

# Sisters' Voice



**Summer 2024**

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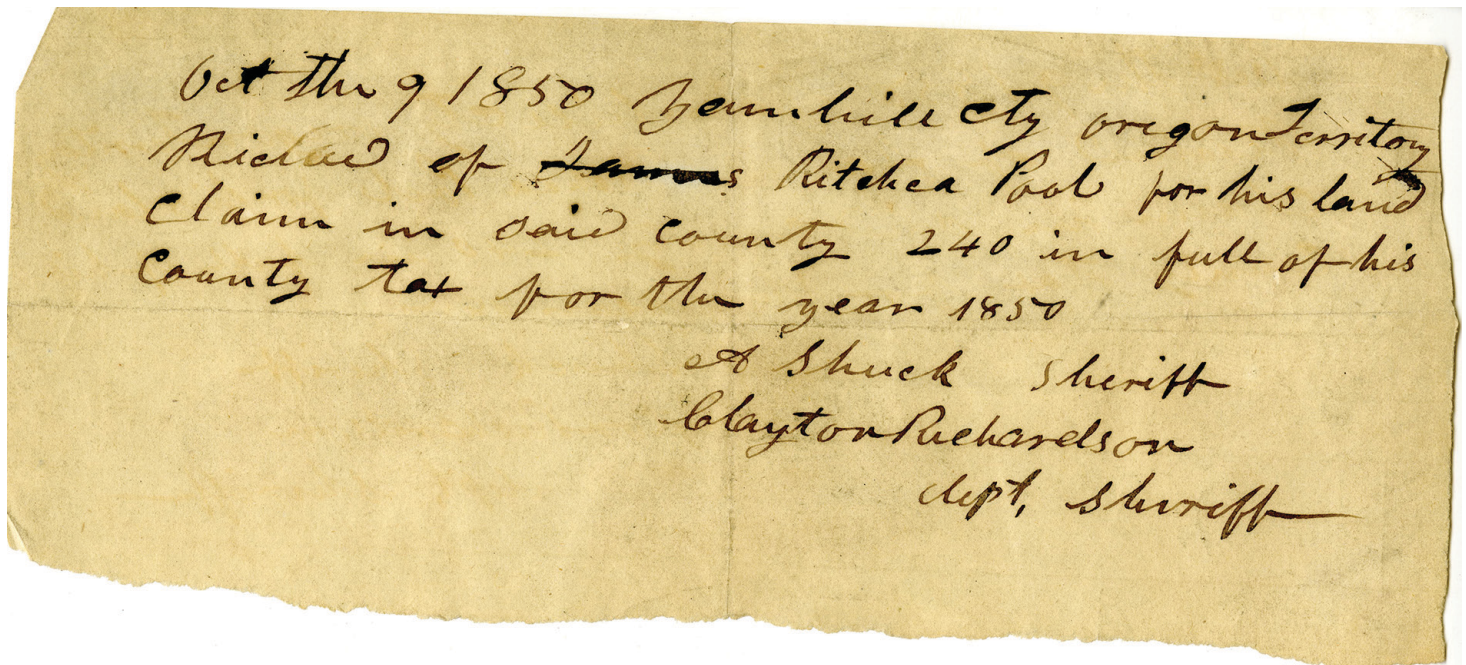
# Displacement by Design

Kat Mahoney, Executive Director

**Portland is known for its parks, bridges and bicycle paths, microbreweries, and coffeehouses. Portland also harbors a complex and fraught history with racialized displacement. The Clackamas, Multnomah, and other tribes traditionally resided on the land, but the arrival of European settlers in the mid-19th century prompted mass displacement and sweeping away of the tribes.**

Through treaties and policies like the Donation Land Claim Act, Indigenous peoples were stripped of their lands, cultural practices, and livelihoods, leaving a lasting scar on the city's foundation. Members of various tribes were not considered U.S. citizens and therefore could not own land under the law, even though Section 4 of the Donation Land Claim Act allowed "American half-breed Indians" of legal age who were citizens of the United States (or

declared to be) to take Donation claims. Donation Land Claim Law also explicitly excluded Blacks and Hawaiians, validating white settler claims in the Willamette Valley. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 severely restricted Chinese immigration, impacting Portland's burgeoning Chinatown. Add to this, discriminatory housing covenants and Japanese internment during World War II further marginalized Asian communities.



*Tax receipt for a donation land claim, October 9, 1850*



**Vanport, Oregon**

During the early 20th century, the government actively destroyed and neglected Black communities, like Vanport, furthering their struggle for secure housing. These communities, along with others, were subjected to redlining, a discriminatory practice where banks denied loans to residents in predominantly Black neighborhoods. Redlining hindered the ability to purchase homes and build generational wealth. Black people seeking to own homes also faced restrictive covenants placed in property deeds and titles. These restrictive covenants were supported by the government, landowners, real estate boards, realtors, banks and local neighborhood associations to enforce racial segregation of neighborhoods. Although they are no longer enforceable, many of these covenants can be found on deeds today.

