

# HOMeward

## Street Journal

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## SANTA'S ELVES DELIVER THE DIRT

by Ethan Evans

Spreading Holiday cheer and a bag of dirt, 100 members of the Real Housing for Real People Coalition sang affordable housing carols and rallied for a more aggressive County policy to ensure that 15% of new housing is made affordable equally for extremely low, very low and low income families.

Developers proposed a policy that will only provide



vacant lots instead of actual housing - with no commitment to ensure that affordable housing is ever constructed in new communities. Our rally was to say "NO TO THE VACANT LOT POLICY!"

To show the true meaning of the proposed policy, rally participants delivered empty Christmas presents and bags of dirt for County Board of Supervisors.

see Dirt page 4



## Our Changing World Requires Peace & Sustainability

This was almost a book review, "The Party's Over: Oil, War and the Fate of Industrial Societies" (New Society, 2003) by Richard Heinberg, but the book has been checked out at the library for months so I haven't been able to read it. Not to fret. I will talk about Richard Heinberg and the path he has led me and others on. He spoke on September 23 at the Newman Center in Sacramento about the subject of his book. He showed us the correlation between the population explosion and the advent of our increased usage of oil. In 1800 the world population was 1 billion. 130 years later (1930) the world population doubled to 2 billion. In 1960, 3 billion people. In 1975 there were 4 billion. 11 years later there were 5 billion people. Currently the world population is over 6 billion. After the discovery of oil in the United States we made more and more use of oil to do much of the work we once had to do manually or with less efficient

and less abundant fuel sources. Transportation, manufacturing, byproducts making fertilizers and other uses allowed the production of food to feed more and more people with less expensive energy needing to be expended (as in manual labor). This increased the capacity of the earth to in effect support more people. With this capacity came the actual increases in our population. New discoveries of oil in the US reached its peak in the 1930s. Probabilities of finding new sources of oil started to dwindle until, presently, any new discoveries we could hope to find within our borders would be slight compared to our current usage. Production of oil continued to increase after the discoveries, and along with the production of what seemed an endless supply of oil, allowed the population to increase accordingly and allowed our country to win two world wars and become the most powerful country in the world. By 1970, the production

of oil in the US reached its peak. From that date on, though wells continue producing, the oil becomes harder to extract and quality less assured. After this date, the US began importing oil more and more, to keep its bulging population alive and living as accustomed. The pattern of oil discovery peaked followed by years of production and eventual peak in production has been repeating itself with slight variation throughout the world. Russian oil production has peaked, for instance. There are some areas of the world where oil production has not yet peaked and is expected to produce for many years. The Middle East is one area (with possibly 70% of the proven reserves of oil). But the discovery period of the entire world has passed its peak in the 1960s. The world production of oil is expected to follow by reaching its peak soon. How soon? That can be debated, but if following past discovery-production

curves—maybe 5 years, maybe 10. What will that mean? There will still be oil but each year it will become more and more difficult and costly to extract and refine. Extremely higher costs to maintain the current oil dependent machines we use to maintain, not only our extravagant lifestyles, but our very subsistence. For over 8 billion people. And without oil, remember, earth's carrying capacity may easily support 2 billion people.

Is this a bleak prognosis for the future of our continued existence? Are we doomed? Yes and no. Our future, if we continue the same as we have since the discovery of oil, is doomed to great hardship. And don't doubt that the current US administration will be proceeding with an all out effort to maintain control over the last drops of precious oil with aggressive foreign policies or so it seems (I won't

see Changing World page 4



**NORTH AMERICAN NEWSBRIEFS**  
 WWW.STREETNEWSERVICE.ORG

**R.V. Murphy**  
**December 11, 2003**

Homeless people in Rochester, New York are organizing. The city's refusal to let the homeless use vacant buildings has led to the formation of Poor People United, according to the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle (DemocratandChronicle.com).

Last month, five members were arrested on trespassing charges for breaking into a downtown building in an effort to publicize the issue. "The county has refused to help," said

Charles Kellum, a member of the group. "That's a human rights violation."

