

# REBUILDING



## SISTERS OF THE ROAD

Sisters Voice • Summer 2022





# FRESH CHANGE

## JUNE THROUGH SEPTEMBER!



### EXCHANGE YOUR BARTER CREDITS EARNED IN THE CAFE, DOLLAR-FOR-DOLLAR AT PORTLAND FARMERS MARKET!

While our customers can count on salad, fruits, and vegetable-based meals in our cafe, outside of Sisters these choices can be out of reach for so many in our community. **That is why we are excited to launch our ninth year of Sisters' much loved program, Fresh Change.**

Want to help support this work? If you or your business would like to sponsor Fresh Change, contact Benjamin D. at [Benjamin@sistersoftheroad.org](mailto:Benjamin@sistersoftheroad.org)

## SISTERS OF THE ROAD



### 42 YEARS OF SYSTEMIC CHANGE, NONVIOLENCE, DINING WITH DIGNITY, GENTLE PERSONALISM AND ANTI-OPPRESSION

Since 1979, Sisters of the Road has worked to address the needs of the communities of Portland's Old Town/Chinatown neighborhood—particularly members of the community who are currently unhoused. We built relationships and listened to understand peoples' needs and in response opened a nonprofit cafe with the founding goals of:

- ▶ Providing a safe, welcoming place for everyone—especially women and children.
- ▶ Offering nourishing meals at little cost and/or in exchange for labor.
- ▶ Offering job training and employment experience.

For forty-two years, these goals have shaped our work and continue to anchor our pursuit to fulfill our mission—one relationship at a time.

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR:**  
Heather Dorfman

**PHOTOGRAPHY:**  
[Migyoung Won](#)

**NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS:**  
Heather Dorfman  
Miranda Krone  
Lana Silsbe  
Dara Snyder

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**  
Art Rios Sr.  
Doug Bloem  
Bert Seierstad  
Ed Edmo  
Kat M.  
Travis Smith

**DESIGN AND LAYOUT:**  
[David Lloyd Imageworks](#)

**DONATE TO SISTERS**

← Your donation to Sisters of the Road today makes a difference in our community.

# SISTERS OF THE ROAD

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**MISSION:** Sisters of the Road exists to build authentic relationships and alleviate the hunger of isolation in an atmosphere of nonviolence and gentle personalism that nurtures the whole individual, while seeking systemic solutions that reach the roots of homelessness and poverty to end them forever.

## ROAD MAP TO WHATS HAPPENING:

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#### SISTERS OF THE ROAD CAFE

[133 NW Sixth Ave.](#)  
[Portland, OR 97209](#)

#### SISTERS ADMIN OFFICE

[618 NW Davis St.](#)  
[Portland, OR 97209](#)

[sistersoftheroad.org](http://sistersoftheroad.org)  

## WHO WE ARE

**Sisters of the Road is a nonprofit cafe** in Portland's Old Town/Chinatown neighborhood working to create systemic change that will end poverty and homelessness by providing nourishing meals in a safe, dignified space.

**We work to build community** one relationship at a time, with nonviolence and gentle personalism, believing everyone has a piece of the truth and that we are all more than the sum of our current situation or past experiences.

**We interrupt violence and oppression** in all forms and our cafe is a safer space where everyone is welcome.

**At Sisters we believe** that care and dignity are at the heart of food justice. While we still offer folks hot, fresh meals, pandemic restrictions have forced temporary changes to our programs.

### Rebuilding after COVID

As you'll read in this newsletter, we are currently renovating Sisters' cafe. We are so grateful to the community members and volunteers that are giving their time and labor on Saturdays so we can reopen as soon as possible. During these shared work days, Sisters of the Road provides lunch to volunteers. We also have snack bags available to community members on request. Our goal is to reopen to indoor dining in July.

Blue Meal Coupons are currently on hold while all meals are free, however, they will be in use again when we are able to open up our indoor cafe space safely.

If you would like more information about how to support Sisters of the Road during these unique times, please visit our website at [sistersoftheroad.org](http://sistersoftheroad.org), call us at 503-222-5694 or email us at [info@sistersoftheroad.org](mailto:info@sistersoftheroad.org)





# NEW GROWTH, DEEP ROOTS

*By Dara Snyder, Executive Director*

Hello and welcome—we're so glad you're here, and we're excited to share what's happening at Sisters of the Road.

