

also talk about where people are living now, what they're trying to build for themselves, whether it's out in East Portland or it's up in North Portland, or really anywhere they live, to try to talk about those places, too.

**A.G:** Tell me more about the plan's focus on black families in East Portland who have already been displaced. What do they need to be successful and hopefully not be displaced again?

**L.B:** There is a whole team that is specifically working on that. They've had two open workshops with the public in the past couple of months, and they are coming together around some concepts that have to do with the connections of health, very broadly defined, and stability — mental health, stress, depression, anxiety, the things that happen when you are in a precarious situation with your housing and you're stressed out — trying to really tie housing stability to this whole broader set of concerns, like how are you going to be a great parent or family if you're out of your mind with worry or very, very anxious or you're moving schools.

You can't have a stable situation so they're very on this theme of replanting people with "root shock." This amazing psychiatrist at Columbia University, Dr. Mindy Fullilove, she coined this phrase. It's when people move involuntarily, it's like pulling a plant up out of soil. You can't just put it somewhere else and think it's going to grow. You've damaged the roots; you've shocked its roots. And she has documented those impacts for individual people for families, for community at large. It's disruptive, and you can see it in so many fields. It's the equivalent to losing months in school if you're a kid and you change schools in the middle of the year. There's job loss and job disruption and income problems. There are so many pieces that wear down people psychologically, and it harms their networks. So how do you connect all that stuff up to very clear resources and programs to say actually: This housing thing? That's a health thing. This rental deposit assistance thing? That's an education policy. How do you build that up as official ways of doing things?

**A.G:** What did the background work on the plan involve?

**L.B:** Not directly part of the People's Plan but something that's been going on for a while is the Urban League's State of Black Portland project. We've been connecting with them and getting information from that since last spring on what are the key data pieces that you see, what are the most persistent, severe disparities, where are the biggest gaps, what are the worst things, what are the biggest priorities? Then I had a bunch of students who looked specifically at urban planning in Portland, urban plans in Portland, a wide variety of types, to basically ask the question: Are black people here? Does this do anything for black people? We know that the black community faces certain disparities and certain issues that might relate to their ability to engage with a specific kind of plan. So if there's a project or a proposal

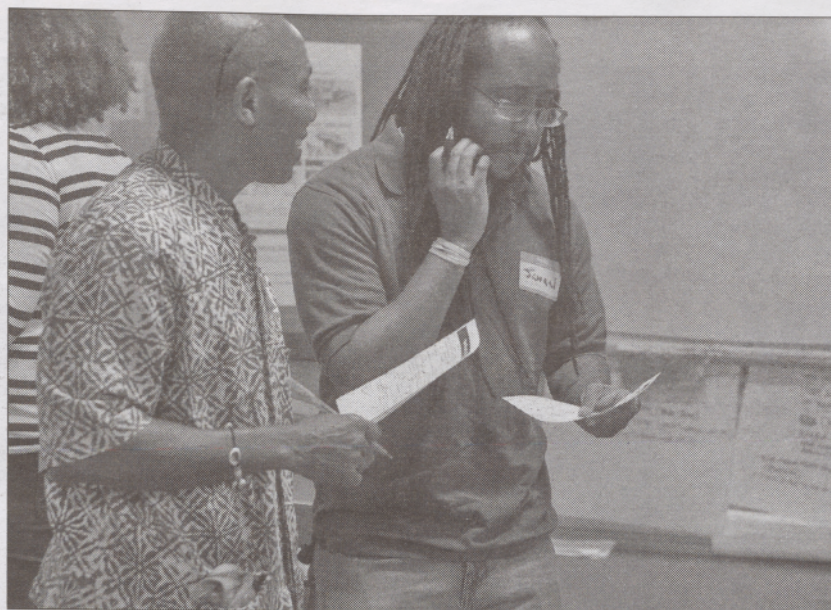


PHOTO BY SHANE VALLE

People attending a community workshop on March 28 participate in a group activity.

or a program that you really need to own your own house to participate in fully, that's not going to affect African-Americans as much because our home-ownership rate is much lower. That's one way of looking at it.