The group recently held a press conference in front of City Hall to draw attention to their plight. "We're asking the community to see this emergency," said David Cox of Rochester, another member of Poor People United. "The poor are the ones suffering. I'm sick and tired of abstract activism for people thousands of miles away. When are we going to be concerned about our fellow Americans?"

Rights, which the United Nations adopted in 1948. Some in the crowd said making those pleas was the least they could do. For the homeless, said activist Jessica Chapman, there was little else they could do. "We

have only one thing left — our voices," said Chapman, who works at a homeless shelter.

A homeless man jailed for trespass made a donation in the "four figures" range to the Ogden Standard Examiner. "Don't let it be said that this isn't the season to be giving," said Ogden police lieutenant Dave Tarran. Lynn Goodwin, director of the Treehouse Children's Museum, said she was surprised to find "a substantial amount" of money in a locked mailbox at Christmas Village near a playhouse the organization is auctioning.

"We didn't anticipate that anyone would actually put donations in the box," Goodwin said. But last week, Goodwin found a stash of money orders that weren't made out to anyone, so she called police. Neither

she nor police disclosed the exact amount. "We thought the money may have belonged to someone else," Goodwin said. "We thought it may have been stolen, and we thought it best to report it."

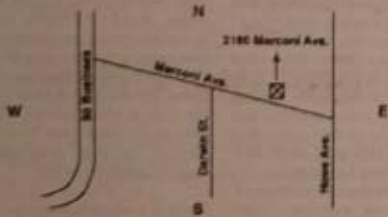
Tarran said that at the same time police received Goodwin's call, they were investigating the source of some money orders in the same series that they found in the belongings of a homeless man who was in the Weber County Jail. The man had been arrested the night before for sleeping in a vacant inner-city home. The man said he received the money orders as payment of an insurance settlement. Police were suspicious, but an investigation of the man's story, including interviewing the business that issued the money orders, proved he was telling the truth.

Goodwin said she was told that the man wanted to rectify things in his past and wanted to make the donation to help children. "It was a very generous gift, and we appreciate it," Goodwin said she only had one regret regarding the gift: "We do wish we knew who the anonymous gentleman was, so we could thank him." The man told police he wished to remain anonymous.

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During the rally, participants held candles and read from the Universal Declaration of Human

by Mahri  
 Leonard-Fleckmann

If I had an English dictionary with me, I would be tempted to look up the word "poverty." From where I am right now, sitting on my porch watching the sun set through the palm trees, eating fresh cow cheese, it is hard to believe I live a poor life. When I imagine that word, I see a different world, one of hunger and thirst and dirty, exhaust-filled streets; when I imagine that word, I see a world where there is no roof over your head, nor people to care for your well-being, nor water available to drink.

Yet from an outsider's point of view, poverty does not reach an extremity far beyond this one. Families often are lucky to make 1,000 pesos a month (roughly \$30). Children go without shoes, babies without diapers, adults without shirts, and in a September school panic, mothers wonder how to scrape together enough money to purchase 40 peso notebooks for their children (a little over \$1). People cook over outdoor fires, houses are made of cheap wood or heavy leaves, and about half have dirt floors. Electricity is non-functioning, and the people feel

blessed that the recent construction of a potable water system with taps limits trips to the river. Yes, it is a poor community.

However, here in my small rural village in the Dominican Republic, I have quickly learned that poverty is not always so easily defined. Undeniably, the people of my community of Gurabo have very few things. They have never gone to a restaurant nor have they seen a movie. They lack the most basic health education, many do not know how to read. Their diet consists of rice and beans, and the sign of Christmas wealth is a family's ability to roast their own pig.

On the other hand, food is never lacking. Neighbors feed each other from bottomless vats of rice. In this rich land, there is an over-abundance of avocado and mango, the most expensive fruits in U.S. grocery stores. The air is perfectly clean, and children run along the dirt road with no concept of the dangers of cars or strangers. When one woman falls ill, the entire village takes care of her and her children. And you would never catch a person sleeping on the ground unless so desired.

