

**Talking Points from the
State of Multnomah County Address
Given by Chair Marissa Madrigal
February 21, 2014 @ 9:00 am
City Club @ Governor's Hotel - Portland, Oregon**

Chair Marissa Madrigal

OPENING REMARKS

Thank you for having me. Today, I have the incredible honor of representing an organization, community and people I love - Multnomah County. But before I begin, I want to honor the history of this place where we stand- a history that doesn't just go back a few hundred years, but instead thousands. When we say the name Multnomah, we invoke the name of a people - the first people to inhabit this land and the same people who live among us now, too often invisibly.

The Multnomah dwelled on these banks for millennia before Manifest Destiny, disease and extermination pushed them to the edge of extinction. While one might be tempted to absolve oneself of responsibility for historic wrongs, the truth is that people of privilege continue to benefit from the inequity born of horrible actions. The great-grandchildren of those who were harmed, are today, still more likely to be suffering in our community. The forced assimilation of indigenous people continues to result in staggering over-representation of Native Americans in the foster care system, the justice system and poverty.

The reason I work for Multnomah County, the reason I am here today is because I believe we can do better. I believe as a people, we possess the strength to make a difference in the lives of our friends and neighbors, no matter who they are or where they come from.

Please help me welcome Carlos McNair, a member of the Klamath Tribes and a Youth and Education Specialist at the Native American Youth and Family Center. Carlos has agreed to honor us today with a hand drum song.

It's difficult to overstate how proud I am of much of the work Multnomah County is doing. I have witnessed our passion for people, our heart and our grit more times than I can count. We touch every corner of our community whether it's seniors and people with disabilities or kids learning to read, whether it's finding new homes for pets or keeping your summers a little less mosquito plagued. Public health. Bridges. Libraries. Jails. We do it all. But talking about the State of Multnomah County, without acknowledging our community's collective responsibility, our weaknesses, the real size, expense and complexity of our problems, feels hollow.

I know that this speech is typically an opportunity to score some political points and generally avoid talking about depressing things. But if I've learned anything over the

course of my life including my recent experience, it's that nothing is more valuable, powerful or essential than the truth.

Also, to talk about the present or future, without understanding or articulating the continuing impact of the past is to speak without context and misrepresent the facts. If we want to improve people's lives, we have to understand how their lives became casualties in the first place.

Multnomah County grapples every day with the infinite complexity of the human condition. It's tempting in a speech like this to shy away from complexity and go heavy on the memorable quips. It's tempting, but it would be wrong. We all know and love people who possess beautiful skills yet battle terrible demons. We cringe when we see someone sum them up in a look. At Multnomah County, our vision of a more perfect union is one that embraces the entire person. A vision that believes in the potential for everyone to live a happy, productive life.

We've seen what happens when we attempt to make sense of the complexity and contradictions by assigning people and problems to one category, one department or one government. Nothing.

We treat one symptom only to have the disease devour our hopes. It is why housing alone, or health insurance alone, or a jail bed alone won't change the things we want to change. People are more complicated than slogans. We must embrace the hard truth that one-dimensional solutions and one-off policies aren't solutions at all. Only a lot of work, money and power will bring our people out of suffering.

A member of the Grant Constitution team named Annalies Cowan came to a commission meeting last year and said something I found deeply moving and profound - this young woman said, "It is important as a citizen to not be selfish with your knowledge, to spread it to those who didn't get the same opportunities you did in life."

There is so much wisdom and love wrapped up in those words. It holds true whether you are lucky to be blessed with a healthy, wealthy family or have traveled a harder, bumpier road. Everyone has knowledge and wisdom to share. And what better advice for someone like me, who unexpectedly finds themselves in a position to be a little less selfish.

So today, I will tell three stories that I think you need to know, instead of ones I might want you to know. None of these stories is all good, or all bad. Like our own lives and winding paths, they're complicated. In telling them, I will subject you to my biases, and in hearing them you will apply yours.

But, through these stories I hope you'll begin to understand the true state of Multnomah County and see the glimmers of opportunity on the horizon.