In the 1880s, Old Town Chinatown was a mix of sailors, longshoremen, and immigrant laborers. The first Chinatown was a few blocks away across Burnside Street on the Southwest blocks. The Chinese community left Second Avenue and resettled in the Northwest blocks because they were pushed out by the growing white population that discriminated heavily against Chinese society. As the city grew during the 20th century, immigrants found a haven in Old Town Chinatown.

The Depression and rising housing costs pushed many marginalized people to the edges into urban homelessness. The neighborhood became known as Skid Row for decades. Bud Clark, the 48th mayor of Portland, delivered meals to the men in the SROs and said the area was often a den of illegal activity.

By the 1980s, the city welcomed the construction of the Chinatown Gate, a gift from Portland's sister city, Kaohsiung, Taiwan. The gate became a visual marker and tourist attraction for the area. The inscription on the gate reads, "Four Seas, One Family" as a reflection of inclusivity.

However, Old Town Chinatown was declining and a new Chinatown, the Jade District, was growing. Some critics argued, at the time, that the gate was a symbol of gentrification and performative. Over the last 40 years, multiple attempts have been made to revitalize or gentrify the area.

Chinatown is undergoing another wave of gentrification. This time, we're seeing an influx of proposals for sneaker factories and expensive restaurants. The gate is a reminder of the important contributions

**Examples of racist covenants in Portland included:**

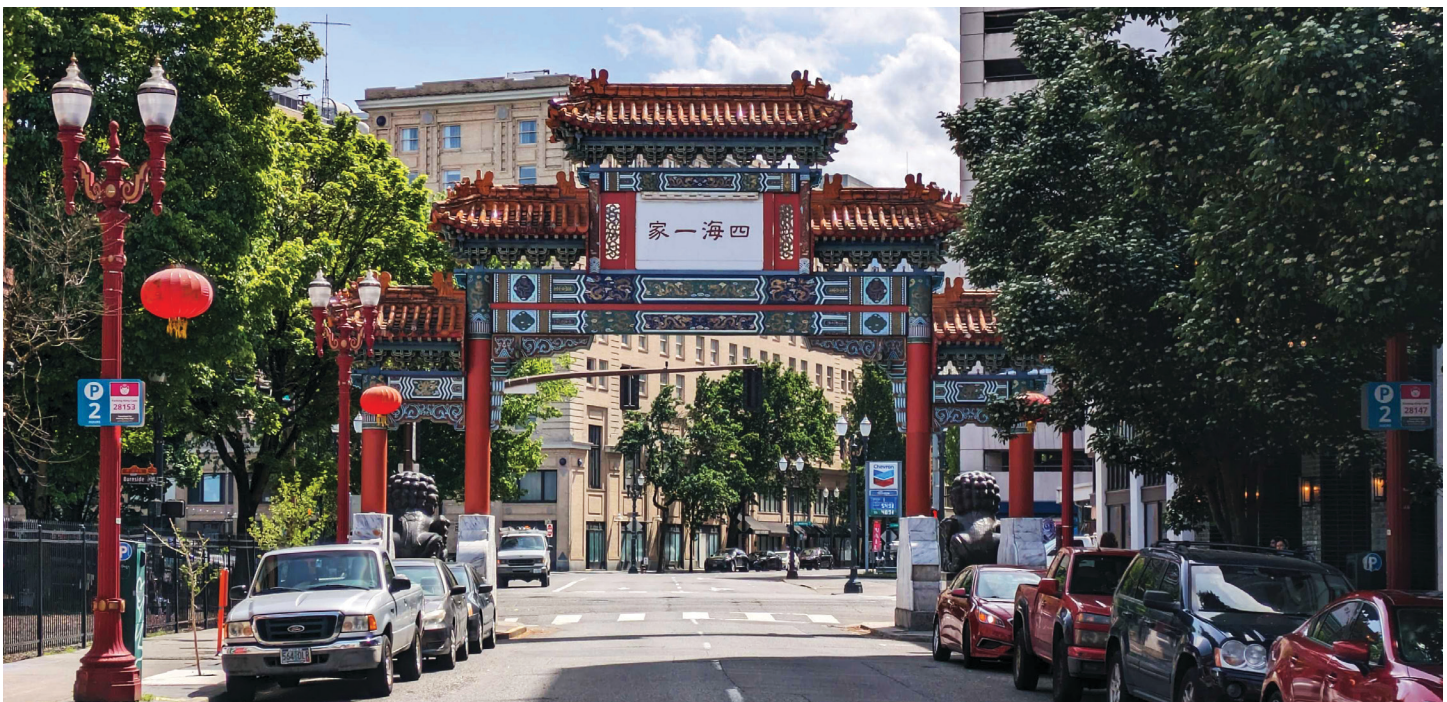
**“... no person of African, Asiatic, or Mongolian descent shall be allowed to purchase, own, or lease said premise ...”**

**“... No Negroes, Chinese, Japanese, Orientals, or any person other than the Caucasian race shall rent, purchase, occupy or use and any building on any lot, except that this covenant shall not prevent occupancy by domestic servants of a different or nationality employed by the owner or tenant. ...”**

Chinese immigrants made to the city, but it is also a reminder of the challenges that the Chinese community, and other communities, continue to face as displacement continues.

