

REMEMBERING buddy gray

November 15th marks the third anniversary of buddy gray's tragic death, a tireless advocate for the homeless. Neighborhood based organizations in Over-the-Rhine such as Drop Inn Center ShelterHouse, ReSTOC Low Income Housing Cooperative, Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless and Over-the-Rhine Housing Network are able to continue to respond to the crisis of homelessness and lack of affordable housing because of the strong foundation that was built under buddy's long tenure of leadership and labor. After three years his loss is still poignant, but his death did not leave a vacuum because buddy believed in passing on knowledge and skills so the work of the Over-the-Rhine struggle would carry on. He did not work in isolation. He always had somebody learning and working along side of him. He was not about building up his own kingdom.

buddy learned from activists and truth-bearers before him. He knew that for the freedom train to keep on chugging more people had to be inspired to hop aboard. buddy taught us well that the ride would be arduous and long but the journey worth it. Alice Walker claims in "Anything We Love Can Be Saved": **We begin to distinguish between the need, singly, to throw rocks at whatever is oppressing us, and the creative joy that arises when we bring our collective stones of resistance against injustice together."** buddy possessed a special gift of energizing our collective stones of resistance. We miss so much his mobilizing and energizing spirit but he believed strongly we each carried it within us and he challenged us to call it forth and use it in our daily work of justice. buddy's spirit is singing *carry it on, AND WE WILL.*

So in the chill of autumn's air let us remember buddy in his railroad cap putting his arm around a person homeless in Washington Park, coaxing his friend to come on over to the Drop Inn Center. Let us remember buddy in his hard hat working on a Saturday guerrilla crew at ReSTOC getting everyone excited and believing we can save this building for our people to live in. Let us remember buddy whispering in a huddle in City Hall chambers trying to figure out our next move to lobby a vote for our neighborhood issues. Let us remember buddy and his bellowing voice challenging injustices everywhere he went. Let us remember buddy leaning down to pick up a child and giving a big squeeze of care and encouragement. Let us remember buddy in his pick up truck helping a family move with their meager possessions set out on the street. Let us remember buddy's electric laugh and sense of humor that helped us find fun in our work. Let us remember buddy planting trees for he believed beauty would inspire us. Let us remember buddy on his bicycle riding around in early hours of morning and late at night to find space and moments to reflect. Let us remember buddy buying a cheese sandwich, chocolate milk and Reese's Cup at Bang's market, and sharing it with a friend. Let us remember that buddy believed in us and the power of the people to change the world to be a better place.

buddy remembers us too. He misses giving us his "buddy hugs". I am sure he laughs and cries with us as we experience our little victories and big defeats. He understands more completely than ever what we are going through in our daily efforts to hold on to Drop Inn Center Shelterhouse, our homes and community of Over-the-Rhine. buddy's life was violently taken from us; but our relationship with him still lives. The work he dedicated his life to lives on in us and through us. buddy's soul is embedded deep in our neighborhood of Over-the-Rhine because he planted roots and love all over the place. And when the struggle gets tough, if we listen long and hard enough, we will be able to hear buddy's bellowing voice.... **YOU CAN DO IT MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, CARRY IT ON, NOT JUST FOR ME, NOT JUST FOR YOU, BUT FOR ALL OF US, CARRY IT ON!**

By Bonnie Neumeier
Long Time Friend and Companion
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