Of course, it is not all so romantic as I portray. First, remember that I live in a beautiful village and so escape the dangerous, stifling city barrio. Second, work is impossible to find outside of factories and the sporadic selling of crops, and because of this, some of the men spend their days in a drunken haze. Girls get pregnant between the ages of 12 and 14, and men beat their wives or girlfriends without second thought. Most importantly, the Dominican Republic lacks the state security nets that help those in poverty in the U.S., and the poor must rely on neighbors for food since soup kitchens and welfare do not exist.

However, many of these things are universal as well. As in the U.S., people lack good health-care and education and are often overlooked by the government. And as in all societies, poverty forms a cycle that is difficult to overcome, and families often find themselves rewriting history through the generations. Sometimes though, I wonder. Here in my village, people do not pine for American wealth. The pain of materialism does not touch their unknowing minds,

see **Poverty?** page 4

**Absolute Poverty?**

Street News Service • www.streetnewsservice.org

# WORKING POOR

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by Jemal Swoboda

The popular myth that if you work hard you will be aptly compensated is dispelled by the investigative journalism of Barbara Ehrenreich in *Nickel and Dimed*. In what could have been a book filled with numbers and confusing charts, Ehrenreich instead offers her own undercover experiences as a low-paid worker. She takes on the role of a waitress and cleaning maid, among other jobs, and painfully discovers that it is very hard to make enough money even to survive.

Ehrenreich destroys any plausibility of the famous Horatio Alger tales of "rags to riches" success. The conclusion is made that service workers are not paid enough to survive, making upward mobility almost a lost cause.

Whats Up Magazine recently caught up with the author to discuss the plight of the low-wage worker and how close many of us are to becoming homeless.

Whats Up: What inspired you to get involved with low-income workers and worker's rights?

Barbara: A lot of what I have written about over the past twenty years as a journalist has been about women and poverty, so this not some short term interest, but rather something I have been consistently writing about. I tell in the book how I got talked into the *Nickel and Dimed* project, but ever since welfare reform the whole idea that you are a useless parasite if you don't have a job concerned me. It's ignoring the fact that these women were trying to raise children under very difficult conditions of poverty, so my attention turned toward jobs. If they are all supposed to work... is work going to support them and their children?

Whats Up: In your writing you simplified poverty to what it represents: the lack of money. Given financial resources, what else does it take to break the mold of poverty?

Barbara: I reject the idea that there is some particular mind-set or psychology that causes poverty. I think people who are in poverty end up having very disordered lives. It is hard to maintain a permanent residence or to have the kind of stability that middle-class families take for granted, such as being in the same home for a few weeks and having dependable transportation. I think those things are caused by poverty. I don't think

poverty is caused by an individual's character flaws... I guess it is possible that someone very affluent could spend all their money on drugs and gambling and fall into poverty that way, but I think that is kind of unusual.

Whats Up: What are the main obstacles that separate the unemployed (but capable) no-wage worker from the employed low-wage worker, and what incentives exist to encourage someone to work for a job that fails to provide for basic housing and healthcare needs?

Barbara: That's a good question... why do it? Except that today there really is no safety net if you don't, if you declare that you are unable to work or that it is ridiculous to work for so little money, then there is nothing left to do but to beg. There is no backup. That is essentially what welfare reform meant, that there was no alternative to work on whatever conditions employers want to impose.

Whats Up: Imagine that former federal levels for low-income housing support were restored. What workers would most benefit and what workers would still fall through the cracks?

Barbara: Those levels were 100 percent higher in the 1970s than they are today, but it would be a huge help to all kinds of underpaid people. My biggest problem in this country is that for some of the people, wages and rents don't match anymore... they are not compatible. Rents go up and up and wages, although they went up briefly in the late nineties, have been going down again.

Whats Up: You report on the underside of capitalism, and from where I stand with many of my peers, as a recent college graduate the possibilities of capitalism seem endless. What would you say to my generation to help us better understand this underside of capitalism?