Understanding Portland’s history of racism is crucial for acknowledging its impact on today. Even though the covenants and exclusion acts are no longer enforced or legal, displacement still exists due to a shortage of affordable housing, gentrification, and other economic factors like low wages, income stagnation, and inflation. Displacement often acts as a precursor to homelessness.

When individuals or families are forced out of their homes due to rising costs or gentrification, they often struggle to find affordable alternatives, potentially leading to homelessness. Policies aimed at addressing homelessness sometimes inadvertently exacerbate displacement. For instance, clearing encampments forces individuals to relocate to different areas, further disrupting their lives and straining community resources. Engaging with minoritized communities is essential to understanding the challenges and opportunities for creating effective solutions. At Sisters, we believe in community-based solutions.



***Chinatown Gate***

In 2022, when I stepped in as the Acting Executive Director, Sisters was at a crossroads. We spoke with community leaders, friends, and internally to decide what to do. In the end, we chose to expand and acquired 331 NW Davis. However, not everyone in Old Town Chinatown welcomed the news. While some news outlets praised this new chapter in Sisters' history, others criticized our move and even tried to thwart it. One business owner attempted to buy the building. Another business owner commented that we could have chosen another location in Slabtown.

What does this solve, other than making it someone else's problem? We can either look at the sight of human suffering and say it's bad for business, or we can acknowledge that our society's inability to care for and meet the needs of everyone in our community is bad for business.

Portland has approximately 6,200 individuals experiencing homelessness on any single night. Addressing the root causes of displacement is crucial to developing long lasting solutions. This includes dismantling discriminatory housing practices, investing in affordable housing development, and addressing poverty.

Implementing long-term, holistic strategies that focus on prevention, intervention, and support services are crucial to creating a more equitable and just city for all. It's going to take all of us, partnering in authentic relationships with one another to make this lasting change happen.

**Love us. Hate us. We are here to stay.**



*Mural by p:ear at 331 NW Davis*

# Measure 110 Didn't Fail, Leadership Did

Bea Baker, Systemic Change Intern

In 2020, Measure 110 (M110) was voted into state law by Oregonians with overwhelming support to decriminalize drug possession for personal use. Fast forward to 2024 and 60% of Oregonians believe M110 was a mistake. Fueled by intense lobbying to repeal M110, House Bill 4002 (HB 4002) passed the Oregon State Legislature and takes effect on September 1st, 2024.

There are over 18,000 homeless individuals in Oregon, with that number rising every year. Becoming unsheltered plays a large role in triggering addiction and exacerbating addiction for those already experiencing it. Having a history of homelessness and addiction makes it extremely difficult to get stable housing and maintain sobriety.

M110 was supposed to remove punishments and make it easier to get into treatment and housing. In addition, the measure promised to redistribute money from the cannabis tax into addiction and homeless support programs.

## How it worked:

When a person was found possessing a limited quantity of a controlled substance, that person:

1. Received a \$100 fine.
2. Was provided a 24/7 Hotline number, and required to call to set up social services screening.
3. Underwent a screening, and was supposed to be connected with mental health services and mailed a letter confirming the screening was completed.
4. Needed to bring that letter to court to have their fine waived.

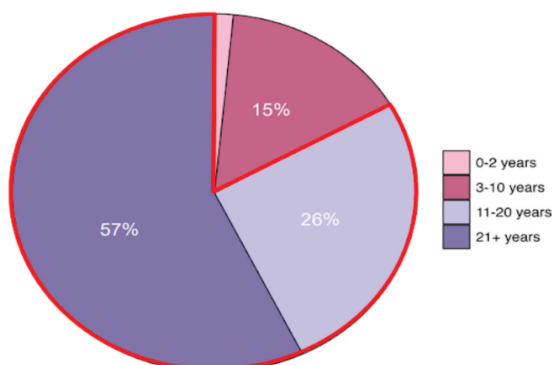
Seems simple right? Wrong.

A combination of misinformation, inaccessibility, and government mismanagement got in the way.

**1. Misinformation.** There is a prevailing myth that M110 brought in a wave of drug users and homeless people to Oregon, but data does not support that claim.

## Results: Drug use characteristics

Number of years using drugs\* (n=467)



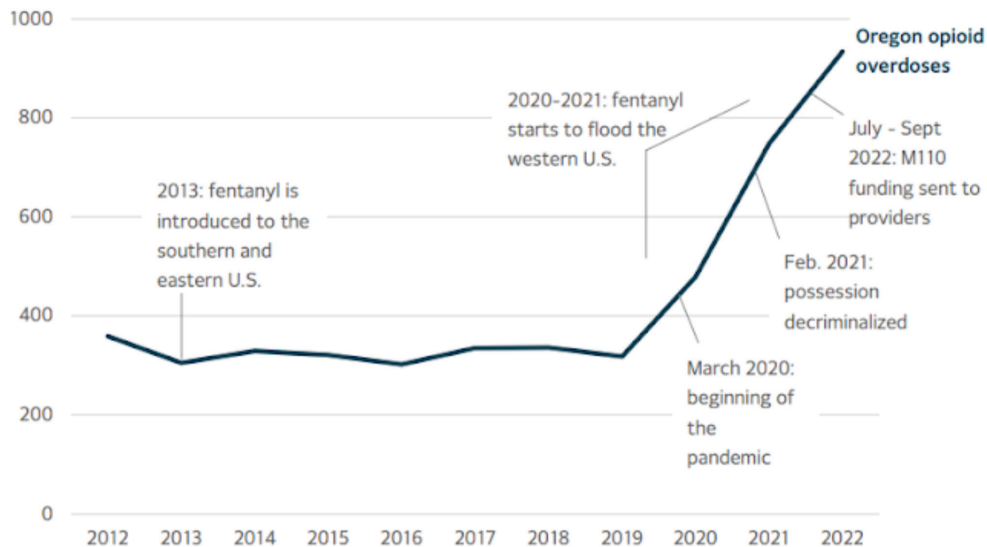
\* Drugs included fentanyl, heroin, methamphetamine, powder cocaine, and crack cocaine

