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# HOMeward

## Street Journal



Volume 7, No. 6

Member NASNA  
North American Street Newspaper Association

November/December, 2003

## From Doorways to Dignity

Street News Service [www.streetnewsservice.org](http://www.streetnewsservice.org)

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Homeless Resources

by Israel Bayer

Dignity Village has battled through a turbulent past to arrive where it is today. Imagine a group of homeless people empowering themselves to the point where they took control of their own lives, and organized and developed a vision for a better future for not only themselves, but for people in similar circumstances all over the world.

After more than three years of battling critics, neighborhoods, police, angry newspaper columnists, shelter providers and a reluctant city hall, Dignity Village has come to a crossroads in their evolution for a better tomorrow. By the end of October, the Village will present a detailed proposal to the city that will decide the future of more than 60 people who live at Dignity Village.

Tent cities have popped up in Toronto, Eugene, and Santa Cruz and Santa Barbara, Calif., in the past two years. In October, one appeared in Vancouver, B.C. Most faced strict enforcement by city officials and have been swept by police. In Seattle, tents can

only stay for three months before moving on to the next location, and can return to that same place only once every two years. No more than 100 people can live in the tent city, and private owners or churches must donate the land.

Portland's Dignity Village is the only city-sanctioned tent city in the United States. Its two-year lease agreement with the city to reside at Sunderland Yard expired at the start of October, prompting the latest proposal.

"I see Dignity Village building new structures — getting things up to code by getting smoke detectors in the structures," said Tim McCarthy, outreach coordinator and dignity's treasurer. "We're going to build platforms for everything 16 inches off the ground to keep us off the water and the rodents out. We're out here on the river and next to a compost pile and next to a field, so it's natural to be dealing with nature. Our proposal will be detailing many things."

Besides trying to get structures off the

ground and up to standards with fire codes, they will be implementing a data system to track demographics of Village residents, including who becomes housed.

The proposal will also detail a plan for the future, staying true to its vision to become a green, sustainable village. According to Jack Tafari, the chairman of Dignity Village, the group would like to get past some of the short-term deadlines to allow the village room to work toward a long-term goal, instead of always having to prepare for the next hurdle.

"They (Dignity residents) have a proposal coming to the city," said Marshall Runkel, an aide with Erik Stan's office. "Then the city is going to have to consider the proposal and then come back with an answer."

Runkel said one of two things could transpire. One scenario would be Dignity Village would not be able to stay at Sunderland Yard. Another would be that the village could stay with certain conditions. Runkel went on

see Dignity I page 2

## Throwing the Book Back at Our City's Lawmakers

by Paula

I was cruising through the city ordinances on the internet the other day looking for any new law on the books that would explain why police have told many people that homeless people will not be allowed in the city parks with their possessions. There were several separate incidents

of this nature reported to me in the past month. Someone soon came in with a citation they got for sitting at a table with his backpack (tarp rolled up neatly attached to pack) on the table at Cesar Chavez Park. He was told, along with many others that day that they had to leave the park or they would get a ticket. He received a ticket for violating the

already established camping ordinance under the section "12.52.020 Definitions". Whether a rogue officer was misinterpreting the definition "use of camp paraphernalia" or "storage of property" or if this was a policy crackdown on homelessness, this particular ordinance has become more than the city's attempt to end homelessness by

making it against the law. Now there seems to be a chance that this ordinance may be applied to YOU, student with a backpack full of books, to set your backpack on a table at a public park, or YOU, mother that uses a backpack to carry your babies diapers and bottles of formula, to set the pack down anywhere when in a public place, or private place without the owners permission, especially if you happen to have a baby blanket. YOU may not be targeted, and I hope you won't be.

I'm reminded of another recent ordinance passed by the city, somewhat secretly, when the June agricultural protests were being anticipated in Sacramento. It made it against the law to be in possession during a parade (or march) of any hard objects, specifying such items as batteries that weren't installed inside an elec-

## Put your foot down (against homelessness!)

by Lillian

Wouldn't it be great if everyone would just put their foot down against homelessness and say "enough is enough!" Well, a group of homeless service providers decided to have a walk-a-thon around the State Capitol to do just that by raising awareness and financial support for their programs. The needs for these programs are increasing at the same

time that the state budget resources for these programs are being reduced.

On a beautiful Saturday morning, around a hundred people gathered together at the Veteran's Memorial at the Capitol Park near 15th & L Streets at ten in the morning to put their foot down against homelessness. There

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## NORTH AMERICAN NEWSBRIEFS

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# Dignity I

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by Molly Rhodes  
October 30, 2003

In mid-October, homeless people in Portland looked to create what no other self-run homeless encampment in the country has: a 10-year lease with the city. Officials in Dignity Village, a two-year-old transitional community for homeless people that's run by homeless people, presented the city of Portland with a plan in which the village would upgrade many of its facilities and expand its services for homeless people in exchange for the city providing financial support and protection from eviction from their current site. The proposal came in response to the city's demand for a solution to the village's safety and hygiene problems if they didn't want to face immediate eviction. However, a lot of the ideas brought forward by Dignity Village were ones they had already acknowledged would be needed to make their model a success.

Upgrades to Dignity Village would include replacing make-shift structures with wood-frame strawbale houses, adding community gardens and a "shop" for distribution of donations, and offering employment training workshops. Dignity Village would also partner with other social service agencies in the area to provide needed medical and housing assistance to its residents. While the city has yet to formally respond to the request for the 10-year lease, even officials who support the idea of a self-run transitional center are hesitant about one that's supported by Portland taxpayers. "I'm not going to dismiss the model they've created but I'm nervous about a model that calls for the city to support it," Portland Commissioner Erik Sten said in an interview with the Portland Oregonian ([www.oregonlive.com](http://www.oregonlive.com)). "The idea of the city paying Dignity Village's bills is a big leap from where we are now." Yet Dignity Village officials counter that their plan is the best for the homeless people they are trying to help.

