessness and poverty will aggravate the chances for survival, as it does with virtually every issue.

Access to shelter is paramount for escaping a domestic and sexual violence. According to information compiled by the Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women, access to shelter services leads to a 60 to 70 percent reduction in incidence and severity of re-assault during the 3-month to 12-month follow-up period compared to women who did not access shelter. Safe shelter is proven more successful in preventing severe repeat assaults than court-ordered or law enforcement protections.

In 2011, more than 20,000 requests for emergency shelter in Oregon could not be met. That same year, the vast majority of unmet requests for domestic violence services in Oregon were requests for housing.

The cycle works in both directions, with a large percentage of women who turn to welfare services for housing reporting domestic violence as a factor in their need for assistance. And surveys also show that the lack of shelter is cause for some women to even stay in an abusive relationship to avoid becoming homeless.

It's a vicious cycle, as they say.

So let's talk about domestic and sexual violence, but let's talk about what it takes to really create a survival network for people trying to escape it. We can ask why — why people do what they do in these situations — or we can listen to what we already know. Housing and safe shelter is an integral part of survival. It doesn't grab headlines, but it should.

Talking about the vision of Street Roots

What is the vision of Street Roots? At the heart of Street Roots and every street newspaper are the vendors selling the newspaper. Providing people the opportunity to earn a dignified income is at the heart of everything we do.



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

DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

People from all walks of life and backgrounds come to Street Roots in search of a new day. The concept is simple. Individuals work with Street Roots and local businesses to sell the newspaper. Street Roots uses an old Catholic Worker philosophy developed by Dorothy Day that prescribes to the idea of meeting people where they are. We start from a place of trust and work from there.

Street Roots works with some of the hardest brothers and sisters on the block — offering individuals the opportunity to earn an income and embrace community is what we do.

We live by some pretty simple rules when it comes to training people to sell the newspaper and to be a part of the Street Roots community. Vendors go through a 45-minute vendor orientation, including a video created by vendors themselves to give people tips for how to be successful. We then go over the rules and regulation of public sidewalks and work with individuals to find a sales location.

After that, it's all about embracing love. Sound cheesy? It's not. Poverty is traumatic. The world is violent. Homelessness is cruel. The only way to combat these realities is with unconditional love.

Everything we do works toward the idea of treating people with kindness. No racism, sexism, classism, no violence, including verbal violence. We are a community without judgment, no matter how hard the

road ahead might be. Enduring poverty on one hand and embracing love on the other is very hard work. It's the work we do each day, collectively, at Street Roots. It's the reason I believe we have a collective spirit at Street Roots among the vendors and staff and volunteers. It's why we walk the long road.

Delivering a quality newspaper is something we don't take lightly. We understand from experience that people, for better or worse, expect less from a street newspaper. When we are able to deliver more, it not only serves as a tool for vendors to be more successful, it also serves the larger community to take on social justice issues facing our community.

We work hard to deliver Portlanders and the region a newspaper that looks at the issues of homelessness and poverty along with a range of different issues in a way that everyone is engaged. From the reader, to vendors experiencing poverty, to the systems approach to tackling the problem — we believe everyone should be on the bus.

Do we always get it right? Of course we don't, we're human. There will always be stories of failure peppered between the stories of triumph. It's what makes us grow and learn and become better at the work we do. For every person we see overcome the harsh realities of poverty, there's another that walks through our door struggling to survive.

So what is the vision of Street Roots? Beyond going to a weekly publication, or improving systems, or developing new ways of supporting people — it's you, it's me, it's all of us working toward ending people's suffering. With that comes a great responsibility. With each new relationship built and each newspaper sold we changing the way people think about and engage with poverty. We are changing people's lives. We thank you!

Lessons

by G. B.

What can a bird teach of hope?
What can a sunflower teach of being?
Where does the heartbeat of the world reside?
Can children teach us to love without hate or rage?
Can falling leaves teach us of the passing of time?
Where do the lessons of the world hide?
Each season has its lessons
Each seed a hidden story
Dirt can be more than just the stuff of the ground
And the wind more than just a bowing thing
Open eyes or shut make a difference on this earth
Ancient wisdom, tribal songs, stories beyond stories
I stand at the edge eager to learn
"Tell me your stories. Teach me your ways."
The eagle flies by with the tree standing straight
The wind gently blows while the world awaits

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 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 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.