

Housing justice protects people and planet

BY VIVIAN SATTERFIELD
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

At OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon, we spent six years fighting for and winning inclusionary housing policies for Oregon's cities. As partners in Anti-Displacement PDX, we won concrete language in the Portland comprehensive plan. Together with the Welcome Home Coalition, we passed a housing bond last November to invest in permanently affordable homes in Portland. Ultimately none of the recent victories in housing mobility and choice matter if landlords are able to kick their tenants out, or price them out, for no good reason.

Housing is a basic human right, and shelter is a necessity. Today, our current system fails to protect everyone. A lack of stable, affordable housing is a problem across the country. In our city, we know all too well the fate of those who lack shelter. We lost four community members in the first ten days of 2017 during an unseasonably cold and snowy winter. These were individuals whose lives had value and who deserved dignity and a chance at

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personal success.

These recent severe weather events are linked to global climate change. We have a chance to respond to climate change and to advance housing justice. As a part of the Climate Justice Collaborative, OPAL and our partners at the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) and the Coalition of Communities of Color believe that displacement prevention is a key pillar of climate resilience. Skyrocketing rents keep our communities from living where they can access a frequent service bus line. As our families are pushed to the edges of the city and beyond, a long bus ride with multiple transfers becomes impractical and inefficient. Green spaces, cultural centers, and educational opportunities get further from our reach.

We want the tools to stabilize our communities now, not later. And you can help us win these tools. We need you to pick up the phone and tell your

legislators rent stabilization and an end to no-cause evictions will keep economically vulnerable people from being displaced due to the whims of investors and market players. It will keep people from being displaced onto our streets, which will save lives. Also know that when we keep everyone stably housed, we are reducing greenhouse gas emissions and ensuring that historically marginalized communities have housing mobility and choice.

To make the system work for everyone, we must listen to those whom it currently fails. People of color, people with low incomes and front line communities demand climate action rooted in economic, racial, and social justice. That means renter protections as a key defense for people and the planet.

We mourn those who have died because of housing injustice. We can honor their lives by fighting to change a system that leaves vulnerable people out in the cold.

Find out who represents your voice in Salem: www.oregonlegislature.gov/findyourlegislator/leg-districts.html

A Precious One

by Maddy Brown-Clark

There were tears in my eyes
When I heard she'd died
So wet and so cold
From rain and snow
Was she hearing voices?
Making the wrong choice?
She was caught in freezing wind
Would she ever breathe again?
Did she need a friend?
She lost her home
And she died alone
On the chilly streets
In the rain and sleet
I wonder how she felt
When no one came to help
We have to look out for ones
So this doesn't happen anymore
For though she had no home
She was a precious one

For those who passed away in the cold



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