"We want the people who come to stay at the Village to be working their way out of the Village into permanent housing," said Dignity Village chairman Jack Tarafi in a press release from the village. "We're not trying to be an alternative to good permanent housing, but we are an alternative to the doorways and the streets."

To further compound the problems for Portland's homeless population, a year-old "sit-lie ordinance" bars people from loitering downtown, and levies heavy fines or jail time against anyone who refuses. The ordinance was passed by Mayor Vera Katz behind closed doors, a move that outraged neighborhood activists and led to this fall's Obstruction as Nuisance Festival. A group of about 20 homeless activists camped at various sites around the city over the course of the weekend, according to the Portland Mercury ([www.portlandmercury.com](http://www.portlandmercury.com)). The idea behind calling the event a festival was to bring to light one of the many loopholes in the law, including one which allows people to lie, sit, or stand in one place in downtown for as long as eight hours as long as they are attending a festival. Every eight hours, the Obstruction as Nuisance Festival would relocate, thus skirting the edge of the law.

The festival focused its moving location to land in front of businesses that had been particularly supportive of the new anti-sitting law and have a low tolerance for homeless people. While city officials continue to claim that the anti-homeless ordinances are the only way to get homeless people off the streets, homeless advocates point out that charging homeless people with misdemeanor offenses if they violate the ordinance only keeps them out of shelters, as many shelters do not accept people who have recent criminal records, including misdemeanors. For more information about homeless issues and future demonstrations in the Portland area, see [www.crossroadspxd.org](http://www.crossroadspxd.org).

to say the village would have to make improvements regarding safety at the site.

"Some days its been really hard to see how it could ever succeed, other days I've been amazed at what Dignity has been able to achieve," Runkel commented. "It's an extraordinary thing. The success of the village has come from support from the community. It's one of those things that makes Portland, Portland."

Dignity pays the city \$2,000 in rent each month for the site on Sunderland Yard, and maintains portable toilets there for around \$17,500 a year. It also pays more than \$5,000 a year for garbage services. Most of the money that supports Dignity Village comes from people in the community. Approximately half the money comes from a single donor, Leland "Lee" Larson, who heads up The Larson Legacy, an organization that contributes to more than 20 organizations around the world, including street roots. Larson walked into the camp after reading an article about it and was immediately transformed into a supporter.

"We have some concerns over ventilation and fire hazards at the site," said Ty Kovatch, the chief of staff for Portland City Commissioner Randy Leonard. "Randy would like to see smoke detectors in every structure. Overall, though, he was impressed with the people and the rules that they have developed. People are getting up and going to work and doing a lot better than they have in a long time."

Many critics continue to downplay the village's success, others have hailed the village for the accomplishments they have been able to achieve.

"Dignity's key success is that it has been able to provide a safe place with all the basic services to at least 60 people a night for the past two years. And it has done so at little or no cost to the public," said Marc Jolin, a village supporter and attorney with the Oregon Law Center. "The Village provides the kind of stability and personal support that people experiencing homelessness often need to get off the streets and back into permanent housing."

fence the community may be on, ultimately, it may come down to a city council vote in the coming months. In the weeks and months to come, only the city will be able to decide the fate of Dignity Village at Sunderland Yard.

"We're hoping the city will see a way to allow us to continue in our efforts to build community and a model that may help other people like ourselves in Portland, and all over the world," said Tafar.

### History

"Have you heard the good news, homeless people? We are coming out of the doorways, coming out from under the bridges. We are setting ourselves up a tent city. We are coming in from the cold," wrote Jack Tafari in street roots in November 2000, one month before the tents were pitched on public land.

The first meeting of the campaign, Out of the Doorways, was on Oct. 12, 2000. The village was born out of street roots and homeless activism because of the lack of shelter space in the city. On Saturday, Dec. 16, 2000, a group of eight men and women pitched five tents on public land and Camp Dignity, later to become Dignity Village, was born. Two days later, the police and fire marshal forced them to leave. The group fled from the muddy field beside the Broadway Bridge. They marched off to an industrial site under the Fremont Bridge with a shopping cart parade, where the next phase in the battle for Dignity continued.

In the first few months, village members ran a series of articles, poems and opinion pieces in street roots to inform the general public what the camp was all about. Within weeks, the camp had become a media phenomenon on TV and radio stations throughout Portland and the nation. Images of people in wheelchairs and the shopping cart parades were brought to people's living rooms. The groups tactics escalated with every relocation to gain more attention in the community. Most newspapers in Portland covered the camp as being underdogs who had no true vision or way to sustain them.

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Regardless of which side of the

# Dignity II

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selves. The Oregonian editorial board waged a campaign against the village that exists still today.

"The first few weeks were both chaotic and exciting," said Bryan Pollard, former managing editor for street roots and former spokesman for the village. "There was apprehension about how the police would respond but we had contingency plans for a variety of situations. The police responded more gently than we expected, I suppose partially because we had numbers and were obviously organized."

The second site under the Fremont Bridge lasted five days, until the day after Christmas. In another shopping cart parade, they moved to the Waterfront under the Morrison Bridge on the east side. The group lasted about three weeks in the cold of winter at the Waterfront. They then ended up on River Place on Martin Luther King Junior's birthday in January of 2001.

The group agreed to leave River Place a week later, after negotiating for a spot back under the Fremont Bridge. The group lasted there for nine months before splintering into three factions.