The other is culturally, socially. For example, there was a group that looked at the idea of crime prevention through environmental design. It's an interesting concept. Some of it has to do with, like, don't put shrubs up against a building because someone could hide behind it. Some of it has to do with lighting, but a lot of it has to do with the idea of eyes on the street and natural surveillance by other people. So what does that mean if you're black youth and you want to go hang out at the park? If there are all these eyes on the street who are other people checking out what you're doing, is that a positive thing because they're engaging with you as a community member, or is that potentially very negative because they're calling the cops and now you're having a criminal-justice system encounter because you're trying to chill out at the park? So they did a little bit of thinking analysis around that, talking to people about how they experience those things.

**A.G:** What is this next phase all about?

**L.B:** The phase we're in right now is all about getting people who are — I'm going to use the term "experts," — together in circles to talk about hey, here's all the policy stuff that's been thrown out there, which of these things sticks for you? And then just get also their general human ideas about life and the world and what's important. So when we say experts, we don't just mean certified smart people. We're trying to get a mix for each topic area of people who are some kind of certified, titled person who is identified as a leader in some way, but also has people who are personally impacted by the issue, who are experts on their own lives, people who have experience and networks in the community.

**A.G:** I imagine that the People's Plan will get compared to the Albina Plan of the 1990s over and over again. What went wrong with

the Albina Plan, and how will the People's Plan differ?

**L.B:** I think that many people in the community were pretty happy about the content of (the Albina Plan). People participated a lot; they were very engaged in it. It was a process that was certainly in response to the really bad old days of urban renewal — not that the current days of urban renewal are not bad, but it was a plan by official institutions. The content of it is perfectly fine; it's very comprehensive; it talks about all these issues, but then the responsibility for it went (away). Every agency was kind of like, that's not us, we don't have the money.

It comes back to this organizing and accountability piece. The plan is not really the thing. Policies are important; programs are important. We have a lot of ideas of what those are going to be. The plan is getting people to pay attention and identify the targets that can get it done. But part of that also means it's not only the "capital C" City of Portland that's gonna do it, but who in the nonprofit sector is going to get this done, or what agency is going to change the way they're working to deliver something different for people if they're really going to serve this group.

So I think there's more implementers; there's an accountability structure. There's an advocacy moment that we can put forward.

**A.G:** So how do everyday people enter the conversation?

**L.B:** We're just getting into that part. We've spent some time doing background work. And there have been a couple of events in East Portland. For us, that's a real priority area to engage in East Portland because that's an area that's been underserved and overlooked in the conversation about black folks in Portland. We focus a lot of our time physically on the space that is Northeast Portland and then going, "Oh no, we can't find the black people to survey here." Well, no kidding. So one of the things we're trying to do is figure out what people want to do and then deliver more of that.

## Death of a Building

by Maddy Brown-Clark

Dead buildings  
Reach for the sky  
And wait for the touch  
Of the wrecking ball  
To pound them into dust  
Flatten them by bulldozers  
And scoop them from the earth  
In wait of a parking lot  
For daily commuters  
Up for sale on ancient computers  
All a part of urban decay  
And old dead buildings  
Who have seen their day.

## The Mirror: School of Hard Knocks

by Leo Rhodes

Looking in the mirror  
I start reflecting on being a youth  
With eyes of wonderment  
And a mischievous mind  
Always knowing there's a big world  
(beyond my realm)  
Just waiting for me to conquer  
My teen years  
Confusion, uncertainties  
Making bad choices  
Still waiting to conquer "The Big World."  
Conquering the world  
As an adolescent  
I hit the ground running  
"Take no prisoners!" "Do or die!" was my war cry.  
Pushing the envelope  
Living on the edge  
Taking life's bumps and bruises  
Many times my life spun out of control  
I would seek shelter and safety  
But as the years went by  
Shelter and safety became less and less  
Many years later as I look in the mirror  
I see a wiser elderly man  
With scars of victory he once boasted about  
And other scars that weren't so victorious  
As I look in the mirror  
I see a wiser elderly man  
Whose idea of conquering the world  
Has changed in many ways