

Everyone should get behind the People's Plan

What would Portland be like if instead of reacting to social problems, we intentionally planned for social success? What if we worked to ensure social and economic equity with each step forward, rather than scrambling to backfill the scars of gentrification?

Members of Portland's black community are asking similar questions as they compile the People's Plan. It's a forward-thinking agenda of what communities would look like if they

were envisioned with black people in mind — and then addressing how we make that happen.

They should have the support of the entire community — with a sense of urgency. The fact is that Portland's African-American population is on the front lines of this city's paralyzing income stagnation and housing crisis.

Median household income in Portland has moved little since 2000, and even weakened among renters. Meanwhile, housing costs, particularly rents, have skyrocketed beyond affordability, according to the Portland Housing Bureau's inaugural State of Housing Report, the first phase of which was released this week.

"The rebounding of post-recessionary wages among white households has not been shared, and inflation-

adjusted incomes of communities of color continue to fall," the report states. "Communities of color experience a disproportionately low homeownership rate when compared to white households, and the population as a whole. Although African American and Native American households showed increases in homeownership rates, corresponding income, affordability, and population trends suggest a decline in the number of renter households in these communities as they are priced out of the city, rather than true increases in homeownership."

There's a saying that if you're not part of the solution you're part of the problem: In the absence of an inclusive agenda of equity and economic opportunity, our city is promoting economic and social segregation.

So the black community decided they were going to be part of the solution. Individuals, along with businesses, community leaders and nonprofits are coming together to craft a landscape that works for all — with the support of City Hall. It's not about where people *were*, but where they are now, and where they want to be. And then it's targeting efforts to make it happen, right down to creating a neighborhood where everyone is welcome, where people know each other, and where black lives matter. We take that for granted at our own peril.

EDITORIAL

'Weekly has made my life so much better'

It would be easy for Street Roots to play it safe and to not take on some of the most complex issues of our time. We could walk the straight and narrow, and simply focus on one aspect of poverty and choose to not rock the boat when it comes to thinking about issues of race, gender and class. The path of least resistance would mean not providing Portland with investigative journalism and a platform for social justice. It would

mean not standing up and speaking truth to power in an intelligent manner.

Saying that, it would also be very easy for Street Roots to use our pages to simply rage against the machine and not offer tangible solutions to the problems we face in our community. After all, Street Roots is engulfed by the

circumstances of poverty. We understand at a very raw level the harsh realities of a broken system. It's hard to watch people die on the streets, literally, without having access to a roof over their heads and still offer a productive voice in policy discussions and in the community. It would be easy to simply say, down with the man, regardless of the context.

Obviously, it's our goal to create the best publication possible for new and old readers alike to support vendors making money. We believe by providing investigative journalism coupled with arts and culture and voices from the community and people in poverty, we are helping provide important perspectives for the larger community.

Without focusing on the relationships between vendors and the general public through the sales of the newspaper, none of this would be possible.

People ask me, "How much do vendors selling the newspaper make?" It all depends. Vendors typically make between \$200 and \$1,500 monthly depending on their own personal circumstances. The newspaper offers a place for people, regardless of their past, to begin again. Street Roots offers people a chance improve their quality of life, while being a part of a larger community.

As many of you know, Street Roots launched weekly

publication this year. Since going weekly in January, paper sales have increased by 56 percent. We have been flooded by the community's support.

Going weekly has been an amazing experience for everyone involved. A year prior to launching weekly Street Roots unveiled a public campaign asking readers and foundations to support giving vendors a stable income week in and week out. It was a risky campaign. If we were successful, it would be amazing. If we failed, we would fail publicly, and we would have mud on our face. Some thought it couldn't be done. Others cheered us on. Most fans of Street Roots held their breath, hoping for the best.

We did it. Together.

During the first few weeks of weekly publication, Street Roots ran on adrenaline alone. Then came the, oh my goodness moment. We have to produce a newspaper and provide basic services for more than 100 people every week. Finally, we have settled in. Today, we have found our groove.

We hope you are enjoying the new format, the newspaper and most of all your relationships with vendors.

"Weekly has made my life so much better. I used to have to save my money the first week to spend it the second," says Tony, a Street Roots vendor. "I used to have to struggle every day. Now I look forward to the new paper every Friday. So do my customers."

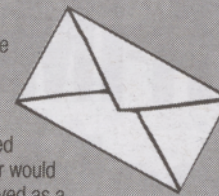
It's your support, readers, that makes Tony's story possible.

We are happy to report that this spring a generous donor will be matching all recurring donations to Street Roots in the month of May. By giving a monthly donation you are supporting the work of the day-to-day needs of the vendor program and the newspaper, including providing a safe place for people on the streets to gather daily. You can give a one-time or a recurring donation online at www.streetroots.org. It means the world to us.

When Street Roots started out some 15 years ago, Street Roots was a ragtag monthly publication with about 1,000 readers. Today, with supporters like you, we are a weekly publication with a readership of nearly 15,000. That's amazing. Thank you.

Write in

If you would like to have something that you've written published in our pages, or would like to get involved as a member of our reporting staff, contact Managing Editor Joanne Zuhl at 503-228-5657, joanne@streetroots.org. We ask that all submissions include the author's name and contact information, if available.



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Interested in advertising in Street Roots?
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If you are interested in volunteering with Street Roots, please submit a volunteer application at streetroots.org/volunteer. Or call Volunteer Coordinator Grace Badik for more information at 503-228-5657.



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.