One group went to Rancho Dignity, a forty-acre farm outside of Portland. "We used Rancho Dignity as a temporary holding place for the aged and infirm," said Tafari. Another group occupied a field near the French-American school on Naito Parkway, otherwise known as the Field of Dreams. The camp was swept on Sept. 11, 2001, and several members of the Homeless Liberation Front, a radical group in Portland that reclaims public lands for the public use, were arrested for camping. The third group went to Sunderland Yard, where Dignity Village currently resides.

"We eventually all coalesced on Sunderland Yard, but the mood was very, very bitter about being driven out of town," said Tafari.

"The first winter was hell at Sunderland Yard," said McCarthy. "It was cold and nasty! The wind coming off the river in the winter is brutal. The first winter we were in tents. One of the reasons we started building structures was because of the elements. Our tents were collapsing because of the weight of the water. We took control, and started building structures out of necessity. Last winter was much better after the structures were built."

Many critics believe that Dignity Village has done nothing for themselves, but villagers and supporters see it differently.

"In the last two years we've built a straw bale house with the help of the Lynda Doleman and Mark Lakeman with the City Repair Project," McCarthy said. "We've erected a windmill, and built a dome struc-

ture as a community space. We've built raised beds for flowers and vegetation with about 20 grade schoolers with the Environmental Middle School. We've also built a moveable shower system using a tankless water system and constructed homes from donated scrap materials for villagers."

In addition to these accomplishments, many other organizations and supporters have helped along the way. The Community Cycling Center comes out twice a year to do bike workshops in exchange for bikes. Outside in visits the village twice a month to give check-ups and refer people to doctors or hospitals. The village also has a monthly poetry reading and potluck.

It's been two years at the current site, and although villagers were bitter in the beginning and many feel the current site is not the best location, the village has survived.

## Vision

One of the many critiques of Dignity Village is that they have no vision. Many believe they just want to live in tents out on the edge of town, but according to villagers, they have had a vision from day one. "To create a safe, sanitary, self-governed place to live as an alternative for Portland's poor, an alternative to the overburdened shelter system where there are about 600 shelter beds for about 3,500 homeless people, an alternative to sleeping alone in the doorways, under the bridges, or in the jails where we are occasionally housed for urinating in public, jaywalking, or camping. Our vision is to create a green, sustainable urban village, built by and for ourselves using mostly donated and/or recycled materials, solar and wind power, composting toilets, and growing our own organic food in our gardens and on our farm."

When asked if they serve a necessary purpose for transitioning people into housing, McCarthy said they have gotten twelve people into housing in the past three months.

Michael Harrison, the media representative for Jim Francesconi said their office hasn't seen anything that shows that Dignity Village has been an effective model.

"Jim has always felt that city resources are probably more effective in transitioning people off of the streets through other assistance programs, including drug and alcohol and mentally ill services."

When asked about rumors of displeasure between the Portland Department of Transportation, which has authority over Sunderland Yard, and Dignity Village, Harrison said that the transportation department knows that the majority of the City Council is for the village. "City Council

is elected to make these kinds of decisions," he said.

"Dignity Village is a prototype for livability and sustainability for everyone who lives in this city," said Mark Lakeman of the City Repair Project. "In addition to addressing homelessness and poverty, Dignity Village is fighting for social justice and [against] violence against women. The future of the village has always been to move ahead to build a village and to take the rest of society forward into a cooperative culture."

Other critics contend that Dignity Village would not be good for neighborhoods. When the village was potentially moving to a parking lot on Thirtieth Avenue and Powell Boulevard, neighborhood members, Dignity Village, and village supporters got into a heated debate with the Creston-Kenilworth neighborhood. At one point, homeowners who were outraged at the thought of Dignity Village moving into their neighborhoods turned on renters who supported the village.

"After meeting fierce opposition from the neighbors, threats of fire-bombing, the city agreed to allow us to remain on our current site, provided we paid rent," said Tafari. The Creston-Kenilworth neighborhood's response was typical of most in the village's effort to find a permanent home. But that tide could be changing.

"The question is, where do you go when your income is insufficient to afford housing, when there are not adequate services or shelter space to meet your needs, and you get ticketed for sleeping outside?" said Amy Dudley, a neighborhood community organizer with the neighborhood coalition Southeast Uplift.

"In the Homelessness Working Group's community conversations on homelessness, neighborhood association members have praised the hard work of the people at Dignity Village to create a self-reliant solution to the lack of affordable housing and sufficient services coupled with policies that make it illegal to sleep outside. Community members have also critiqued the policies, priorities and funding decisions that criminalize the homeless and keep people in poverty. Dignity Village is one of many solutions out there that require all community members to take a look at their role and responsibility in working to end homelessness"

Many homeless advocates also believe that some of the pressure being put on City Hall to get rid of the village comes not only from people such as radio host Lars Larson, home-owners, and key figures who work behind the scenes, but also from within the homeless service community. In particular, shelter providers who see Dignity Village as a threat to their current system, which has nowhere near enough shelter beds for people sleeping on the streets. However, the

homeless advocates street roots talked to said that Dignity Village was in no way, shape or form a threat to the shelter system, but instead, just another slice of the pie in working to get people off of the streets. "It's counter productive to have a shelter system that doesn't want to see people on the streets empowered," said an advocate who requested not to be named. "We all need to be working together."

Yet, Ron Williams, director of community outreach with the First United Methodist Church that runs Goose Hollow Family Shelter, recently wrote a letter to the Portland Tribune and The Oregonian stating that "Dignity Village should be shut down as uninhabitable hovels that are not suited for human habitation."

## Destiny

The effectiveness of the village has always been a raging debate in Portland. "At the time, the community feeling was very mixed. We had people coming out of the woodwork wanting to help us and support our struggle, but there were also many people who didn't think it was the right approach or it wouldn't work," says Bryan Pollard. "These detractors have always fascinated me because people have the energy to criticize and cast doubt, but rarely have the creativity or character to propose a better way."

