

The fight moves forward on immigration

It has been an emotional, gut-wrenching few weeks. The images and sounds of young children screaming and crying for their mothers and fathers has pushed many of us to the limit.

We are demanding an end to the cruelty and heartless treatment of human beings, orchestrated by powerful men in order to secure even more power. People, politicians, organizations and companies across the globe are putting their foot down on the Trump administration's policy of separating families,

incarcerating children and criminalizing their parents in a system observers say offers no protocol for reunification.

And it's working.

Earlier this week Trump reversed his policy and signed an executive order to keep families together during detention while their cases were being processed. There is an exemption for cases in which the child's safety is believed to be in danger.

While this new tack shows a little give in the administration, it is not a change in course. This administration, since May, has removed an estimated 2,300 children from their parents' arms. How, when and where these families will be reunited remains unclear, with many observers noting there isn't a reliable system in place for reunification. It's a game of assigned numbers and bureaucracy in a vacuum of information, legal representation and sanity.

The atrocity happening on our border has highlighted the gross flaws in our immigration system in a way unlike other tragic consequences of our policies. So much has to change.

The long-game for this administration is the border wall, a campaign promise Trump has tried to secure with several strong-armed tactics. He's tried brow-beating Mexico into paying for it and vilifying those crossing the border as violent criminals. He's held hundreds of thousands of talented teenagers hostage with the suspension of DACA, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. And now he's permanently traumatizing children, not as a needed safety and immigration measure, but to trigger – if only out of desperation – a political reaction to make the nonsense stop.

We need to restore the long-game to real immigration reform. We have to make our immigration system fair and constructive for people seeking asylum, refuge and a better life. We've got to stop wasting resources and opportunities in the

senseless effort to keep people down.

We also need to disconnect the profit motive behind this. For-profit prison corporations are salivating at the waves of men, women and children currently and soon to be incarcerated. Detention facilities are their growth industry. And every step of the process, from transportation to phone services, is a revenue generator for private companies, courtesy of your tax dollars. The Obama administration acted to phase out the use of for-profit corporations for federal prisoners, a policy the Trump administration reversed within minutes in office.

Today, things have changed. All across the country, lawyers, politicians, labor unions and clergy are united in their opposition to our treatment of immigrant families. The president's executive order shows the pushback has made a difference.

And at the ICE facility in Portland, a round-the-clock protest dubbed OccupyICEPDX prompted the closure of the short-term detention center for immigrants. It's not known when it will reopen.

So often in history, generations have said "never again." And yet history is repeated – from slavery to the extermination of indigenous populations, the incarceration of Japanese Americans and now the detention and destruction of Latino families at our borders.

Now is not the time for people to sit on the sidelines expecting history to right the wrongs as a matter of course. Inaction and complacency are what the proponents of these policies are counting on. Now is the time to speak out to our representatives and tell them "never again." Write and call those who have sat on the sidelines and those who have supported these cruel tactics and let them know we will not tolerate yet another racial assault in the supposedly unassailable name of laws we, as a people, have created.