Over half of our sample have been using drugs for more than 21 years.

Over 80% have been using drugs for more than 10 years.

**Only 7% of users started using drugs after M110, 80% had been using substances for 10 or more years, and only 9% had moved to Oregon in the past 2 years.**

SOURCE: RTI International, 2024, Oregon Measure 110 Drug Decriminalization Evaluation



According to the M110 audit released in December 2023, drug use was already on the rise in the years leading up to M110s implementation. It's a primary reason why M110 was passed in the first place.

M110 did not cause the fentanyl crisis, and according to a recent study it didn't increase fentanyl overdoses either. M110 also never barred law enforcement officers from apprehending dealers.

**2. Inaccessibility.** The goal of M110 was to get people into treatment, but Oregon does not have enough detox or rehab beds for everyone who wants one.

In many counties, the citations handed out by officers did not have the phone number to call to get screened and receive treatment. Without that number, most individuals given a ticket never had the chance to get help.

Without the screening, there are no next steps to waive the fine. Add to this, many experiencing homelessness do not have a mailing address, so even if there was a phone number, where does the letter get mailed?

Getting the fine waived also required the homeless individual to navigate the court system on their own. And when people tried, they were told they had filed the wrong paperwork.

**3. Government/Systemic Mismanagement.** OPB reported the proposals to amend issues with M110 were ignored or rejected by state officials.

The Executive Director at Oregon Health Justice Recovery Alliance (OHJRA), Tera Hurst, emailed then Governor Kate Brown a proposal of how to implement M110 effectively. The proposal addressed issues

**“We’re just hundreds if not thousands of beds behind.” says Dr. Amanda L. Risser, Sr. Medical Director of Primary Care and Substance Use Disorder Services at Central City Concern. “Locally and statewide there is just the need for many more treatment beds, of all levels of care.”**



noted above and more. Hurst told OPB she had weekly meetings with Brown's staff and asked them to implement the suggested changes. In February 2024 former governor Kate Brown said her office was stretched too thin in 2020 and 2021. However, these changes would have made M110 a success.

### **House bill 4002**

HB 4002 increased a drug possession from a Class E violation to a Class C misdemeanor. Anyone found in possession of a controlled substance can now be charged with up to 30 days in jail and a fine of up to \$1250.

**How it'll work.** When a person is found possessing a limited quantity of a controlled substance:

1. Police and district attorneys are encouraged—but not required—to offer deflection programs rather than a citation, arrest, or trial. If someone completes the deflection program, no charges will ever be brought.
2. If the first diversion offer isn't an option, the state must offer conditional discharge. The person is charged with possession of a controlled substance, but they can enter into an agreement similar to probation. Like probation, it's handled by a Probation Officer (PO), and if the person breaks the rules they face jail time. However, entering into a conditional discharge does not appear as a conviction on someone's record.
3. If the person does not accept or complete the first two offers, they go to trial. If found guilty, they will be put on probation. Like conditional discharge, the person has the opportunity to get treatment. When the probation is completed the charges are expunged.
4. If the person goes to jail, The Oregon Department of Community Justice and their PO can work with the person to set up an

early release from jail. If they do not comply with rules of release they return to jail and complete their sentence.

5. If someone is convicted and does not get treatment, after 3 years the charges are sealed regardless.

### **The issues with HB 4002.**

1. The Oregon Judicial Department and Oregon's Supreme Court have raised concerns HB 4002 will put a huge workload on public defenders and the court. Public defenders are severely understaffed. Over 2,800 people are facing charges without representation, and recriminalizing drug possession is estimated to add 1,523 cases per year. If Oregon cannot provide a defense lawyer to the defendant within 7 days of their first court appearance, they must be released.
2. Many elements of HB 4002 introduced are new to the court system. Oregon courts now need to figure out how to do it all before September 1st of this year.
3. Recriminalizing possession will disproportionately affect people of color. The Racial & Ethnic Impact Statement put out by the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission predicts that "a racial disparity for Black/African American individuals will be present for the new convictions resulting from legislation regarding possession of controlled substances..."
4. There are currently not enough available treatment programs for those who choose initial diversion options.

**As the State rolls out HB 4002, remember what actually went wrong with M110: misinformation, inaccessibility, and government mismanagement.**

This article was abridged for newsletter format. To read the full article, please go to our blog!