"Dignity Village was the vanguard, and continues to stand up for themselves and everyone who is homeless, exclaiming, and explaining that there is not enough shelter or affordable housing for everyone who is homeless in Portland," said Genny Nelson, the director of crossroads, and co-founder of Sisters of the Road Café. "The current system punishes them all for that reality. Dignity Village has provided crucial transitional housing for many of its members. They have been a safe place for men and women to stay, with access to e-mail and a working phone, while they have waited for permanent housing. They are an example of an oppressed people's self-determination."

Michael Anderson, communications coordinator with the Community Development Network, supports the village's triumphs in the face of adversity. If the city takes the tent city away as a housing option, then the city should come up with another alternative.

"Closing Dignity before other housing options are available is wrong," Anderson said. "Dignity Village is a great example of human ingenuity in the face of crisis. With a lack of existing viable housing, the folks who created and are living at Dignity created an alternative. This alternative does not undo the crisis; it provides a workable solution to the crisis for its residents."

see Dignity III page 4

# You Missed Stand-down?

by Sundown

Arriving at Camp Pollock for Stand-down, 2003, this commentator was first met by the flag at half mast. Upon inquiry, it was revealed that it was the flag that draped the coffin of the last firemen to be interred, post 9-11. His name was Bruce Allen Thomas, who perished with other members of Rescue 1, NYCFD. This information was divulged to me by his brother, who last saw him four days prior to the tragedy.

By eventide, this commentator finds himself at table. A mellow group of vets chatter round about. The discussion hops and skips from subject to subject like a feather in the breeze. From this vantage, it's plain to see that this is the case in nearly all quarters of the camp. A relaxed feeling abounds.

Much has been done by all involved par-

ticipants and planners alike to ensure a productive day on the morrow. Legal issues have been presented, health issues have been addressed, and billeting will continue through tomorrow.

As dusk dawns (ha-ha) we are greeted by a cacophony labeled 'live' music, and sady, this proves to be the case the next evening too. "Was this planned?" was overheard from somewhere, as hopes for a better Stand-down, 2004, are aired.

Great are the accolades for His Honor, Judge Shepard, who managed to single-handedly dredge through about (sic) \$40 billion worth of "illegal camping" cases, perpetrated against a viable minority group known as the indigent poor. Let's try to remember, folks, persecution is a

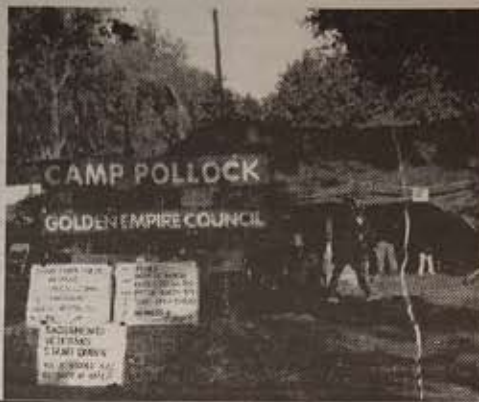
major factor of refugeeism.

Compassion is evident throughout the event by the very number of donors and volunteers who have so graciously assisted this year. This scribe begs the pardon of all the many wonderful contributors involved for not exactly naming all persons and entities who, with grace,

provided various material and financial support for this most auspicious occasion. To begin to name a few, or several, one supposes, would ultimately prove a grave injustice to the countless many who, too, provided as they could.

Please assume it to be said then, that all who received of your goodwill would wish to hereby thank you for your outstanding participation in the noble betterment of our lives.

Well, folks - with not much more to compose for your literary amusement ad edification at this time, I urge you to contact me, through the Homeward office if you like, with any commentary I might somehow be able to address in the future, O.K. ??  
ByeFer now, Sundown.



# Sitting on our Hands

by Susan R. Horton

Bush bashing is so easy, isn't it? Watching him read to school kids at warm and fuzzy photo-ops — while the Republican-dominated House is busy cutting 30 percent from the funds needed for his "Leave No Child Behind" bill — elicits a knowing smirk. But that smirk can look a lot like Dubya's.

Easy as it is, Bush-whacking is not good for us. The cheap moral righteousness it buys us may be the number one reason keeping us from doing the more useful things we could be doing: writing a check to a food bank, volunteering at a shelter, becoming politically active.

Here's the rest of my top ten reasons why I — well, okay, we — choose to sit back and smirk more often than is good for us.

2. I mused at the Spare Change News office the other day that maybe PATRIOT Act surveillance might be a good thing — if those cameras were aimed at the shelters and street corners where the poor struggle to live a decent day to day life, so those in power could see the suffering their policies cause. But, said those who heard me thinking out loud, the Bushies know what is happening. They just don't care. Instantly I was boomeranged back to a conference I'd been to, where intellectuals were resolving to stop writing complicated prose, and start talking clearly to their fellow citizens instead. Perceptions and voting patterns would change, some said, if people only knew how things really stood. But that discussion ended exactly where ours at the newspaper did. The problems we face can't be solved with knowledge; they're matters of power. By offering case studies of community actions by everyday folk that have changed people's lives for the better, Robert Putnam's new book *Better Together* proves that this notion is not necessarily true. Our conviction that it is one reason we don't do more.

3. Most of us who buy this paper are liberals, or left of liberal. That means we have

compassion. But it also means we have great faith in the power of explanation: of talking about and analyzing problems. Nothing wrong with that. But we come to believe that talking about something is somehow doing something. Or we believe that urging others to do something is doing something. Those in the newspaper business talk about "putting legs on their editorials": doing something about the problems being written about. Too often, we don't.

4. Turning the pages of our daily newspapers and seeing the suffering faces of Afghans, Iraqis, Liberians, or at the photos of homeless men and women sleeping under park benches, we suffer compassion overload. So much suffering; so little ability to help. We give up; turn the page.