STORY 1

The County is responsible for many pieces of the public safety system - prosecution, jails, parole & probation. But in the barrage of statistics and interplay with the police, legislation and courts, it's sometimes hard to understand the real life impacts of our policies.

Several years ago I met a dazzling young woman. When it came to politics, she was a natural - so much of what happens in a political environment is between the lines and she not only could read it, but analyzed it instantly. She was professional, responsible, kind and funny.

But unbeknownst to many of us who knew her, this junior in college had experienced more of the real world than most of her peers could imagine.

At ten years old, this young lady and her siblings were placed in the foster care system when it was determined her biological mother was abusive, addicted and could no longer care for them. By this time, she had already become a mother-figure to her siblings, who were then split into two homes and experienced all the associated trauma. Despite how adults had failed her, she was able to attend a private high school, earned a coveted internship and got into prestigious private college.

The summer after she graduated, I learned that while attending college, this young, talented woman had been charged with, convicted of and served jail time for a non-violent financial crime she committed at 18 at the urging and under the influence of her biological mother.

The courage with which she delivered this information was heart stopping. She said: "I am okay with being uncomfortable with sharing this piece of information, but I also do not care if I am judged. I know who I am! So you can judge or love me and that decision is for you to make."

Her mother was never charged, but she was. A court appointed attorney recommended that this young woman plead guilty to multiple felonies, which would have permanently devastated her life's upward trajectory. After a private attorney hired by someone who believed in her potential stepped in, she plead guilty to one charge, with jail time and hundreds of hours of community service. She owns her role in what happened. But do we?

Where, exactly, was the justice in her experience? Would she have been counseled to plead to multiple felonies if she had been white? How would her life be different if her mother's mental illness and addiction could have been prevented or treated? Where would she be if she hadn't been able to attend a school that supported her, or find adults who believed in her? Most importantly, what would have happened if she wasn't one of the most positive, strong, resilient, beautiful people I know?

What is most frightening to me is that the only thing unique about this story is my friend's ability to beat the odds. Her story makes me proud of her and angry at us. How many young people are sitting in our jails and prisons right now deciding that their lives are over - with no one left to fight for them? Instead of just punishing, how can we hold people who make mistakes accountable and help them not make the same mistakes again?

At the county and as a country, we have a long way to go to address these questions. There is hope if we can acknowledge that our biases directly and negatively impact people's lives. This isn't a theory, this is a fact. People of all races commit crimes at the same rate. The only explanation for the over-representation of people of color in our justice system is US. Our subjectivity and bias. Your crime and the risk you pose to society should be the primary determinants of your punishment, not your income, your skin color or your accent.

That is why the County's Juvenile Justice programs are driven by facts and evidence. We are using scientific methods to understand and measure the success or failure of our programs and we're using that information to change what we fund. We're using it to invest in the programs and strategies that are proven to work. Sounds rational, right?

But sometimes the evidence is counter-intuitive and goes against stubborn social mores. Turns out that for first-time low-level youth offenders, the harsher the punishment and the more intense our intervention is - the worse the outcome. We see higher recidivism rates, not lower ones. So when appropriate, we're trying to have a lighter touch because we understand now it is a better way to keep the community safe and keep young people on track.

Two years ago, our juvenile justice team also began using something called a Functional Family model. Simply put, rather than behaving as if a young person exists on an island by themselves, the Functional Family model allows probation officers to use a reality-based approach: No kid - and no person, for that matter - is an island. Parents and siblings, their jobs, health and problems all impact the outcomes for the kids.

We've applied these same principals to our work with Black and Latino gang-affected youth and their families because we know that by understanding the different cultural, religious, familial and inter-generational dynamics present in different populations, we're able to direct our resources in ways that work.

But there is one very important thing to keep in mind when I tell you that our juvenile justice program is the best in the country - we don't actually want your kids to end up there! We can be the best in the country, but on the river of broken dreams, we are the ocean. We are the end. We need the best neighborhoods, the best teachers, the best

schools, the best everything to happen for kids before us, if we want to reduce disproportionate outcomes for children and adults.