## Community Voices for Collective Belonging

Brenna Fawson, Systemic Change Organizer

**If change needs to happen in Portland, we need to understand the true roots of our problems. And we all agree change needs to happen. This premise underlies the “Community Voices Town Hall” event series we kicked off this winter.**

There is no shortage of advisory groups that offer solutions for “fixing” the city. Many of these glossy, well-funded taskforces, however, think about the problems of only a narrow subset of people. We, at Sisters, are interested in understanding the issues that the majority of us face—skyrocketing rent, a healthcare system in shambles, and low wages, to name a few—which is what unites us. As we live through the realities of economic and environmental displacement, solidarity with each other is the only way we’ll build a future where we all belong.

### Reimagining Livability

On February 20th, we headed up NW Glisan Street to Rose Haven for our inaugural town hall event. The evening’s focus was reimagining livability. More and more, we’ve heard that Downtown Portland is not “livable,” so we asked: Livable for whom? What stops people from living their lives Downtown, if they have a choice? Friends from Milk Crate Kitchen, Hygiene4All, the AfroVillage, and Ground Score Association joined Rose Haven and Sisters of the Road to discuss these questions. Over 100 community members filled the room and others joined via the livestream provided by XRAY.fm and The Numberz. Once the panelists started sharing their experiences, it became clear that underneath the idea of livability, there is

a deeper truth to unravel.

Not being able to meet basic hygiene needs in the city arose as a major problem shared by many people; over 50 percent of respondents to our pre-event survey identified no access to restrooms as their top barrier to enjoying Downtown. Barbra Weber from Ground Score cut to the quick: “If you had no way to get rid of your garbage, what the heck would you do? ... We need to have more bathrooms. We need to have places where people can take care of their basic rights.”

To understand livability, we have to grasp that the profit-driven system we live in has no incentives to ensure that all people can meet their needs. We have to grasp that there are some people who seek to

sweep over this chasm as long as they can live comfortably. **The primary measure of livability Downtown lies in the well-being of the people. All the people.** This city will never truly thrive if there are some people whom our officials and leaders have deemed expendable.

### Who Runs Portland?

On March 20th, our second town hall featured the International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) Portland, Unite Oregon, and Portland DSA. This event focused on the quiet influence of big business on politics and how our community organizations have had to contend with this Goliath.

The evening began with an illuminating history of the Portland Business Alliance (PBA), now called the Portland Metro Chamber. The PBA remains one of Oregon's most influential special interest groups. It got its start as a lobby group for big banks and retailers in the 1980s in the midst of growing privatization and deregulation, and now has private meetings with Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler. Last election, the chamber spent \$131,000 opposing the new system of government, constituting nearly 40% of the total \$332,000 the committee raised.

The Portland Metro Chamber even accused the Portland City Auditor's Office of allowing anti-business activist organizations to hijack a 2020 audit that criticized the lack of city oversight over Enhanced Service Districts. The groups listed were Sisters of the Road, ACLU of Oregon, Portland Copwatch, and the Oregon Justice Resource Center. Sisters received a letter from the City Auditor in 2022. We asked them to prove it. We're still waiting on a response.

Whose interests does the PBA represent? Sara, from ILPS, and Je, from Unite, pointed to a web of PACs that are connected to the

PBA, and are composed of such giants as Amazon, Intel, Nike, US Bank, and Boeing. Each speaker shared stories about the corporate interests that challenged or even derailed their work on their respective campaigns: Universal Preschool For All, the movement against local Enhanced Service Districts, the national No 2 APEC campaign, and Portland's Eviction Representation for All campaign.

Rebekah, from Portland DSA, discussed the importance of bringing supporters in quickly while keeping an eye on the potential opposition. During the Eviction Representation for All campaign, they learned that some board members of otherwise progressive local nonprofits were landlords themselves, working in real estate or for multinational banks. Rebekah explained how the PBA began contacting these board members to say, "Hey, you need to get on our side." Multnomah County Measure 26-238, the 0.75% capital gains tax that would have funded a new County Tenant Resource Office, lost at the polls in May 2023.

Ultimately, this town hall was an expression of the urgency to improve our own conditions in the face of massive corporate growth and greed. "Governments on their own do not do things to make people's lives better...we do," Cody from ILPS remarked near the end of the event. We win "because of pressure, and pressure comes from power, and we build power by organizing, and teaching each other, and listening to each other. **Remember that grassroots people power is the only way that any political change is going to happen. So let's do it together.**"

### Meet the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office

We, at Sisters, know the legal system is vast, complex, daunting, and sometimes dangerous for people to navigate on their

**“You want a DA who will prosecute fairly across the board - whether the defendant is a police officer or a bus driver or a banker.” - Kat**