5. Since we are idealists, we tend to idealize those who need help. Then, we are disappointed when we discover those who need help turn out to have thorny personalities and opinions we hadn't counted on. This is a central point in David Reiff's *A Bed For the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis*. A battlefield reporter during nearly every war fought in the last ten years, Reiff's experiences in Afghanistan and Bosnia especially prompted his book. We in the West, he says, are touched by the iconic photo of the white humanitarian worker cradling the starving black child. But not all the needy, and not all refugees, are innocent children. Many are adults who have political opinions; who may in an earlier round of ethnic war have been victimizers themselves. When the UN headquarters in Baghdad was bombed recently, we were puzzled. Why would anyone want to bomb UN peace workers? Closer to home, that homeless person may be crotchety and short-tempered. Human beings and their complex situations swamp and sap our urge to do something.

6. When our inaction makes us uncomfortable, we ease our consciences by assuring ourselves that there are others who are better at helping than we are. Reiff calls those people who do what we don't "Designated Consciences."

## Street News Service

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7. As idealists but also pragmatists, we convince ourselves that our help only serves to take the pressure off the government, which should be doing the work of alleviating poverty and suffering. Faith-based charity, we think, is a government hand-off, a shirking of responsibility. Why participate in that, we ask?

8. Or, we suspect that our meddling may only make things worse. A friend's young daughter had so much compassion for the squirrels storing nuts for the winter, she went out in the fall and gathered all the nuts she could find and stored them in the garage. However, when she went to put the nuts out, she discovered that they'd all rotted. Her intervention ensured that more squirrels than usual went hungry that winter.

9. As workers with thin wallets, we believe that to do a lot, you have to have a lot. Only a Bill Gates can make a difference. British novelist Charles Dickens' cold-hearted capitalist Mr. Dombey suddenly becomes a soft-hearted and giving man after his fortune is made. But before Dombey had made his fortune, it wouldn't have made much difference if he had been soft-hearted, because he'd have had little to give. And if Scrooge hadn't been, well, Scrooge, for most of his life, he couldn't have become a philanthropist at the end of it.

10. We all know someone who is struggling financially, wrestling with addiction, mental illness, or homeless or on the verge. We may have tried to help, and found our help insufficient, unappreciated, or only enabling. Our lurking fear is that some people may be unhelpable; some problems unsolvable.

My top ten list here will stock no food pantry, house no refugees. But, like liberals everywhere in every moment in history, I believe that clarity, explanation and honesty are—well, at least, something. Maybe even a prelude to action.

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## Dignity III

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Wendy Kohn and her company Kwamba Productions are making a documentary about Dignity Village. Her work there has made her a strong supporter of the tent city's mission.

"Dignity Village provides us with an opportunity and context to discuss the issues, and find out if perhaps there are ways we can all get together to solve community needs and issues," Kohn said. "Dignity Village is trying to create one possible cost-efficient solution to the problem, and the input of business owners and developers would be most valuable."

"To understand what an accomplishment the Village truly is, you have to visit it," said attorney Marc Jolin. "You'll see a community alive with activity. People building and maintaining Village structures with recycled materials and renewable energy, holding community meetings, cooking and helping each other with personal issues, providing guided tours to visitors, and doing all the work of administering a 501(c)(3) corporation. And then consider that all this is managed on an entirely volunteer basis by people who, until recently, have been living on the streets. The village has a lot of supporters that provide critical assistance, but ultimately the Village is a fantastic example of homeless people helping themselves by helping each other and by providing an important service to the rest of the community."

Israel Beyer is a staff writer for *street roots*, Portland, Oregon's street newspaper. Reprinted from their October 17, 2003 issue.

# Welcome to HOMEWARD:

Please help us make a difference!



Homeward Street Journal has been publishing since 1997 as a non-profit project of the Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee, which is a part of the Sacramento Housing Alliance. The paper's mission is to alleviate miscommunication between communities by educating the public about housing and poverty issues, and by giving the homeless a voice in the public forum. Homeward also informs the homeless of shelter and occupational assistance, and acts as a creative self-help opportunity for those individuals who wish to participate.

The opinions expressed in Homeward are those of the authors, and not necessarily the Sacramento Housing Alliance or SHOC or Homeward.

### Submissions and Editorial Policy

We welcome any participation or contributions: Articles, poems and other writing can be submitted at our office in the Loaves & Fishes complex, or mailed to the address below.

All writing submitted for publication will be edited as necessary, with due respect for the authors' intent. The editors will attempt to consult with an author if changes are necessary, however, the paper will go to print with the story as edited if the author is unavailable.

All Letters to the Editor must be signed to be published. If the writer wishes to remain anonymous s/he should so state, but the letter must still be signed.

Poetry and graphics will not be edited, with the paper will publish the submission or not.

In submitting articles to the paper, authors give their permission to print their submissions in accordance with the above stipulations, as well as publishing excerpts on Homeward's webpage and possible reprinting in NASNA member papers, with due byline. Any requests for stories outside the above three will be referred to the author.

Subscriptions are available with a \$15 contribution. Make checks out to SHOC.

All correspondence can be sent to Homeward Street Journal, PO Box 2430, Sacramento, CA 95812

For information please call: 442-2156

The paper may also be E-mailed at Homeward2@yahoo.com

excerpts from the paper are published on the web at <http://users.cvnet.com/shoc/home>

## Joining SHA

The Sacramento Housing Alliance is a network of concerned citizens which promotes decent affordable housing for low income households and homeless people through advocacy and participation in public discourse.