2022 has brought surprises, opportunities, and challenges for all of us. At Sisters, we're meeting them all with these essential questions: what does our community want and need, and how do we partner to get closer to those needs? We know that the behind-the-scenes work on our internal policies and practices is just as important as the more visible actions, campaigns, and movements we are part of. Who

we are as an organization, how we work together and support each other is the foundation on which our work for housing, food, and racial justice is built. Using consensus and collaborative processes as a team is a crucial way we live our values. These values shape everything we do, from our work on the Homeless Bill of Rights/ Right to Rest Act, to the welcome and good food we offer in our cafe.

The staff recently held a retreat to clarify our work and goals for the upcoming year. Fueled by delicious meals created by Miranda Krone, our



new Cafe Manager ([see page 5 for details](#)), we affirmed that we are both a cafe, and equally a space for accessible community organizing. We confirmed that over the coming year, we will be stable and adaptive. As always, we will center the voices, leadership, and empowerment of our community.

These goals are like lampposts—giving light and direction to our path forward. Simply having some time with each other is crucial too, and a core part of our practice of nonviolence and gentle personalism. We took time to share mutual, heartfelt appreciations and even silliness (check out our fun photos!).

Together, we agreed that to support our goals, we must increase staff wages. Sisters is committed to eliminating poverty and one way to do that is ensuring our staff can afford housing. As such, as of July 1 we will increase the base rate to \$23 per hour, and plan to increase pay by year three to a minimum of \$27 an hour, budget permitting. We believe this increase will allow staff to be better able to pay for housing in this devastatingly gentrifying city. Wages for other positions will be increased incrementally as well.

Toward a more racially just organization, community, and world—Sisters will reestablish our Racial Justice and Anti-Oppression Committee. We plan to launch or relaunch a number of other activities too, like our Fresh Change program; Legal Defense Clinics; Community Outreach and Research Events (CORE), which will offer training and experience to unhoused folks in community-led outreach for social change; DIY art events; and ongoing collaboration with coalitions and campaigns for justice, just to name a few. Check out our [interview with Systemic Change Manager Benjamin D. on pages 7-8](#) for more information.

As you read, please consider how you can get involved. **Your support makes a huge difference! We're in the midst of our summer Full Plate Project campaign, and donations during this time are invaluable!** If you can, please also

consider a monthly donation. As a sustaining member, you ensure that we have a clear and consistent budget to rely on as we work toward a more compassionate and just world. We also welcome you to join us as a volunteer, and invite you to participate in our community events. You are part of this community. Thank you!



Having fun during our annual staff/board retreat.





# FRESH STARTS IN THE CAFE

By Miranda Krone, Cafe Manager

**Editor's note:** Miranda Krone joined the team at Sisters of the Road in March, as our new Cafe Manager. Read on to learn more about updates and new developments for the cafe!

As we are all aware, the past couple of years has had a devastating impact on millions, and Sisters of the Road was no exception.

At Sisters, we thrive as part of a community, and sharing a meal at the table together is central to that. We are so very glad to be getting back to meals together soon.

In preparation, our cafe team and volunteers have been busy cleaning, sanding, painting, and turning our minds, hearts and collaborative energies towards rejuvenation and renewal in partnership with our community. We've been so grateful to have support from our neighbors - both unhoused and housed - in these renovations. We asked them why they chose to help—here's what two of these volunteers shared:

Mark said that **“it's the right thing to do”** because he's **“part of the block, part of the community.”** Mark shared that during this challenging time, Sisters is a constant. He looks forward to more resources, a cleaner space, and community.

Monica told us, **“It needs to be done. We need to serve our community and create healthy space for people to eat and experience a little safety, civility, and cleanliness.”** She's also looking forward to increased opportunities to work or volunteer, and that more people will have access to healthy food and a safer place.

This past month has also brought with it budget and planning sessions for the coming year, which has been an opportunity to take a deep breath, gather, and reflect on the input we've received from our community and to choose the path forward together in solidarity. We're very excited about changes to our pay structure that will move us toward a livable wage ([see the message from our Executive Director Dara on pages 3-4 for more](#)). This and other meaningful supports will allow us to maintain our focus on hiring and working with folks with lived experience of houselessness or unstable housing.

