

Solidarity in the midst of uncertainty

The November election brought big wins for housing across the country. There were 34 ballot measures for affordable housing nationwide. Twenty-seven of them passed, including measures in both Portland and Vancouver, Wash. Collectively, tens of

thousands of people will be housed as a result of these measures.

Thank you to all of the Portlanders who supported Yes for Affordable Homes. Your vote will help give thousands of Portlanders a safe place

to call home. More than 20 people at Street Roots, including 10 vendors, put in countless hours of work to help pass the measure. We also provided leadership and editorial content as well. Street Roots readers should be proud.

Saying that, all of us at the Yes for Affordable Homes campaign feel like the player who scored 50 points in Game 7, the biggest game of our lives, but failed to win the series. It feels like a small victory against the backdrop of a new administration that will no doubt tear down everything we worked for on the affordable-housing front.

In the context of the larger political climate that we find ourselves in, all I can say is that we must continue to fight, dissent and work against hateful people and policies. I'm less interested in unity at this point and more interested in working toward justice. The tension in the world is thick.

In many ways, that tension feels a lot like 9/11. We all felt the ground move beneath our feet that day. We didn't know what was to come, but we all knew it wouldn't be good. That's the same feeling that many of us have had for more than a week.

The collective anxiety that our country is sharing is real. Hundreds of hate crimes have been committed in the past week, influenced by the election.

The new administration appears to be developing one of the scariest policy agendas our country has ever experienced. It's important to not normalize these realities. It's not normal to have fringe, right-wing, racist policy makers in the White House. We shouldn't treat it as such.

A reporter recently asked me what the new administration would mean for housing and homeless services. My response was a continuation of the past 40 years of disinvestment in safety net programs and the

dismantling of funding to support affordable housing as a public infrastructure. There is talk about the dismantling of things like Medicaid, public housing and other programs like food stamps. It's a nightmare.

That's just the tip of the iceberg. Talk of mass deportations, registering Muslims, abandoning climate change strategies and the deregulation of the banks. We haven't even mentioned education or foreign policy.

Obviously, we are in uncharted waters when it comes to the future of our nation. Everyone is grieving this election in different ways. For some, it's protesting. For others, it's withdrawing. Still for others, it's organizing to prepare for what's to come.

Does anyone really know what's to come?

Not yet, but the simple fact that I'm having conversations about what it would take to actually create an underground network large

enough in scale to protect immigrants from mass deportation, especially in rural America, makes me sick to my stomach. Some might say it's outlandish to think that we are on the verge of such a reality. I happen to think it's outlandish that we must have the conversation in the first place.

National commentator and political insider Van Jones said it best, "Hope for the best, prepare for the worst."

Our community and country are in need of courageous leaders, especially at the local level. It won't be easy. If the choice is between losing federal funding and standing up to injustices, we expect our elected leaders, nonprofits, churches, schools and others to do the right thing. To stand with the people, regardless of what hardships it may bring.

Street Roots fully understands the role we play locally in providing readers with quality journalism and the voices of the people. In many ways, our coverage won't change; it just becomes that much more urgent. We've already worked to prioritize the voices of immigrants and refugees, the poor, critical thinkers, policymakers and truth-tellers. We will continue to do so.

Lastly, to all of our friends who continue to live in fear because of the color of their skin or where they were born or their gender or the person they choose to love, Street Roots commits to standing up beside you no matter what comes in the days and years ahead. We are all in this together and we will use the power of the media to the best of our abilities to defend the rights of people, the press and overall humanity. If they come for you, they will have to come for us. In solidarity.

"Our community and country are in need of courageous leaders, especially at the local level. It won't be easy."



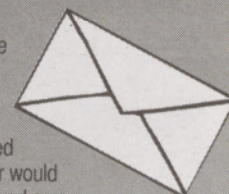
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By Israel Bayer

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

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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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LETTERS

Time to split up the monopoly on judicial selection

I read the excellent article on the judicial system problems in your Nov. 4-10 issue. Whenever I get my ballot and look at the positions for the different judges, I always feel like I am looking (at) a ballot from the Soviet Union. There is only one person to vote for in 95 percent of the positions.

I feel the problem is that there is only one State Bar Association; an old boys club

that controls the judicial elections in our state. If there were two State Bar Associations and each had to present a candidate for the different judgeships, the people would have a choice. Splitting up the present State Bar Association monopoly would give our citizens a choice.

Presently members of the State Bar Association are reluctant to sue a fellow

member even when he is incompetent. Having only one person to vote for isn't an election, it is an anointment.

J. F. Macdonald
Oak Grove, Oregon