

Communities of Color Leader Fights for Progress

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grow up with, and they just naturally flow off your tongue and in your thoughts.”

King was writing about things 50 years ago that resonant today, Mundy said.

“It’s just as real – that people in power don’t want to share power. They don’t think you’re as good as them, as smart as them, as capable as them, as strategic as them,” he said.

Mundy said King had such an influence on him that he often looks back at King’s language for inspiration.

“Whether I’m talking about the code change at city housing or homelessness issues or who gets to decide how a campaign is run in the city of Portland and the state of Oregon,” he said, “it’s beautiful that his words were so beautiful and striking, and it’s miserably sad that you’re still dealing with the same stuff today.”

Mundy said when he is disheartened by the futility of the struggle, he thinks of the necessity of the struggle and the relentless nature of the battle for full equality.

“You shouldn’t have to fight for those things,” he said. “You shouldn’t ever have to fight for what should be a basic human right, and certainly shouldn’t have to still be fighting for the same things that were exposed decades ago.”

The Coalition of Communities of Color, of which Mundy is president, is an alliance of 19 culturally-specific community based organizations with representation from communities of color, with a mission “to address the socioeconomic disparities, institutional racism, and inequity of services experienced by our families, children and communities, and to organize our communities for collective action resulting in social change to obtain self-determination, wellness, justice and prosperity.”

Mundy said each organization in the Coalition was founded to provide a social service, including housing, education and health care.

“Each one of our members was founded on principles of service to others, which is a lot of what Dr. King stood for, and fairness,” he said. “Fairness in contracting, fairness in access to public funds, and fairness in funds for services that can be delivered in a culturally specific way.”

About a third of the Coalition’s members are black-led and black-run organizations, including Self-Enhancement Inc., Africa House, KairosPDX, the Portland African American Leadership Forum and Unite Oregon, but other member or-

ganizations are geared toward other culturally-specific groups such as Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, Middle Eastern and even the Slavic community.

And even though Mundy is leading an organization that represents “different, disparate communities,” he can’t help but see the world through the eyes of a black man.

“I view the world, yes, through an equity lens, but there’s another lens – the lens of a black man having gone

through for decades and decades – American stuff,” he said. “And I can’t ever leave that behind when I’m making decisions or interacting with people or understanding how to get myself and our organization a place in this city, this world. How you see things affects everything.”

Mundy agrees that there is a lot of attention being given to diversity and equity by government and other organizations, which have expressed regret for the gentrification of North-

east Portland and unfair treatment of the African American community in the past, but he wants to see results, not just more words.

“That’s crocodile tears. I don’t need that,” he said. “If you don’t make policies that are inclusive and have some teeth and that there’s penalties if people don’t adhere to them, I don’t want to see your tears or hear your laments. It doesn’t mean anything.”

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