

Connecting to something greater than myself

BY CLEO TUNG
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

Last month, as I was packing up my things to move to Portland, I discovered a box of old school projects in the garage. In it was a picture I had drawn in the

second grade of my future self. I was wearing a stethoscope around my neck and a white lab coat, and was attending to a little girl who had scraped her knee. I had drawn myself as a pediatrician.

Since then, my career aspirations changed frequently. In middle school, I no longer wanted to be a doctor. I was going to be a psychologist instead. In high school, I had changed my mind again and aspired to be a social worker. By the time I entered college, I declared my major in criminology and was determined to practice law.

With a new sense of purpose, I focused most of my undergraduate and graduate years soaking in as much criminal justice work as I could. I came to know women serving life sentences at the California Institution for Women in Corona, who opened my eyes to the shortcomings of the criminal justice system. I interned with the Attorney General's Office in Washington, D.C., which showed me the potential of law for social change, as well as the inefficiencies of bureaucracy. I spent hours researching crime

prevention methods, looking for ways to improve the lives of people affected by crime.

By the time I finished graduate school, I had the education and experience necessary to take the next steps in my career. But along the way, I had lost my calling. I was discouraged by the pace at which change is made through litigation. I was no longer sure about my career path.

It took a lot of self-reflection before I made the difficult decision to change the course of my future. I was certain that I wanted to improve the lives of others yet I found myself back at the drawing table.

It was during this time that I fell into the world of development. I was offered a fundraising position in higher education and accepted thinking I would stay no longer than a year. On the contrary, I'm pleased to say that it's been nearly five years since that day and I look forward to many more years in development.

Fundraising is often daunting and stressful. It's not a responsibility that everyone enjoys. Certainly, most people find the act of asking for money uncomfortable. So why does anyone choose to be in development? It's a question I get asked all the time and my reason is simple. Development provides an incredible opportunity to be connected to something much greater than oneself. The work can be tough but the greatest reward comes from making a meaningful difference in people's lives.

As a development director, I'm surrounded by people who are passionate about changing

the world around them. There's something to be said about helping people realize their vision and connecting them to the incredible organizations that share their commitment. After all, development is about empowering ordinary people to do extraordinary things. It gives me immense gratitude serving this purpose. I'm continually humbled and inspired by the people I meet through my work, and what they can teach us about the human spirit.

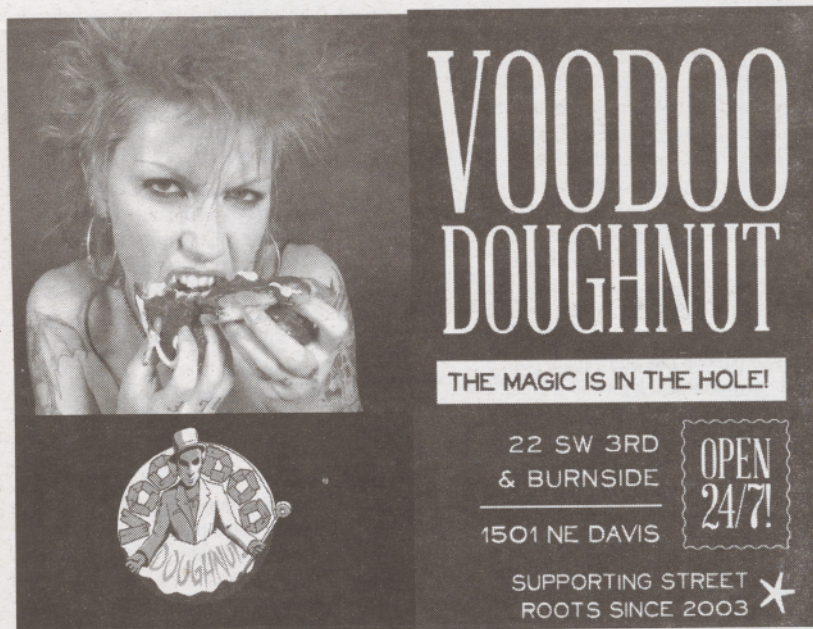
My love for development also stems from a sincere belief in the power of philanthropy to deliver lasting and positive social change. Philanthropy has the potential to make a remarkable impact on the world in which we live. It propels us to raise the voices of the underserved, tackle the inequalities of our time, and transform society for the better. It is through development that we drive such philanthropy and ensure that this critical work can continue.

So, as I think about that picture of myself and all my different career paths, none carry more meaning than my work in development. Indeed, I can't think of anywhere I'd rather be than Partnership for Safety and Justice, especially during this critical time for public safety reform.

It is an honor to be part of an organization that so fearlessly advocates for a criminal justice system that is truly fair and effective, and serves the needs of those most impacted by crime. I am energized by PSJ's mission and look forward to the great work that lies ahead.

PARTNERSHIP FOR SAFETY and JUSTICE

Cleo Tung is the development director at Partnership for Safety and Justice, a statewide, nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to making Oregon's approach to crime and public safety more effective and just.



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