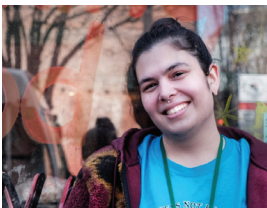
In the cafe, we look forward to offering an expanded menu that is more similar to a market rate restaurant, and offers more fresh foods prepared to order. Our Kitchen Manager Lana and I have put our heads together to make some long overdue kitchen equipment upgrades. You'll also see changes to our dining area that we hope will make it feel even more like home as we welcome you and other neighbors back inside.

We are very excited to begin hosting meetings in our space again too, beginning with workshops by Portland Street Medicine, and arts and crafts and writers workshops. Over the coming year, we will even compile many of the recipes you have known and loved over the years, along with some new ones, and combine them with essays, memoir and poetry written by our community members to create a Sisters of the Road cookbook. [Check out Lana's home version of our famous cornbread recipe](#) on the opposite page for a “taste” of what's to come!

As part of our goal to make fresh, nutritious and delicious foods available to our community, we are also setting up a “grab and go” cooler in the Personalist Center, next door to the cafe. Folks with limited cooking access, or who were not able to get a dining slot with us that day will still have access to freshly prepared and sustaining meals.

For me, these past couple of years have felt very much like trying to fight a raging fire with one tiny bucket. Having joined Sisters of the Road these few months ago, I could not ask for a better bucket brigade to be a part of.





# SISTERS FAMOUS CORNBREAD

*By Lana Silsbe, Kitchen Manager*

**Cornbread has been a staple of Sisters' meals since we opened our doors in 1979.**

Gifted by Sister Mary Bertoli, our cornbread recipe has been passed down by generations of Sisters' staff and is still the recipe we use today. Our partnership with Oregon's employee-owned natural foods company Bob's Red Mill brings local and whole grain products to our kitchen. We use Bob's cornmeal and all purpose flour for our delicious cornbread. Here's the recipe to recreate our famous cornbread at home!

## INGREDIENTS:

- ▶ 1 1/4 cups Bob's Red Mill Cornmeal
- ▶ 1 1/4 cups Bob's Red Mill All purpose Flour
- ▶ 1/2 cup of sugar
- ▶ 1 TBS baking powder
- ▶ 2 tsp salt
- ▶ 2 eggs
- ▶ 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- ▶ 2 cups whole milk

## DIRECTIONS:

Makes 8-10 Pieces

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Generously grease a 9x9 inch pan.
3. Mix dry ingredients in a large bowl.
4. Add milk, eggs and oil to a medium bowl and mix vigorously, until evenly incorporated.
5. Combine wet and dry ingredients and transfer into the prepared baking pan.
6. Bake until golden brown, about 30-35 mins.
7. Enjoy with family, friends, and neighbors!

6





Sisters' Systemic Change Team, Benjamin & Lauren

# ROOTED IN THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY: A CONVERSATION WITH BENJAMIN D.

*By Heather Dorfman*

Centering the needs and interests of community members is a given for Systemic Change (SC) Manager Benjamin D. His enthusiasm for the future of Sisters' organizing and advocacy is abundantly clear, and it's rooted in his conversations and work with unhoused folks.

Benjamin came to Portland a few years ago with a strong background in organizing with [Western Regional Advocacy Project \(WRAP\)](#) and other groups. As a resident at Right 2 Dream Too, he learned more about Sisters of the Road, and knew he needed to get involved. He began volunteering, and fell in love with the mission and model. So much so that he applied several times to a cafe staff position, and finally got the job - all while continuing his housing justice organizing. A year and a

half in, Benjamin intentionally stepped back for some time to rest and recharge. Soon enough, his spark for Sisters relit, and he returned to help in the cafe last summer. Not long after, he was hired as SC Manager.

As SC Manager, Benjamin is excited to guide Sisters into a new stage; one that draws on the rich history and decades of organizing that have long made SOTR a local and national force for change. He's stepping in at a challenging time, and one full of opportunities. The ability to invite unhoused folks inside, and share a meal in community, has always been a strong foundation of organizing at Sisters. With the cafe closed to indoor dining during the pandemic, the SC team temporarily lost this valuable organizing and dialogue space.

Instead, Benjamin focused his efforts on connecting



with houseless folks where they are—visiting with them outside, and at their camps. He kept these relationships alive, and listened closely to their experiences, perspectives, and needs. He made sure people knew that they matter, and that we are paying attention.