On the adult side, this year our county will implement evidence-based practices aimed at reducing the prison population. At direction of the Governor and legislature, the DA, Sheriff, Judges, Probation and Parole are all working together to fund smart, effective alternatives to incarceration. Of course, some people need to be locked up. We'll never stop needing some jails and prisons. But we need to be smarter. Prison and jail are blunt, expensive instruments that aren't effective at changing people's behavior.

As technology improves and data is automated, it will only be easier to ensure that how we are working is as effective as we think it is. Every year, we are better able to assess who is at risk of re-offending and which programs are most effective at making us safer. I will end this story with my young friend's wise words: "Jail served to denigrate me to the point that I would rather have been dead, hating my biological mother and myself, feeling lonely, unwanted, unsuccessful, and most importantly, that God, family, and friends no longer loved me. Jail is not a place for one to learn or promote changing of one's ways."

STORY 2

The next story is a difficult one for me to share. A year ago, I lost a dear friend when he took his own life. Paul was a writer, artist, performer and proprietor of Sniffy Linings Press, an online collection of local authors, stories and essays. He was a short, sweet, curly-haired and sometimes maddening presence who encouraged and inspired people who didn't have anyone else on their side. One of my favorite quotes of his was this: "It might be a mad house, but we live here."

To survive, he did graphic design under the table and in his later years, he wrote painstaking yo-yo reviews for amusement. He didn't have children and lived an on-and-off drug addled life, but when I gave birth to my daughter ten years ago, he bought her a tiny little pair of lime polka dots socks. He was complicated.

And he was suffering: from the lasting effects of childhood trauma, poverty, and crippling self-medicated mental illness. Over the decade and a half I knew Paul, I saw him cycle and fight successfully and unsuccessfully to get control. In the final years and days of his life, his complications had become so entangled that it was impossible to comb them into separate strands.

Last January, when he was bullied by his landlord after requesting repairs, his state deteriorated. Those of us who tried to help him feared that he would attempt to take his life, but we all thought if we loved him enough, if we found him a lawyer, if we found him a place to stay, we could hold on to our friend. He died, alone, believing that he was going to be evicted from the now-condemned, mold-infested apartment he had called home for a decade.

Paul was special to me, but again, his experience and his circumstances were not unique, particularly visible - or, frankly, the worst. There are tragically worse. But as I have personally struggled to come to terms with our collective failure to help him save himself, it has sharpened my sense of what the public's priorities should be. There were thousands of critical junctures in Paul's life where prevention or intervention might have made a difference.

Paul's suicide might have been prevented if someone, forty-years ago, had protected him from abuse. He might have been better able to cope if thirty years ago, someone had recognized and treated the symptoms of his trauma. He might have been able to cope with the idea of finding a new place to live if there had been any affordable apartment west of I-205 that would take him and his thoroughly non-existent credit. Instead, the complications in his life piled up and suffocated him.

At Multnomah County, our challenge as the safety net, particularly when it comes to mental illness - is to be responsive to crisis in ways that work, while at the same time expanding investment in the supports that help people thrive before and after a crisis. For example, I believe that Paul might have killed himself earlier if not for a City Housing Inspector who came to his apartment and validated the complaints Paul had made to his landlord about the condition of the place. That work matters.

How is your mental health today?

Would it be the same if you had no home, no money and no heat? How would it be if a few far away people in Washington, DC cut your already inadequate food budget? I'm going to talk a little more about why Mental health treatment is important, but to be responsible, I have to emphasize that it is only one piece of the puzzle.

In recent years, Multnomah County has capitalized on an improving financial picture and made strategic investments in evidence-based prevention. For example, we're building community capacity through our Mental Health First Aid program so more people (including front line staff) recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness before a crisis. We're screening for mental illness and addiction in routine doctor's visits. We're aggressively treating youth who have just had their first experience with psychosis to keep them on track socially and developmentally. We also continue to reach out to kids at school through our long-standing school-based medical and mental health program.