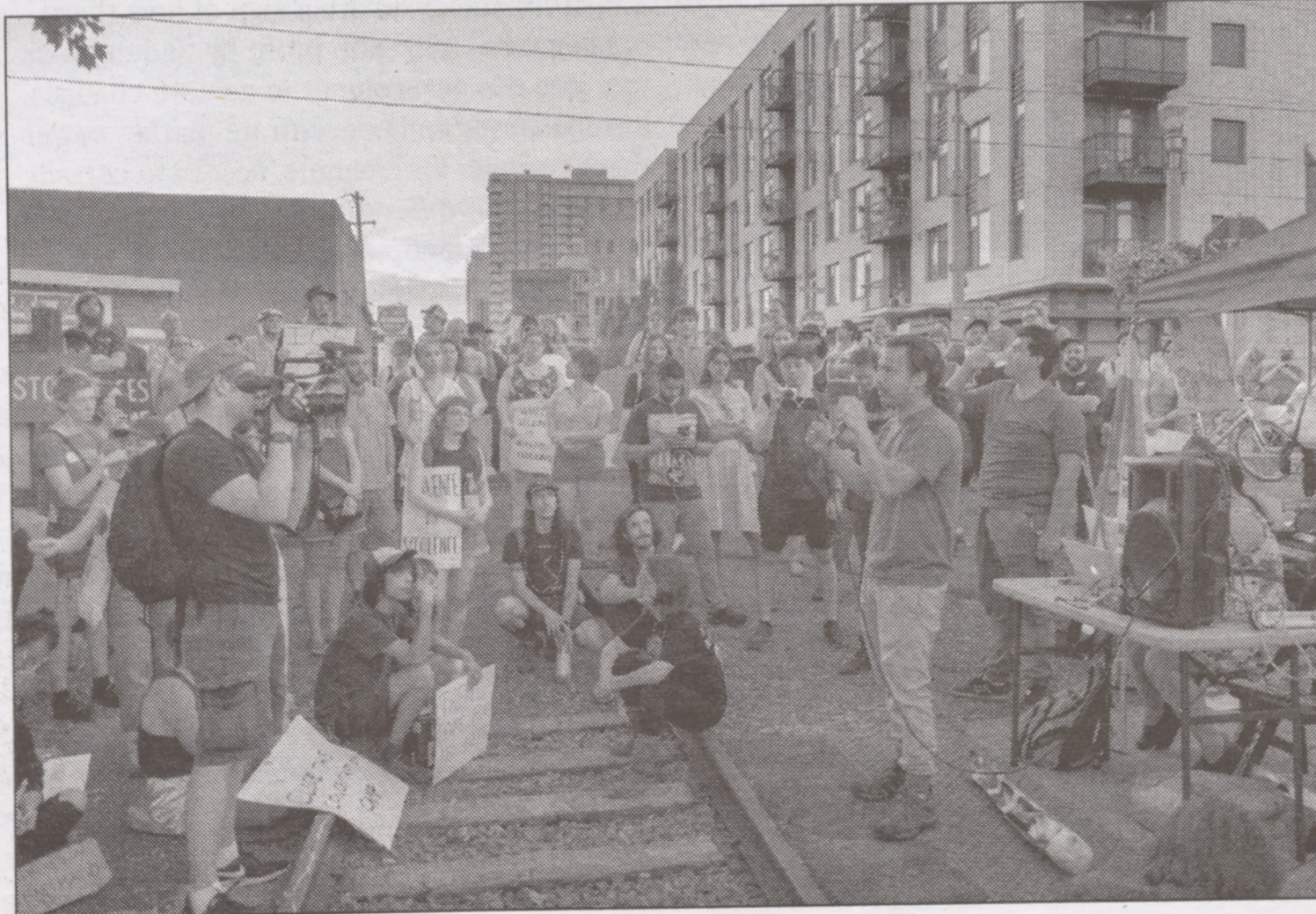
Support the legal efforts to bring justice to those injured.

Buy OccupyICEPDX a pizza. Show up.

And most importantly, vote.

Efforts to repeal Oregon's so-called sanctuary status, which prohibits local law enforcement officers from working as agents for federal immigration and deportation policies, are underway with the goal of placing a measure on the November ballot. There is a reason the separation between local peace keepers and federal agents exists, and it is rooted in its history of abuse and incarceration of legal, American citizens because of their heritage.

Never again.

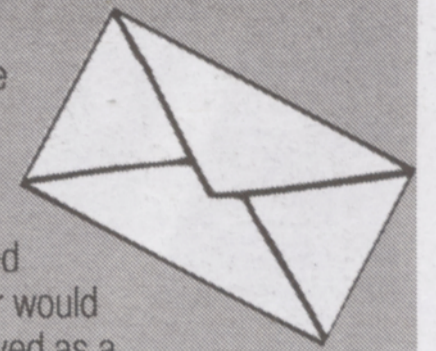


Protesters organized under the banner of OccupyICEPDX outside of the ICE detention office in Portland on June 16. The office closed its operations indefinitely as a result of the ongoing demonstration.

PHOTO BY DIEGO DIAZ

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 Executive 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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