Decades of political engagement and community organizing have taught us how important thoughtfully building relationships with those that hold different perspectives can be. Benjamin is doing just that—meeting with neighborhood associations, local businesses, city council, and the staff at Multnomah County. This enables him to counter harmful narratives about people experiencing homelessness, and to work toward collaborative solutions. He’s also pushing forward at state and national levels. He represents Sisters in a number of housing justice coalitions, including with the Homeless Bill of Rights/Right to Rest Act campaign.

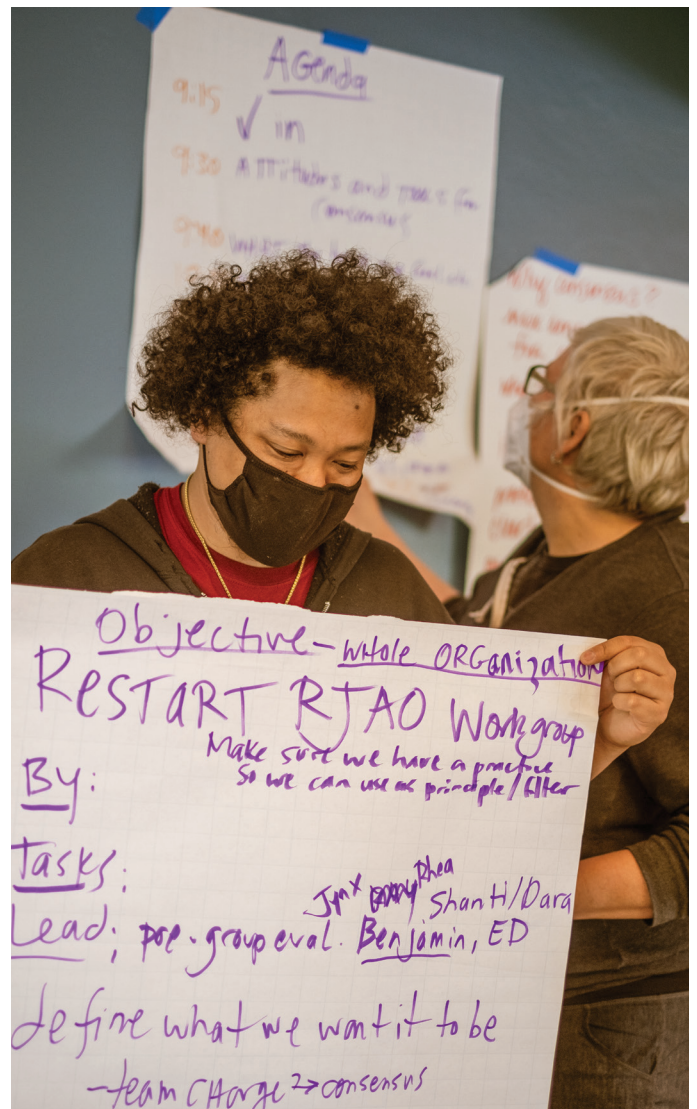
Benjamin is now laying the groundwork for a number of activities, including upcoming Community Outreach and Research Events (CORE), in which people who are unhoused would identify needs and research topics; learn data collection skills; and partner with other researchers to use this data for advocacy efforts. Many in the community have also asked for the Roadies to return, a program that offers unhoused neighbors opportunities to learn organizing and leadership skills. And, for those who barter work in the cafe, the Fresh Change program will again offer credit to spend at local farmers markets for fresh produce and more. Sisters will also partner with WRAP and the National Homeless Law Center to decrease barriers to legal support, and decriminalize homelessness.

Community members tell Benjamin that space to be creative and learn together is absolutely crucial too. Soon, the team will again offer monthly gatherings to create art like buttons, t-shirts, and poetry. Benjamin is also partnering with Portland People’s Outreach Project and Street Medicine to offer first aid training and harm reduction resources.

According to Benjamin, “the pandemic and the last couple of months...have been challenging—especially the ramping up of displacement for unhoused people. It’s been really hard for folks...to navigate their lives. During this time, it’s critical that places like Sisters exist. A place to stop and rest, even for a little while, allows people to feel normal.”

Benjamin invites you to help build the compassionate responses this time needs, and encourages you to “talk to friends and neighbors to counter negative narratives.” You can also share your “sweat equity” to make all of these great opportunities happen. Join us for community events like art-making and open mic nights—great ways to build relationships with others that care about justice and compassion. And as always, your donation to Sisters of the Road, especially during our annual Full Plate Project, means so much—and keeps these programs going.