As more people are enrolled in insurance plans through the Affordable Care Act, we expect more people to access mental health care earlier. Multnomah County also hopes and expects that some services we now subsidize with general fund dollars will be covered by insurance, allowing us to fund the other things people need - housing, food, and wrap-around support.

That said, before you cheer about more people being covered, I want to make sure you know that as a community, that doesn't let us off the hook. We, the people of Multnomah County, need to increase our mental health literacy. We need to understand the difference between mental illness and addiction and what happens when folks are struggling with both. We all need to know the number to the mental health crisis line: 503-988-4888. We need to understand that people suffering from mental illness have the right to experience symptoms, in public, just the way you have a right to go to Safeway when you're under the weather. And, we need to know that like our physical health, our mental health needs a lifetime of maintenance.

I can't change the trajectory of Paul's life, but I can make sure you know that as a community, we need to be committed to a continuum of effective services, from early identification, to inpatient mental health and addictions treatment, to supportive housing if we want to see a difference on our streets, in our schools and in our homes.

STORY 3

The last story I want to tell you is a happy one. And it is probably going to embarrass that young man sitting right there at my table. Sorry.

One of the things that I love about our country and our state is that we are dreamers. We believe in the potential to change our fates. It makes us fun and innovative and exciting. But too often, we expect that all it takes is hard work. And we find these examples of people who have overcome great odds or had incredible accomplishments and we say, "See! See! they did it. THEY figured it out. It is possible!" But we leave things out. We leave out, or they leave out when they got help. Even though they did get help. Everyone does, whether it's from a social service program, or a family legacy of money, power and access.

That young man at my table is Natividad Zavala. Natividad is our office's policy assistant. He grew up in Salem with two hard-working, loving parents. Natividad is quick-witted, smart and he hustles. Sometimes when I see him walking quickly through the office I recognize the competitive spirit my parents instilled in me - that drive that pushes you to be better than yourself, to keep growing, learning, absorbing. He is the first person in his family to graduate from college.

In Natividad's case, he didn't start with a college legacy in his family. When your parents have gone to college, you have a built in network of advisors. If your high school counselor sucks, no problem, mom knows how to interpret college entrance standards. If you want to go Ivy, Uncle Alex went to Harvard and can tell you how he played the game, starting with expensive SAT prep courses. Although Nati's family provided a loving, stable environment, when it came to college stuff, he was on his own. But in Salem, Willamette University has partnered with private donors to provide a college readiness program called: Willamette Academy.

From middle school through high school, Willamette Academy provides homework help, takes kids to visit college campuses, and has them work with Willamette professors. Nati says, "Willamette Academy gave me an opportunity I might have never had. The opportunity to have a college education. The opportunity to realize my dreams. An opportunity that has forever changed my life and the life of my family." Nati graduated in 2013 and is now employed, paying taxes and helping support his family in Salem. In Willamette Academy, 100% of recent graduates graduated from high school, •100% of recent graduates enrolled in a college or university following graduation •Academy students have received over \$10 million in scholarships.

You might find it odd that I would tell you about a non-Multnomah County program, but I love Nati's story because it's a great example of a local team effort having wide-reaching, life-long effects that Multnomah County will benefit from. It's also a model that we can copy and replicate in our own community.

Now Multnomah County is part of Natividad's team. We see his drive, skills and potential to be whatever he wants to be.

SUMMARY

Teaming up - formally or informally - is a best practice recognized by leaders in social service innovation, whether its governments, non-profits , businesses or all of the above. Team members are required to let go of the individual glory and to be vulnerable. They have to trust each other, engage, participate and communicate to win. That is the dynamic we need to create in our community when we're tackling our problems.

At Multnomah County, we're coordinating policies with school districts and non-profits to improve student success and eliminate disparities. It's not easy, because we all have egos - but we're expanding our comfort zone so we achieve better, more consistent results across our community.

