

We won't be proxies for anti-immigrant policy

Words mean things.

Or at least they used to.

Take the word "criminal" for example. It has been inserted into the debate over immigration, pushed by the Trump administration insistence on arresting, incarcerating and deporting so-called

"criminal" aliens. It's a term that conjures up the perfect antagonist if you're looking to profit from a paranoid, divided, us-against-them society.

EDITORIAL

Fear and stereotypes around immigration enforcement have always been destructive to a community, but they seemed to be headed toward a fever pitch as the Trump administration digs its claws into U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

So what does this term mean?

It can mean a violation of people's constitutional rights, for one. All people in the United States – regardless of your residency or citizenship status – are protected under the U.S. Constitution.

Under this administration, it means taking basic protections away from people who are undocumented, discriminating against people of color, and ultimately tearing apart families and people's lives.

Because under current policy for undocumented immigrants, anybody charged with a crime – even if they're not convicted, is subject to incarceration and deportation by ICE. Even further than that, ICE can detain and deport anyone they believe might have broken the law, whether they're charged or not. And finally, just to sweep all the corners clean, it gives immigration enforcement officers individual judgement as to whether someone poses a risk to public safety – and should be deported.

With so many people in their sights, it's clear the federal government wants – and is seemingly demanding – our complicity.

We shouldn't give it to them. We shouldn't become proxies for such destructive policies.

That could be a challenge, given the financial carrot ICE has for cash-strapped counties with costly jails to run. Local jails across the country are part of ICE's scheme to increase space for an aggressive detention agenda, and ICE is busy identifying more beds in county facilities to house the anticipated rise in detentions in years to come. It's a new form of privatizing our local jails and officers in the industrial detention complex.

It's important to remember that coming into this country illegally – crossing the border outside of the proper process – is simply a misdemeanor. And if you have been in the country legally and your documents expire, the offense is a civil offense – it is not a crime. Yet, with compounding levels of offenses aimed at ensnaring immigrants, the federal government has become a "criminal" making machine.

Oregonians have been letting their voice be heard against the invasive tactics of ICE in our communities.

Lawmakers can follow suit, pushing back harder with legislation that prohibits unchecked federal collusion with local law enforcement. One example to look at is California, which is considering several pieces of legislation to establish a due process for cooperation between federal and local officials – one that protects individual rights and doesn't exploit police authority.

It's unconscionable that a nation that owes so much to immigrants would treat modern day immigrants with such contempt. We have designated a population of people of color with a criminal label for the slightest offenses, misdemeanors that would be a slap on the wrist for a native resident.

Basta.

Enough.

How you can support Street Roots this season

Here are 10 ways to support Street Roots and vendors this spring and summer. The more you spread the love about Street Roots and the more people who purchase the newspaper, the more successful vendors are. It's a win-win situation.

1. Stop and talk to your neighborhood vendor.

Introduce yourself and let the vendor know what you like and don't like about the newspaper. Stay engaged and help us build community. Street Roots provides a safe place for individuals to engage with people on the streets in a positive atmosphere.

2. Recruit your peer network and turn them on to Street Roots. It's one of the best ways you can support the organization and vendors.

3. Tell businesses that you love Street Roots. Ask a manager or tell the clerk how much you love having a Street Roots vendor in front of the businesses that you frequent. It makes all the difference in the world.

4. Become a Street Roots ambassador and help spread the word. Buy an additional Street Roots and introduce the organization to at least one friend or co-worker this summer.

5. Blast out Street Roots on social media. Have the perfect shot of reading a Street Roots with your morning coffee and cinnamon roll? Take a photo and put it on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

6. If you are traveling out of town with family or friends, buy an extra copy of Street Roots for the road. Reading Street Roots at the airport, train station, on a road trip or by the campfire is bound to spur some great conversation.

7. If friends or family are visiting from out of town. Let them know what Street Roots is and the concept behind it, and encourage them to buy a copy if they are shopping at Powell's bookstores or other locations where vendors regularly sell.

8. Let us know about your experience purchasing Street Roots, both the good and bad. It means the world to many of the vendors to hear from readers. It's equally important for us to know if things aren't going well on sales locations. Visit streetroots.org to submit your story today.

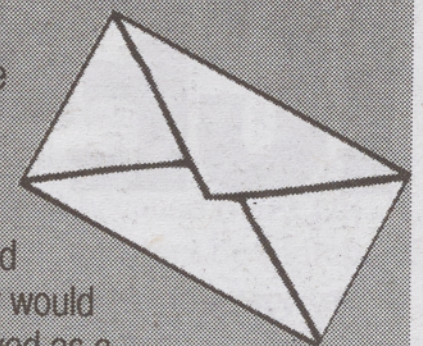
9. Donate to Street Roots. We can't do it without you. Plus, when you give \$25 or more to Street Roots through June, you'll receive a cool pack of Street Roots buttons.

10. Lastly, pay it forward, Portlanders. The only way to combat poverty and hate is love. It transcends all. See someone having a bad day? Offer them a hand or a smile. Do something nice for a stranger. Take the time to spread your love this spring and summer.

From all of us at Street Roots, we appreciate your readership and support of vendors selling the newspaper. Giving a hand up and getting a great read in return is our goal. Thank you for making that possible. Happy summer!

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.



Street Roots

211 NW Davis St.
Portland, OR 97209
503-228-5657
Fax: 503-227-3117
www.streetroots.org
www.news.streetroots.org
Hours: 7:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Mon.-Fri., 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Sat. and 7:30-1 p.m. Sun.

Advertising

Interested in advertising in Street Roots?
Contact Israel Bayer at israel@streetroots.org

Staff

Executive Director Israel Bayer
israel@streetroots.org
Managing Editor Joanne Zuhl
joanne@streetroots.org
Vendor Program Director Cole Merkel
cole@streetroots.org
Operations Director Sarah Beecroft
Development Director Sarah Cloud
Program Assistant Meghann Van Pelt, Jesuit Volunteer
Development Assistant Patricia Romero
Editorial Assistant Monica Kwasnik
Reporters Emily Green, Suzanne Zalokar, Sarah Hansell, Leonora Ko, Jared Paben, Amanda Waldroupe, Stephen Quirke
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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.