Barbara: I have been trying to say it for a couple of months now. I've been on the road speaking to college campuses since August, mostly to first-year students and have been trying to answer the question why they should care. In some of the colleges, these students are the first in their family to go to college and have worked very low-wage jobs themselves and have some understanding about the world around them. My message to them is to not forget where they came from. They may have gotten into college, but the way

tuition is increasing their brothers and sisters may not... unless they become an activist and to try to do something about this situation.

To those students who are more clueless and who come from a more affluent background and think everything is going to be fine for them... one thing they should realize is that they might end up in this sort of situation. An education is not a guaranteed protection against falling into a low-wage job trap. I hear from a lot of people who have some education, even master's degrees, who have been in these jobs for years and years. Finally, they realize that any working-class system of morality and ethics or religious system requires that people who are comfortable do things to help those who are not. This couldn't be any clearer in Christianity, although that seems to be a part of the Bible that people skip over.

Whats Up: If provided first and last month's rent and enough money for bills and groceries, which of the employees from one of the low-wage jobs that you took on during *Nickel and Dimed* would most likely become self-sufficient?

Barbara: There is no way to predict an outcome, because it is not inherent to the individual. Mostly, it is the unexpected events that derail us so easily. Those accidents we don't expect or the car that won't start. It can be a child getting sick that requires you stay home from work because a day-care won't take children when they are sick. It can just be something that hits you out of left field that might make it impossible for you to make rent.

Whats Up: These networks of

security that stabilize our lives when things go wrong can break down and many Americans are at risk of becoming homeless. Do you feel that, regardless of the quality of jobs, that anyone can find a job these days to prevent them from experiencing homelessness... you didn't seem to have much trouble in finding work in *Nickel and Dimed*?

Barbara: I wrote that book during times of great prosperity, for some at least, so it would be hard to compare the present with the period in which I wrote the book between 1998-2000. I think it would have been hard for me to do the same journalistic experiment now, because why should they hire an unskilled person like myself when they could get somebody who has been a waitress or a nursing home aid for years?

Whats Up: For those that perform the jobs that were part of your experiment everyday, some people might feel insulted to have their lives put on display as part of some journalistic experiment. Who was your audience for this book?

Barbara: I've found it too inhibiting for me as a writer to think too much about those who will be the audience. Particularly, for this book, I was focused on reporting what I experienced and saw — as vividly, concretely, and as precisely and accurately as I could. I really did not think of audience, but it really has been quite a range in terms of who I hear from. From the comfortably situated people who say, "Wow, what a revelation... what little did I know!" To people saying, "I've experienced all of this... this is my life."

Whats Up: Can we effectively appeal to both audiences?

Barbara: I think you are seeing that cross-class alliance in movements like the Living Wage campaign where middle-class people are getting involved in these movements. People don't like the fact that we have become such a class-polarized society. Some people don't like the fact that we are becoming a society of extremes.

Reprinted from the November/December issue of *Whats Up*, St. Louis, Missouri.

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## Changing World cont. from page 1

go into what we learned on this subject). Alternate energy sources? Our industrial society has designed just about all its expensive machinery to use petroleum. Converting our economy to be fueled by solar power or any of the other renewable energy sources would be feasible if we ceased spending any more money on war and the oil industry and instead spent those billions of dollars on the conversion process, and began conservation efforts and slowed down on procreation and great efforts by all citizens. But the political will is lacking.

One possible way to survive into the future is to form sustainable communities.

There is a lesson in Cuba. When the Soviet Union was no longer able to provide Cuba with oil, Cuba was in deep trouble. The government assigned their top agronomists with the task of coming up with a plan to save the country from starvation. They redesigned the agricultural system to smaller, organic farms, first off. Conservation efforts were undertaken. Agricultural education and other efforts attracted more people from the cities to move to rural areas for farming. Though the beginning years were very rough, today we see the lives of Cubans improving. Though some may not eat meat everyday, no one goes hungry. Everyone carools. You never see someone driving alone in a car. Instead of everyone spending their evenings indoors watching TV, you would more likely see them outdoors dancing or interacting with their neighbors.