Our Health department is teaming up on a meta and micro level: Multnomah County is a part of each of our region's coordinated care organization: Health Share of Oregon and Family Care. And our healthcare delivery model has pivoted to patient centered care provided by teams. Multnomah County is part of each one of our region's coordinated care organization: Health Share of Oregon and FamilyCare. And our healthcare delivery model has strengthened its years-long commitment to patient centered care provided by teams. When we treat someone at the dentist and discover signs of hypertension, their primary care provider and their case manager are made aware of the issue and can be part of the treatment. When someone comes into our jail with chronic physical and behavioral health diseases, we're helping them apply for insurance and then work with our partners in the community to make sure they continue to get treatment.

Beyond the health department, we're creating a regional team that includes governments and residents to coordinate how we should spend valuable federal housing and homelessness dollars. Our winter warming shelters are run and funded by a team of faith leaders, volunteers and county employees.

For me, the best part of being on a team is being able to accomplish things together that you could never do alone. As many of you know, we have an incredible system of SUN Community Schools across our county that are joint ventures of the county, cities, non-profits and school districts. If you have one at your school, you get free after school classes and access to other vital services. SUN keeps kids engaged, safe and out of trouble after school. But the problem is that only about half the schools in Multnomah County have a SUN program and next year, about a dozen current SUN schools have funding that is in danger of going away.

Some of you may also recall that last year, funding for SUN schools was at the center of a last-minute budget spat between the City and County. As examples go, that was NOT great teamwork. And while we patched things over, the public was understandably alarmed and concerned about what would happen this year.

So, a few months ago, Mayor Hales and I committed that instead of re-hashing last year's city/county budget drama-rama, we would sit together and try to make sense of some things in the City and County budgets. We agreed on some principles up front - including the idea that while it might make business sense for the City or County to be solely responsible for some things, there were other areas where a legacy of mutual investment has maximized the benefit to the entire community - like SUN Schools.

I'm delighted to report today that the mayor and I, in partnership several school districts, will propose ongoing funding for 10 current SUN schools and expand funding to an additional 10 schools in next year's City and County budgets. What this means is that together we would have 80 SUN Community Schools across the County serving 24,000 students and their families with improved access to food pantries, energy assistance and health and mental health resources, as well as academic support, enrichment and recreational activities. It also means that priority schools in East Portland and East Multnomah County with the highest rates of both poverty and racial inequity will be SUN Community Schools.

We've agreed on a few other things too. The Mayor and I will propose that the City and County jointly fund services for victims of sexual exploitation and maintain Short Term Rent Assistance to prevent people from becoming homeless. We also identified a few areas where it makes more sense for only one of us to take responsibility. So, for example, our budgets will propose the county fully fund the Crisis Assessment and Treatment Center (CATC) while the City shoulders the full cost of the Sobering Station at Hooper. The county would fully fund senior centers and the city would pay for enforcement of it's specified animal code - which until now was paid for by the county because of an agreement even more ancient than Resolution A. I won't bore you with

the full itemization of what we plan to propose, but I will ask Mayor Hales to stand so that I can thank him properly for being the kind of team player everyone needs. Mayor Hales.

CLOSING

In closing, I want to take a moment to step back and pull together the complexities and themes present today. Like all of us in this room, each person I spoke about had things in their life that went well, and things that didn't. We all inherit a mix of advantages and disadvantages - for some, and I include myself in this group - even the mild adversity I've experienced has made me stronger and more compassionate. For others, the disadvantages are so material and heavy that they may feel impossible to overcome.

I believe that governments job - which is really the People's job and a fundamental value of our country - is to give everyone a fair shot at life, at freedom. But that doesn't mean giving everyone the same thing. It means we need to meet people where they are and give them what they need to be successful. Not give them what I need, or you need, but what they need in a way that respects their humanity.

Our predecessors choices and our choices have created imbalances and inequities that we must correct in order to be just. Multnomah County has begun this work through the application of an Equity Lens to our programs and departments. We use it as a Quality Improvement Tool to identify and address the choke points and pressure valves in our systems that result in disparate outcomes for people. We hope that over time, this tool will have a meaningful and measurable impact on the work we do.

