



"In here there are no strangers..."

Sisters Of The Road

...just friends we've never met."

For Immediate Release

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SISTERS OF THE ROAD TO HOLD TRUTH COMMISSION ON SIT-LIE LAW

Portland, Oregon (July 21, 2008) -- Thursday, August 7, 2008, Sisters Of The Road will hold a truth commission on the effects of the Sit-Lie Law on Portland's homeless community. It will be held at Sisters at 133 NW 6th Ave at 5:30pm.

According to data submitted to the City by the Portland Police Bureau, the Sit-Lie Law has been enforced almost exclusively against homeless people. "Enforcement of the Sit-Lie Law is not only inhumane and immoral, it's unconstitutional; the constitution says laws cannot be enforced against any one class of people. Of the 88 warnings and citations issued between August 30th, 2007 and January 22nd, 2008, 79 were people who were identified as homeless, 'transient,' or no address was listed," said Patrick Nolen, Community Organizer for Sisters Of The Road.

Sisters' truth commission will provide a space where concerns and experiences related to the Sit-Lie Law are genuinely listened to and respected. Testimony from the truth commission will be compiled into a short report that will be delivered to the Street Access for Everyone (SAFE) Oversight Committee on Monday August 11, 2008 during their public hearing to review the effectiveness of the strategy.

Michael Buonocore, Sisters' Associate Director, explains, "We lack confidence that the voices of people most affected by this law will be taken seriously during the SAFE public hearing. Therefore, we will have our own forum where people will be heard."

The SAFE Workgroup was established by the Portland City Council on May 24, 2006, developing "Five Strategies for a More Livable Portland." According to the Executive Summary of this process on the Mayor's website, "The Workgroup emphasized that consensus around this strategy would not endure unless all five parts are implemented together."

Sisters' staff representatives on the SAFE oversight committee noted that the services associated with these strategies, including day access center space, public restrooms and benches, have not been implemented in a timely and adequate manner.

By contrast, the strategy of a sit-lie law that prohibits anyone from sitting or lying on a public sidewalk between 7 am and 9 pm has been fully implemented, and the vast majority of warnings and citations are issued to homeless individuals. To deepen this injustice, the language of the law applies to obstructions on the sidewalk including signs and seating outside of businesses that do not have the proper permit. No action has been taken to enforce the law as it applies to inanimate objects, only humans who lack shelter.

In recognition that the SAFE process has not resulted in the equal implementation of the five strategies and has been shown to target homeless people in its enforcement, Sisters Of The Road publicly resigned from the Oversight Committee on May 8, 2008.

ABOUT SISTERS OF THE ROAD: Founded in 1979, Sisters Of The Road uses non-violence to support community driven solutions to the calamities of homelessness and poverty. Sisters' cafe is open to everyone, serving low cost, hot, nutritious meals. Sisters also provides job training, support to parents and children, and innovative solutions to the issues surrounding poverty and homelessness through self and community advocacy.

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