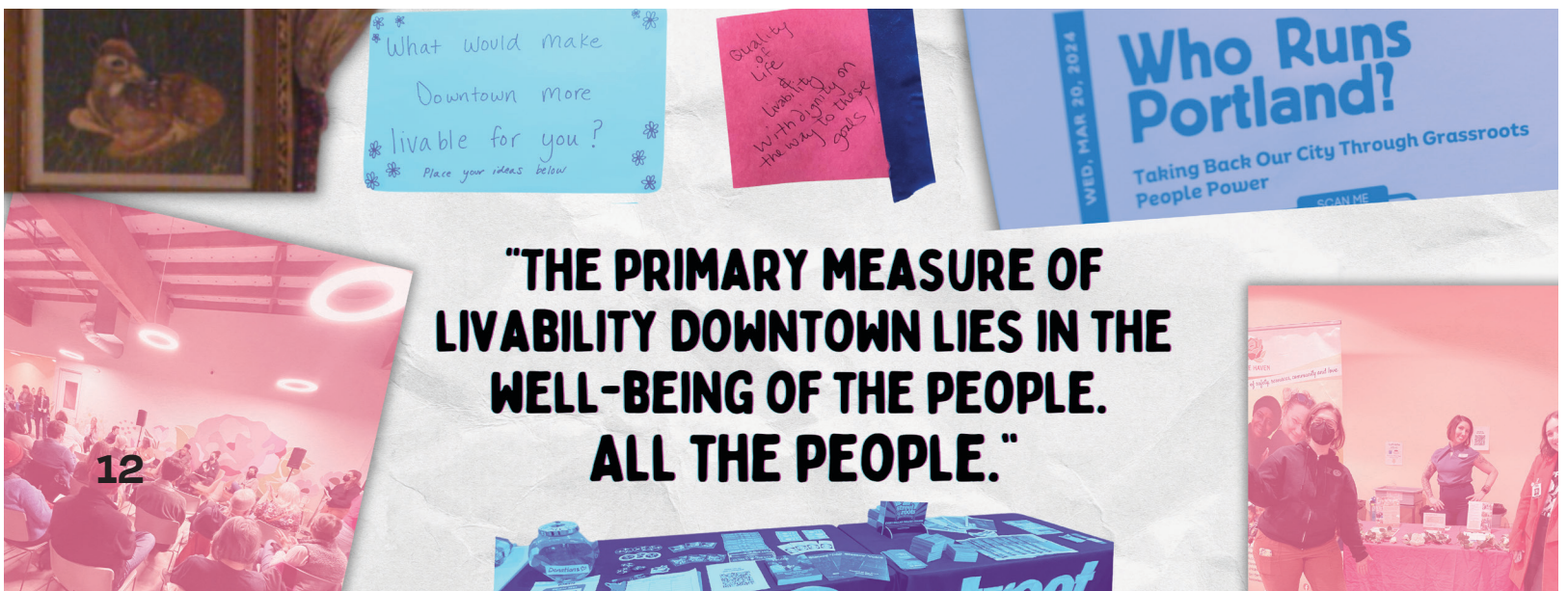
own. So, building on March’s momentum, our third town hall will focus on the Multnomah County District Attorney’s office (MCDA) and its services to our community. The event will educate Portland residents about what District Attorneys do and do not do, and what services the MCDA office provides to the public. As I write this, the event is scheduled for early June. Before the panel, community organizations will share materials and talk to attendees. Panelists will include the Multnomah County DA, Mike Schmidt, and Deputy DAs Mariel Mota and Maggie Burgess. Kat and Lauren from Sisters plan to moderate the panel, focusing on the Multnomah County Access Attorney Program (MAAP).

The MAAP places attorneys directly in communities, away from traditional settings that center law enforcement, aiming to make it less perilous for community members to connect with them. Although MAAP attorneys like Burgess cannot provide legal advice, they can help report crimes, explain the Multnomah County criminal justice system, provide case updates, and refer to other community services. As Lauren explained, “Since the Multnomah County District Attorney is voted in, we want people