I also want to point out that while innovative investment tools like social impact bonds look very promising, we don't have to wait to invest more deeply and strategically. The people - in our various organizations, non-profits, governments, business - can invest now by supporting better revenue streams at the local, state and national level. There is plenty of money in this country, but the majority of it is controlled by a privileged few whose addiction to money is fueling our income gap and our suffering.

One of Multnomah County's most important roles is to serve people surviving at the bottom. But we can't just fund the safety net - we need to bring the bottom up. And we can't do that unless we support workers and their unions. We need to stop the billionaire's assault on the working class masquerading as 'right to work' and "choice". We need to raise the minimum wage so that corporations aren't dumping their responsibilities on the public's tab. We need to make sure that no one has to choose between caring for themselves or a sick child and losing their job. We don't just need paid sick leave in Portland or Multnomah County, we need it in all of Oregon. A hard day's work should earn you more than a paycheck, whether you're a school janitor or banker. It should earn you dignity. It should earn you respect. It should earn you the stability to plan for your future and care for your loved ones.

I've had the honor of working with so many wonderful people in my time at the county that I could take up the entire hour here just reading their names - and their impact is

such that I could never do justice to the weight or quiet brilliance of their stories. Thank you, Multnomah County employees, for everything you do to make our world better. Your passion, your dignity and your respect for the lives of others sets you apart.

Of course, those employees include the seven individuals you, the public, hired to oversee the work of this government, Commissioner Diane McKeel, Commissioner Judy Shiprack, Commissioner Loretta Smith, Commissioner Leisl Wendt, Sheriff Dan Staton, District Attorney Rod Underhill, and Auditor Steve March. Thank you. I would be remiss if I didn't also thank former Commissioner Deborah Kafoury. Thank you for your service to our community.

And because it takes a few rather large villages to ensure the health and safety of our people, we are trying harder than ever to align our work with City governments. Together with the cities of Portland, Gresham, Wood Village, Fairview, Troutdale and Maywood Park, we are working with limited resources to keep people safe and help them prosper. Thank you to all our city councils for teaming with us.

Thank you to my staff in the Chair's office, especially my chief of staff, Emerald Walker, who sacrifices countless hours to advance the county's mission. Thank you to my parents, Elizabeth and Salvador Madrigal, who taught me what it means to chose love, every time, no matter the question. Thank you, to my husband and best friend, Alex, who has seen me through some really very ugly cries and is raising with me the two most beautiful and smart little people in the world. Lastly, there are hundreds of people out there - some of whom I know, some of whom I don't - who have shown me, my family and Multnomah County employees compassion and kindness over the last year. We are grateful for each word, each hug, each note, each sentiment. Thank you.

So if one did have to boil this speech down into one sentence - it's this: We need to do the things for people that work, together. Put another way, I will interpret that for my bureaucratic brothers and sisters: We need to fund evidence-based, outcome-driven, prevention and intervention as part of a multi-disciplinary, multi-jurisdictional, public-private community team. Again. Doing things for people that work, together.

Multnomah County: You are beautiful, strong, flawed and loved. The problems our community faces are things county employees and non-profits and people dedicate their lives to because they know that nothing short of that will solve anything. We need more of them, which means we need more of you. We need all of you, and everyone listening on our team. I'm not asking you to quit your job and become a social worker (although that would be nice). I am asking you to take an active interest in and make a financial commitment to our community ... forever. Yes, I did say forever. We need you for the rest of your life. I don't expect to see the job finished in my lifetime, or my children's lifetime, but we have to start somewhere and it's our turn.

Is that overwhelming enough for you? A lifetime? Well, I believe in us. I believe in this special place. Together, let's find the courage to seek the truth. Real truth, the kind that

comes with laugh lines and scars and embarrassing stories that are even better told ten years later when they are actually funny. Let's start there.

Thank you.

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These talking points were prepared ahead of time and were given at the time of the Ceremony. For access to the video and/or presentation materials, please view at: http://multnomah.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=3

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