# Max's View

by Max Biddle

The issue of affordable housing seems to be the most illusive issue facing Sacramento County and the City. It is an issue that should take precedence over all other issues facing the community. Low wage workers, senior citizens, even the homeless, struggle to keep a roof over their heads. Constant worry about living stability from month to month of facts all other aspects of one's living conditions. It undermines the secure psychology that one needs to conduct the rest of life's responsibilities. Student's abilities to maintain good grades, worker's concentration and job performance, normal family relations all suffer under the strain of housing instability. All these factors can have subtle but far reaching effects on the economy.

About a month ago, CBS opened its evening news with the revelation that the homeless population has reached levels not seen since the Great Depression. This fact alone underlies the urgency of the housing problem. Year after year the Sacramento City and County Governments hold hearings reviewing the so-called housing proposals for solving this problem. But what stands out the most is the constant delays and excuses offered up year after year for failing to produce housing. The financing for the agencies responsible gives rise to the concern as to how this money is used.

There is hope in Assembly Member Darrell Steinberg's Affordable Housing legislation bogged down in the assembly. It is a bill that should have had top priority, but as we see all over the

country, affordable housing legislation is treated like a pariah.

Instead we are treated to the spectacle of a soap opera surrounding the attempt to build a sports arena downtown. We can't help but notice the political priorities of Mayor Heather Fargo as she succumbs to what I call the Roman Imperial influences that seem to effect most city mayors in America. It is the need to build monuments to themselves in the form of skyscrapers, sports arenas or other edifices, instead of solving the pressing need of affordable housing or help financing year-round homeless shelters. Like Mayor Sema, who seemed to lose his liberal philosophy while mayor, and looked to the skyline instead of the streets where you find the needy, I'm concerned Mayor Fargo may be inflicted with that Roman curse.

In an article in the News & Review, October 7th issue, we were treated to the behind the scenes maneuvering of lobbyist Richie Ross with his considerable influence on local political figures. His connection with the Mayor and members of the City Council, as well as Assembly Member Steinberg, was instructive. They came together with seemingly little effort to bring forth a bill to aid in the construction of a sports arena. They also got the Governor's signature with little effort. My concern then should be obvious; if this group of powerful political players could act so rapidly to expedite this legislation, than why not Steinberg's Affordable Housing bill? Why not bring this influence to bear on issues that are far more critical than a sports arena?

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tronic devise, marbles, etc. No gas masks allowed, not even bandanas. No more could a person use or possess a bullhorn during a parade. Supersoakers no longer allowed. The list of restricted items was so extensive that no parade participant could possibly remember everything, even though Mayor Fargo said that the ordinance may be a little too vague. During many of the activities that took place during the week of the Bio-tech Agricultural Conference, many were arrested (TAKEN TO JAIL) for violation of this ordinance (during the permitted march and also other public assemblies that did not even resemble a parade). And, of course, guns (loaded or not) and other weapons were prohibited in this new ordinance. I understood, the necessity maybe of those kind of objects, but wondered how the Veterans Day Parade participants would react to that new restriction. I didn't think they'd be too happy. Well, thankfully, they may not have been informed about the ordinance and the ordinance was not enforced during the recent Veterans Day Parade. I don't believe there were any arrests that day for most boldly and proudly carrying rifles of all kinds, rifles with bayonettes, civil war rifles, swords (drawn, even). I am so glad that this time honored tradition was not upset by police enforcing the law here, but I wonder if these noble veterans knew that they were disobeying the law.

There are also ordinances that forbid homeowners from having property with descriptions of their domain containing any item that may reduce the property value of any other properties in the vicinity. This could include a car being on their property that happens to not run. Or could a garden planted in the front yard that is anything other than orna-

mental be prohibited? Could a property owner wish to store a non-working vehicle so that he or she may repair it in the near or far future, instead of dumping it and buying a resource-depleting new vehicle? Could someone choose to save energy, and possibly help save the earth by using a cloths line visible to the street and then be deemed a blight that reduces property values?

Making Sacramento into an area that attracts businesses moving here, attracts affluent people to settle down here, has been a big focus of our city representatives. It seems a noble goal, from the sounds of it. It sounds that the results may be economic growth for our region. And with this economic growth comes the increase in property values. And how wonderful is the rising of property values? Well that makes rental prices soar. That makes renters poorer. That makes some renters homeless. I think those who make up some of these absurd ordinances are possibly making them to enforce that the citizens remain on the same page, as they focus on speculative improvements for Sacramento. They may not yet realize that that page is in need of extensive editing and that there are many, many pages of this same book we call our community. Some people are already on the next chapter, thinking ahead for a better community that should have quality for all, value beyond property and getting rich off of others, toward valuing each other and all our diversity of expressions, value in human decency. Anyway, I think these mis-thought-out, misleading ordinances are at a ripe time of finally backfiring, exposed to the general public and I hope finally to themselves that, oops, they have greatly erred a few times too many, now.

## What can be done with a split personality?

I used to be rich. I had everything this system can provide, but I lost everything. Nobody is guaranteed to be rich forever, and now I see that life has more meaning than things. Can't you see past your greed and have a little charity in your heart?



How dare you threaten me with poverty. I've never been poor, I'll never be poor. You insult me when you imply that wealth is not the most important meaning of life. I want you gone, I'm going to pass laws to make you go away. You deserve to be punished you damn loser!

The SHA does not itself provide or manage housing.

You may call for info: (916) 442-1198

Annual Membership dues: Standard, \$35; Low-income, \$15

Organizations: Full, 0.1% agency budget; Associate, \$100

Send donations to: Sacramento Housing Alliance PO Box 2430 Sacramento, CA 95812

# WARRIOR

## by Sundown

Warrior, battler, hear my song  
heed my words of subtle wisdom  
carried by music of ancient myth -  
thou hast no defense against mine truth.

How long wilt thou walk the  
rock strewn shore,  
encompassed by the ocean's roar,  
under lowering sky of grey,  
chilled to bone by windborn spray?