Richard Heinberg suggested several possible solutions but left many of us with one strong possible conclusion. We were to start

the work right now to prepare for the future. We must become part of a sustainable community. I thought several days after his appearance, "I must try to convince every organization to have a sustainable community committee". Two days later I got an email from a list I'm on that a Peace and Sustainability group was forming as a committee of Sacramento Area Peace Action. We met and work has begun with great dedication.

A few weeks after Richard's appearance in Sacramento, he hosted a Sustainability Symposium in Santa Rosa. Many of us attended, wanting to learn more. It was held at New College, a college dedicated mostly to training people to become sustainable community members and leaders. Speakers from many fields spoke of their knowledge and experience in this movement that has begun and grows exponentially as more and more people wake up to the realities of the destructive path this world has been heading.

The Peace and Sustainability committee continue meeting twice a month. We are identifying other groups already involved in the movement. Educational opportunities are being explored. Another group has joined our efforts. We have planned a potluck for February 8 and have invited guests with knowledge in various fields to facilitate discussions. And I am

now inviting you, too.

I believe I bring a valuable perspective to the group from my experiences of being homeless for 7 or so years. There is a term called "Voluntary Simplicity" where people strive to simplify their lives by becoming less dependent on material possessions. (Homelessness, though not voluntary in most cases, has produced many experts in that field!) Recycling? Reusing materials before dumping in land fills? (Often practiced out of necessity). Involved in social activities instead of watching TV (who has got a TV)? Cooperation instead of competition? Not many living outdoors will eat in front of a hungry brother or sister without sharing. Energy efficiency? Experts in the field of renewable energy (human muscle and bicycling). Connected to the earth? Who better knows and feels the changing of the seasons? Many who are now too often considered outcasts from society, may someday be esteemed as leaders that can teach others how to live more simply so that others may simply live.

I urge everyone in this world to adjust their lives to live more sustainably, now. Join a sustainability group. Or start a group. Think "cooperation" instead of "competition". We need each and everyone of us to make this work.

by Paula

**Peace & Sustainability Potluck**  
Sunday, February 8, 2004, 5-8pm.  
Unitarian Universalist Society  
2425 Sierra Blvd, Sacramento

A community gathering for learning about and discussing the connection between peace & sustainability and about specific actions that we can take to promote sustainability in our own lives. Bring a dish to share and your own eating utensils. Info: 916 448-7157; or 916 (444-1215) or [sypeaceact@ips.net](mailto:sypeaceact@ips.net)

## Dirt cont. from page 1



Photo: County Clerks receiving bags of dirt

Great job to everyone who worked on this rally—with a special thanks to ParaTransit and the staff of Loaves & Fishes—Friendship Park for helping people come to the event.

(To the tune of "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" Words by Paula)

We wish for Affordable Housing  
We wish for Affordable Housing  
We wish for Affordable Housing  
And shelter all year!

IN - CLUSION - AR - Y  
Policy's good  
When developers built it  
in the same neighborhood

We wish for Affordable Housing  
We wish for Affordable Housing  
We wish for Affordable Housing  
And shelter all year!

# 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, either 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

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

excerpts from the paper are published on the web at <http://users.comcast.com/shochrome>

# Max's View

by Max Biddle

As we view the economic history of Communism and Capitalism over the last century, there is a stark reality of similarity that is apparent. Both systems are subjecting the mass population to economic systems that benefit the minority at the expense of the majority. Both systems subject the human condition to the service of ideological determinations regardless that both systems are failing to provide for the needs of the majority.

Communism, using State Dictatorships to impose their will upon their populations, destroy the human will and desire to live a fruitful and useful life. It is a system that relegates the human condition to serving a dehumanizing philosophy. It turns human beings into factory cogs that end up serving a few in the ruling class.

Unfettered and unregulated Capitalism produces nearly the same effects on the human condition as Communism. We are witnessing the world-wide phenomena of a return to indentured servitude (prison labor), child labor, and the use of cheap labor. Capitalists who so fervently denounced Communism for a century, now can't race fast

enough to China to take advantage of their cheap labor. Labor that is kept cheap by the suppression of workers who are not allowed to organize and protest their living conditions. In America we see that large corporations are consolidating to drive competition out of the system. They would like to eliminate unions and all organizations that defend workers' rights and a livable standard of living.