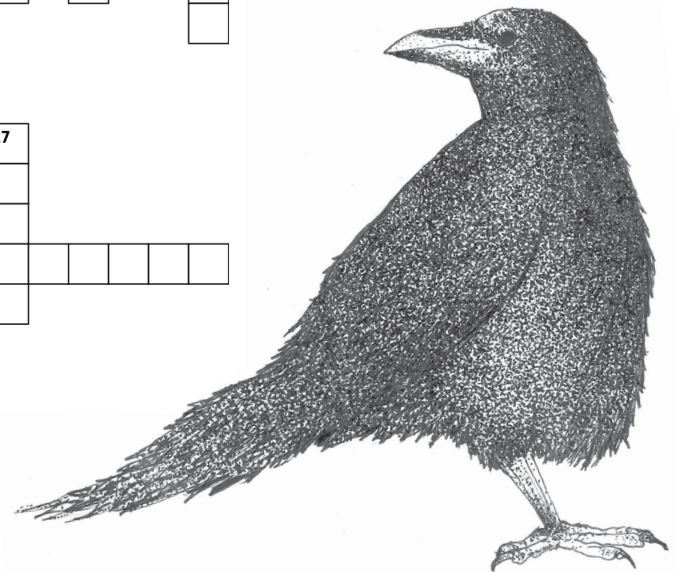
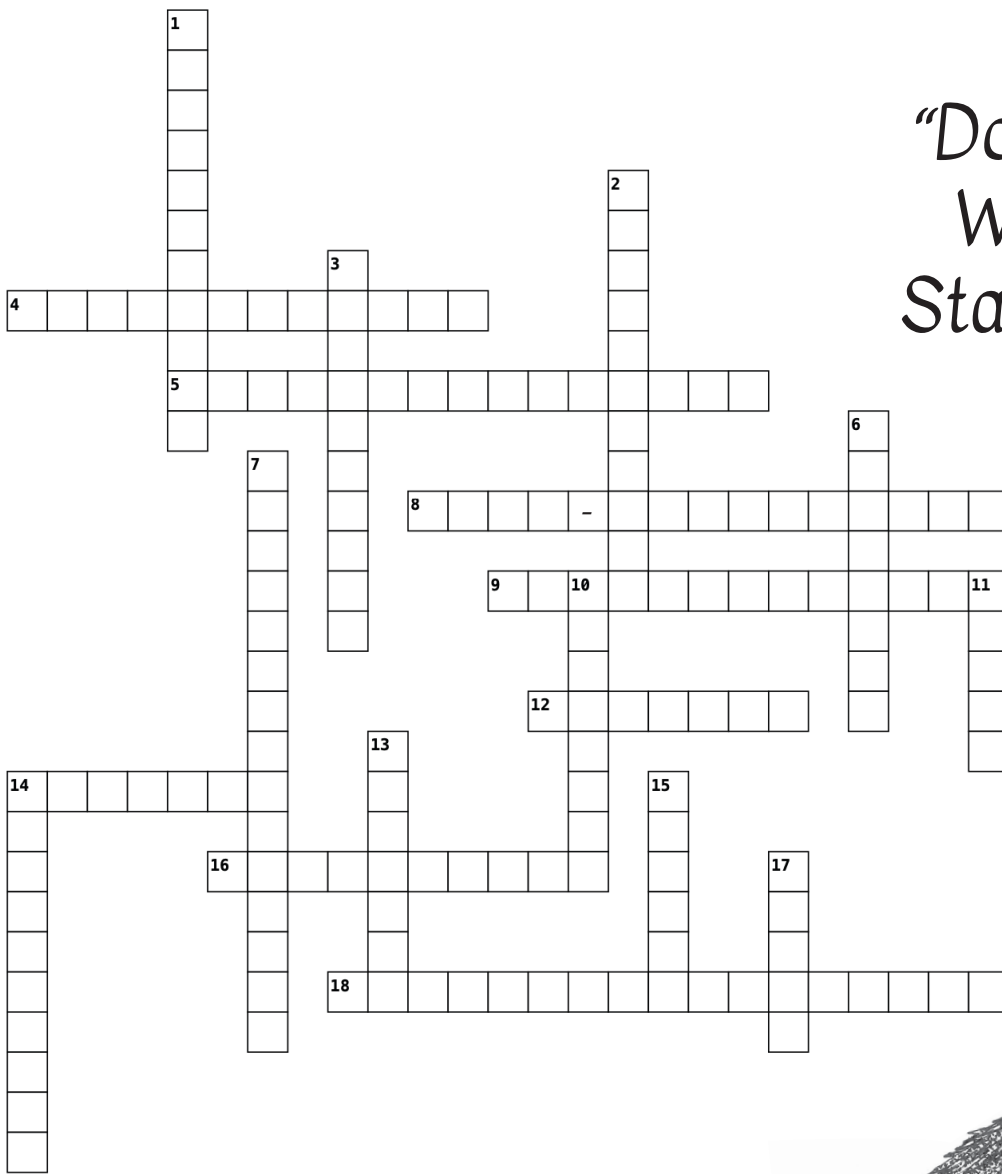
to be informed about what kind of DA they are voting in, and about what the DA office actually does.”

We’ve seen how our communities have come together through these town halls; not only voice questions and concerns, but also to connect with one another to build our collective power. As Liz from Rose Haven put it, “We can’t wait for the folks who already have the power to change, [since] the systems benefit them. We have to come together and use whatever power we have...and it all starts with just talking to each other.”

In the last few months, we’ve heard from many different folks who are committed to addressing the root causes of the deep-seated issues we face. The profit-oriented system we live in makes it easier to freeze on the streets than afford rent. It makes it easier for big corporations to institutionalize the will of a few than the interests of the many. And it makes it easier to put unhoused people in jail than ensure they have adequate medical care. If what connects us all is this system of exploitation, displacement, and dispossession, what else is more important than fighting for the liberation of all of us? After all, we and our communities are here to stay.



# “Don’t Cross Us! We’re Here to Stay” Crossword



*“Don’t cross us, caw!”*

## Down

1. Sisters philosophy that confronts acts intended to hurt, damage, humiliate, or degrade others
2. Provider of community centered journalism, local non-profit partner
3. A principle compelling people to support the struggles of all other oppressed people around the world; one of Sisters’ values
6. Change or The widespread transformation of the structures, policies, and practices that shape a system; one of Sisters’ values
7. A town hall series bringing together community members and partners
10. Public support or work towards a particular cause or policy
11. Park Blocks or Name of park near Sisters of the Road
13. the ethical, philosophical idea that people are to be treated impartially, fairly, properly, and reasonably
14. Cabaret business since 1967 on NW Davis
15. To come together
17. First name of one of Sisters’ founder, “Nelson”