Lonely, weary, full of fury -  
pent up rage like beast in cage  
Will thou condemn another soul?  
Whither then wilt thyself go ?!

Thou gazest now o'er cold grey  
water,  
pondering thy soldier's power,  
granted thee by Gods of War.

Thy heart, once large,  
hast long since tore asunder  
with a mountain's roar.

Thy world altered, desires came,  
to cleave the burden of the chain,  
which unto thee wast tightly binding -  
soul and mind and violent body .

How long, O' ruthless one -  
full of sorrow, nearly tawdy -  
wilt thou strike with muscled arm  
and battle axe thy fancied foes?!

Thou allowest the Gods of Death  
to lead thee in thy e'ry step;  
to provide thee confidence -  
yea battle wit and victory:

'Til none will challenge  
thy broad sword, it's mighty arc  
an end to all .

But thou tirest now,  
and feelest thy age, and  
time hast dulled thy inner rage.

Too much death,  
and stench of blood -  
think thee by chance -  
to ponder o're a second chance,  
and perhaps a way  
to turn the page ...

Doubt thee not - 'O man of war -  
to whom I speak  
through oceans' roar  
that 'tis I indeed who holds the key  
that once again  
cast set thy spirit free.

No stranger, I nor o'er to be-  
to pain, abuse nor misery;  
to lonely nights about the hearth-  
a solemn soul devoid of mirth.

I, too - as thou-  
dost surely know-  
a tortured path  
have had to go;  
received we naught  
for kindness spent.

'O fearful, might man,  
whom dost traverse my sand-  
upon my property dost thou  
sadly brood and tread.

Dost thou know I feel thee-  
thy profound yearning to be free-  
as thou wrestlest  
with thy tortured self?

Behold - my voice within thee;  
Behold - my strength I give thee;  
Behold - my cloak of sky;

of sun and night, of moon and stars;  
Behold - a distant memory  
Behold - a time of great peace  
Behold - a chance to heal,  
as my compassion gently warms thee.

Consider, then - consider well -  
the healing power of my spell,  
and all that thou dost wish to gain.

What tribute hast thou -  
for the ransom of this key?  
The price of what you seek,  
you see, is **THEE**;

The Precious Key you hold,  
you see, is **ME**.

From this distant vantage  
where I behold thee from above,  
'tis plain to me - 'O handsome man -  
that thou wouldst return a Woman's love.

Grieve thee ne'r again alone,  
nor sigh an unheard sigh-  
know thee now a Woman-being  
is nigh thee ... at thy very side.



## One Good Turn Deserves Another

by Stirling Bunnell

Maybe, after we free the Iraqi people, they can show us the same favor by coming over here and freeing us from our oppression, bonds, and tyranny. At least there was no income tax in Iraq. They also had an attempt at governmentally sponsored medical and food supplements until we recently changed that for them. Our democracy and capitalism has brought us homelessness due to unaffordable housing which we describe as "even though (other things) are down, the housing market is up". This means that houses are up in price, way up, as if shelter, one of the three essentials of life, should be viewed as a type of venture capital investment to be gambled with, or put up in hock for some extra spending money. To add to housing's inaccessibility, local governments tax heavily to generate funds to pay public servants, like cops, judges, politicians, and all public workers and works, all making well above the minimum wage, all with constant cost of living wage adjustments. Properties of religious and governmental concerns are exempt from property taxes leaving housing and commercial uses (homes and jobs) as the only ones taxable.

We have freed the welfare recipients of their shame and indignity by cutting off their welfare and food stamps. In that the mothers were mainly receiving it, it has become necessary to find employment positions for them in what has been, for the last 3 decades, a dismal job environment anyway. We reward the Dads by revoking their ability to lawfully obtain drivers licenses and labeling them "dead beat dads". Many of them found themselves falling into that definition way back in the early 1970's when the divorce laws were changed permitting grounds for divorce to be "incompatibility", an incontestable point requiring only 1 of the 2 parties to claim to get the divorce. Then, with the instant availability of welfare for Mom and the kids, the tab could be shifted to dead beat dad, who found it impossible to pay the welfare reimbursements as well as his own living expenses.

## Hot Thanksgiving Meals

**Saturday, November 15**

TLC, Robertson Comm. Center, 3525 Norwood Ave., 12:00pm, Walk-in  
Church of God in Christ, William Memorial, 4495 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, 12pm-5pm, Walk-in

**Sunday, November 16**

First Baptist Church, 7008 10th St., Rio Linda, call 991-2918 for reservation, all welcome

**Tuesday, November 25**

St. Philomene's, 2320 El Camino (Gym), 6pm, Walk-in

**Wednesday, November 26**

Union Gospel Mission, 400 Bannon St., two meals - 12pm & 3:30pm, Walk-in

St. John Lutheran Church, Goethe Hall, 1704 L. St., 12pm-3pm, Walk-in

St. Ignatius, 3245 Arden Way, 6pm, Walk-in

Wind Youth Center, Teens only, N. C St. & Ahern, 12pm, walk-in

**Thursday, November 26, Thanksgiving Day**

Loaves & Fishes, 11am - 2pm, get ticket before 12:45  
Cordova Neighbor Church, 10600 Coloma Rd, Rancho, 2-4pm, Walk-in

People Feeding People, Pannell Community Center, 2450 Meadowview Rd., 12pm-3pm, call 689-5222 for reservation, all welcome

Glory Bound Street Ministry, 4527 Parker Ave., 6pm, Walk-in

Saint Lawrence, Walerga & Don Julio, N. Highlands, 8am-10:30am, Breakfast Walk-in

Salvation Army will not be serving a dinner this year

That was then and this is now, and now is worse. Now unemployment is at 7%, which means 7% of the supposedly employable population is presently receiving unemployment benefits, as if that was any representation of actual unemployment. Not counted are those who are receiving no check because they were screwed out of it, those whose benefits have run out yet are still not employed, those who haven't found work in many years, those who now reside in our prisons, and those who spend about 50% of their life in and out of our local city and county jails for the crime of homelessness.