Benjamin has now stepped into the role he’d worked toward for many years, and brings a clear commitment to listening and being led by our unhoused neighbors. We’re so glad you’re part of Sisters, Benjamin!



Benjamin participates in Racial Justice and Anti-Oppression discussions during our board/staff retreat.





# IT'S THE COMMUNITY THAT KEEPS ME HERE—OF COURSE!

## Celebrating 10 Years of Migyoung

Interview by Heather Dorfman

Migyoung Won has been part of Sisters of the Road for 10 years. We asked her to share some of her thoughts and experiences as a long-time member of this special community.

### What brought you to Sisters, and in what roles have you been?

Sisters did connect me instantly coming from experiencing childhood extreme poverty, and then a former staff member, Kris, invited me to volunteer. I was eventually hired as Cafe Co-Manager. Since then, I also have been Business Manager, Personnel Manager, and currently I am Admin/Operations Manager.

### What's kept you here for 10 years?

Our community, of course! It's so sweet to hear "HELLO!" when long time community members stop by and are surprised that I am "still" at Sisters. Also to me Sisters has been my school for learning and understanding not just gaining lifetime skill sets but also challenging me to be a better and resilient person everyday.

### What have been the biggest challenges?

Not being able to have our customers indoors, especially during the cold winter, was gut wrenching. We also lost many community members and were only able to have a vigil last December.

### And what are some good memories?

Often seeing many community members generously treat customers with their earned barter cards and enjoy sharing meals with them. Always makes me smile! And one day I was walking down the street and suddenly attacked by a stranger. Moments later, still shaking I ran into a community member whom I had a disagreement with. After hearing what happened, he offered me to walk back to Sisters and once I got in he nodded and left. Coming from far away without my family, as much as it sounds cliché, Sisters' community became my family. Sisters taught me that we are together as a community and we can support each other even if we disagree on certain things.

### What's something that has surprised you in your time here?

The generosity all around from the customers, staff members, and our donors. The way we genuinely care for each other, and how Sisters nurtures our authenticity.

### How can people support/get involved?

Get involved by volunteering, working and donating. When you see the rampant injustice happening to our community and the world, we need to be there where we can fight together. After all, we are a social justice organization. I often share this Korean wisdom with my friends I met here: if you want to catch a tiger you have to go to where the tiger lives. With heartwarming food as a vehicle, I am hoping Sisters becomes a more inclusive space for organizing and building authentic relationships. I have been fortunate enough to savor every moment for the last 10 years.

**Thank you Migyoung. We are so grateful for all you have done and been part of at Sisters of the Road!**





## BE PART OF THE FULL PLATE PROJECT THIS SUMMER



DONATE TODAY

The **Full Plate Project** is Sisters' annual summer fundraising campaign. Donations are sometimes slow in the summer, but folks always need the connections and nourishment Sisters of the Road offers.

Summer can feel like an abundant season for some, with gardens and farmers markets overflowing with fresh fruit and veggies. Our donors (people just like you!) know that true abundance must be shared.

Sisters is a homebase for learning and organizing together for housing and food justice. It's a space to sit down and rest, while sharing delicious, nutritious meals. Your donation ensures that the good things that summer brings will be shared with our neighbors who are houseless. Here are 3 easy ways to support the **Full Plate Project**:

Here are 3 easy ways to support the Full Plate Project:

1. Use the pre-addressed envelope included in this newsletter.
2. Donate online by scanning the QR Code above or at: [donate.sistersoftheroad.org/fpp2022](https://donate.sistersoftheroad.org/fpp2022)
3. Follow us on [Instagram](#) and share with your community!

**Thank you for considering a generous gift today –our campaign ends July 31st!**

*Please also consider becoming a sustaining member with a generous monthly contribution that helps all year round!*



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## DONATE TO SISTERS

Your donation to Sisters of the Road today makes a difference in our community. Sisters thrives because of the work that we do together, side by side, in solidarity.

## THANK YOU TO THE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS WORKING HARD ON OUR NEW RENOVATIONS!



**Sisters of the Road is rebuilding** and the cafe will be re-opening fresh and improved in the next months! We want to thank everyone that has pitched in to help with the renovations in the cafe, the new systems, and the new energy.