## Across

4. Former name of the restaurant at 331 NW Davis (and where Sisters is moving to)
5. Turning activities into a criminal offense by making it illegal
8. A sisters philosophy that seeks to stand up against violence and abuse, specially towards marginalized people
9. Policy which decriminalized most unlawful possession of a controlled substance
12. A basic human right
14. The inherent and unalienable right every person and peoples has to existence, respect, and self-determination
16. Leader of the catholic worker movement
18. Sisters philosophy that believes in the intrinsic value of individuals

# Walking the Walk of Community-Centric Fundraising

Kelcie Smolin Grega, Annual Fundraising Coordinator

As many of you are likely aware, a significant portion (80%) of our funding comes from individual donors like yourself. We are incredibly proud of this. We view everyone who supports us as equal partners in our mission to end the violence of poverty.

Our approach to fundraising is loosely based on the Community-Centric Fundraising (CCF) model. CCF prioritizes the community at large over the individual donor – no matter the dollar amount they contribute.

Community-Centric Fundraising isn't just something made up; it's a global movement challenging traditional fundraising norms that perpetuate systems of oppression.

Among the ten principles of Community-Centric Fundraising, I'd like to highlight three that closely align with Sisters' philosophies and mission:

## **Fundraising must be grounded in race, equity, and social justice.**

Our philosophies on anti-oppression and nonviolence urge us to interrupt all forms of oppression and violence, even within fundraising. We advocate for inclusivity, welcoming all who stand with us, regardless of economic status or background.

The \$5 donor is as special as the \$5,000 donor.

## **Nonprofits are generous with and mutually supportive of one another.**

We reject the scarcity mindset when it comes to fundraising. We recognize other organizations and nonprofits working towards systemic change to end poverty as accomplices rather than competitors for a small pot of funding.

We share knowledge, form partnerships, and support our allies to build authentic relationships, combat isolation, and address the root causes of poverty and homelessness.

## **We promote the understanding that everyone personally benefits from engaging in the work of social justice.**

We aren't saviors. We believe in solidarity. In solidarity work, accountability shifts outward, empowering the communities we work with to lead their liberation. We believe the community as a whole benefits from our systemic change work.

You'll notice in many of our communications, we don't showcase people on their worst day. We try to use images that elicit joy, not pity. We know that joy creates unity. This unity is particularly significant in the face of people in power, who wield scarcity and fear as instruments of control. Joy, in contrast, is something that cannot be measured.

I've been at Sisters for almost a year. I've had the pleasure of chatting with some of you on the phone who also share this belief. Your support motivates not just my work, but the collective efforts of all of us.

We appreciate you.





Since we first opened in 1979, Sisters of the Road has been committed to addressing the root causes of houselessness and poverty here in Old Town Chinatown. As we prepare to reopen our new space and continue our advocacy work to bring real, systematic solutions, we need your help. If you'd like to be a part of this work, there are a number of ways you can get involved. Any amount, big or small, helps us immensely in sustaining our programs.

## Ways to Give

### Send a check

Our office space in Old Town Chinatown is open! You're welcome to send us a check in the mail to our address at 618 NW Davis St Portland, OR 97209.

### Donate online

Visit the QR code below to donate or set up a recurring giving plan on our website. Recurring donations help us immensely in sustaining our programs throughout the year, and any amount is an amazing help!



### Employee match

Many companies offer employee match opportunities to 501(c)(3) non-profits. Contact your HR department to see if you can double your impact through employee giving programs!

### Donor advised funds

Set up a Donor Advised Fund through a financial institution or community foundation.

### Contact Us

Got any questions? Reach out anytime. Contact us at [info@sistersoftheroad.org](mailto:info@sistersoftheroad.org) 503-222-1139.



### Peer-to-peer fundraising

Start your own fundraising campaign to gather donations for Sisters from people you know. Check out our toolkit on our website, email [kelcie@sistersoftheroad.org](mailto:kelcie@sistersoftheroad.org), or call us at 503-445-9888 for more information.

### Facebook fundraisers

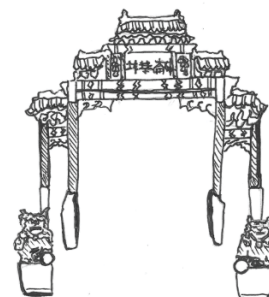
Host your own Sisters fundraiser on Facebook! You might try throwing a birthday fundraiser in lieu of gifts.

### Stock donations

If you want to make a donation and own stock, you can donate a portion of your stock directly to Sisters. Contact us, and we can put you in touch with the bank representative who handles these transactions for us.

### Planned giving

Leave a lasting legacy. Consider making Sisters a beneficiary of your estate.





Sisters of the Road  
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Portland, Oregon  
97209

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Permit No. 3679



Answers to crossword- Down 1. Nonviolence 2. Streetroots 3. Solidarity 6. Systemic 7. CommunityVoices 10. Advocacy 11. North 13. Justice 14. Darcelle 15. Gather 17. Genny | Across 4. HouseofLouie 5. Criminalization 8. Anti-Oppression 9. MeasureOneTen 12. Housing 14. Dignity 16. DorothyDay 18. GentlePersonalism