Instead of going to war for fossil fuel, which is becoming less easily obtainable with time, society must voluntarily (or will involuntarily) change it's lifestyle. The invention of the automobile was originally praised for the attribute of making a "Sunday drive in the country" possible. Now, it makes possible the ability of Mr. John Doe from 100 miles away to commute to this town daily to compete with local residents, who would otherwise would not require a car, for the few jobs existing, creating a competitive windfall from the employer's viewpoint. Of course, that particle shipping and receiving position could have been filled sufficiently by an unemployed individual locally.

And who's waiting to take their cut of the action? It's the "Motorized Officers of the Law". Isn't it special how most of our society's crimes have something to do with cars? As John Q. Public travels from point A to point B attempting to get to a paying job, tariffs are enforced in the form of licenses, insurance, registrations, and fines on any variations of compliance. Our cops, judges and DA's maintain a vigilant guard at the gates that we must pass through as we forage for the basic essentials of life. I wonder if they go home at night and pray a little bed time prayer something like: "Oh Lordy, I pray that the people will learn to be good citizens and obey all the laws soon. Then I'll be jobless, broke, homeless, and treated like a Dead Beat Criminal. Or maybe we'll just modify the laws, changing them to stricter tolerances, thus honing the people to an ever finer edge of perfection."

# Nowhere People

by 'Liss (Melissa) Cain

Hennessey on 'they breath,  
As the hustle for more continues-  
Welcome oblivion - Although brief...  
Some find it in "Crack"  
Others in the lifestyle...

Striving...  
Fighting everyone and everything has lost its meaning  
When the results are always the same  
"Incomprehensible demoralization"  
To such a degree, most people don't have the depth of  
character to understand  
Why and how we are where we are on our journey down  
God's path.

Especially those guilty of 'contempt prior to investigation'  
Assumptions made about the 'type' of person that  
'chooses' to be homeless-

But then aren't we all accountable to some extent, even  
those of us who 'know better?'

When it comes to 'those street people,' bums, losers,  
untouchable...

Wouldn't you rather ignore 'them' hoping against hope  
they'll leave you alone?

Just GO AWAY! Damn it...

Throw them a meager ration of pennies so that they may  
use the 'phone.'

When it's obvious to all that there is no one - nowhere  
who will hear us call.

Filthy clothes tattered and worn,  
Washed too many times until the material is held together  
by a few thin strands of hope.

Unkept hair, dreads without the salon touch, jack o'lantern  
smiles

Make us invisible as you cross the street to escape the  
smell and our downcast eyes...

aimless shuffle of futility...

Incoherent slurring of exhaustion...

Pale, frail, shivering in the winter  
Stench of sweat in the summer

Hunger is all Seasons.

Starved for the warmth of human kindness,

In a world where a pocketful of change and a cigarette  
can be a moment's respite.

Death grip on street Cadillac's full of precious cargo  
So that bedrolls don't vanish in a puff of smoke.

Forever "moving right along" with security at our back,

Pain and sickness ignored until it's cleaned up - or  
not...Just keep walking nowhere.

If God promised to feed the lowliest sparrow ,

Then why am I rifling thru this garbage can begging for  
scraps?

Looting wealthy ashtrays for carefully hoarded discarded  
butts.

Ice-cold water, nectar of the gods, is doled out sparingly  
A quarter for the cup and if the attendant feels  
magnanimous today

He may spare the pitying glance or even worse the  
distasteful glare.

Cleanliness becomes a childhood dream

As the aroma of dust and urine infiltrate every fiber of hair ,  
skin, cloths...

Everyday I'm scared, as more of us disappear and No

One...

Not even God cares.

If these are His 'footprints' then why are my feet swollen  
and bloody?

All of us at SHOC and  
Homeward wish you and  
yours a

Merry Christmas

Enlightening Ramadan

Bright Hanukkah

FAMILIAL  
KWANZAA

and a Happy New Year!



## Down cont. from page 1

was hot coffee and doughnuts for everyone as well as other munchies and there was lots of good spirit about and the different agencies had their tables all set up with plenty of literature to explain how their particular agencies help those in the transition from the streets to self-sufficiency. There was a pleasant hum in the air as the people milled around the tables discussing the many different ways that the homeless are helped by them. Many of the children were busy drawing pictures at a table provided for them. Everyone got a "Put your Foot Down" teeshirt.

the public was invited to choose a service agency to support; to solicit donations from their family and friends, customers or clients, vendors, club members or religious groups. Around two o'clock, the event came to an end.

Participating agencies were: St. John's Shelter, Francis House, Wind Youth Center, Aids Housing Alliance, Cottage Housing, Inc.,

Transitional Living & Community Support, Loaves & Fishes, Traveler's Aid, the Health Project, Chemical Dependency Center for Women, Turning Point, Sacramento Housing Alliance & Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee. Wells Fargo and the Nehemiah Corporation were the sponsors.

There were around 50 people that took part in the first march around the State Capitol as they shouted "Let's put our foot down!" and "There are solutions!" and around 60 people took part in the second march. After the marches, two bicycles were raffled off and two grocery certificates of \$25.00 each were raffled off. A



## Obituary

**Sidney Maddox**  
d. 8/1/99  
cause unknown

**James Stephen Enos**  
d. 9/20/03  
cancer

Yankee ingenuity continues unabated. Seen lately at Friendship Park is James' pedal power RV, a "prairie schooner" of our modern suburban world