It is time to release our economic thinking from the past, and come up with a system that truly is democratic and serves the many. This will only happen when we squeeze greed out of the system. When capitalists realize that their employees are just as important as their investors.

It is amazing to me that one aspect of successful Capitalism, expanding the buying power of the population to make sure there's enough money in the system to purchase the ever growing expensive products being manufactured, should be common sense. But these capitalists appear determined to lower wages, not only in the rest of the world, but here in America as well. The three essential elements of Capitalism are a good product, an efficient delivery system, and the money to pur-

chase. It is obvious that the present leaders of this capitalist system are systematically eliminating the third essential, the income to purchase.

The growing resentment against American Corporations, both in the United States and around the world, should give the business leaders a wake up call. The corruption of both our political and corporate structure easily equals the levels in the Soviet Union before its downfall. Revelations continue of corruption on Wall Street and other parts of our business community, and will have profound effects on our country in ways that will compromise democracy. As the number of the poor and low income population grows, don't be surprised that they feel their stake in this country is meaningless. The growing disparity will eventually cause social upheaval. History is abundant with countries and empires that collapsed from neglecting the needs of its citizenry. The United States will be no different.

Meanwhile, on the local front, Senator Diane Feinstein has supported almost all of the Bush Administration's worst policies and now I wonder why she remains a Democrat. She supported the big tax cuts that clearly benefit the wealthiest people in our population. She supported the invasion of Iraq even though there was no clear connection between Iraq and the terrorists of 9/11. The Senator seems to fail to notice that the 9/11 group were mostly Saudi Arabians. She made known

strong objections to the uncontracted, or lack of bidding, for the lucrative contracts handed out to Bechtel and the Halliburton cronies of this Administration. Indeed, I read in one report her husband's company benefited through contract given him from one of these companies. She can't help notice that Bush has become the greatest recruiter for terrorism around the world and is doing more than Bin Laden could do in turning so many people against us. She can't help but notice the quagmire this country is plunging into, do to the policies she has supported.

She also supported extension of the trade agreements after all the evidence showing the loss of jobs and the eroding of our middle class that will eventually lower the standard of living for all. In fact the amount of times she votes against other Democrats in the Senate should concern California voters. But the last straw was her supporting the Republican Medicare Bill. This bill is the beginning of dismantling the Medicare system. It may also lead to the destruction of all Federal Social programs, which is the aim of the Republican Right, especially the ending of Social Security.

With the help of Democratic Jenators like Dianne Feinstein, the Republicans will surely get their way. We just had a recall for Governor, it may be time to start another one for a certain Senator.

## Poverty? continued from page 2

and they seem to benefit from a much purer happiness found in the company of friends and the time to sit in the late-afternoon sun and visit with neighbors.

Since arriving in this country one year ago, I have gone through several paradigm shifts. The first, obviously, was the severe lifestyle change between middle-class American and poor Dominican culture. The second came when I visited the poorer side of the island, the hell called Northern Haiti. While entering the Dominican Republic had placed a new rung on the step ladder of my perspective of

poverty, Haiti made my village seem like heaven. The roads there were potholed and dusty, impassible but for the rare, dilapidated bus system known as the "tap-taps." The land was hard and dry, and for that reason there were virtually no crops or food. There was very little water and people flocked to the almost non-existent, drained wells. Huts were slapped together with cow dung, and people squatted on the streets to defecate. For every case of malnutrition found in the Dominican Republic there were hundreds in Haiti, and the little children held out their hands to you with desperate hunger in their large, yellowed

eyes.

After Haiti, I returned to the U.S. for a visit, and what I saw there reminded me of Haiti's hunger in reverse. There was no lack of food — in fact, there was an over-abundance. People appeared as the living dead in their manicured outfits, walking hurriedly without bothering to even glance at the people around them. It seemed to me they were racing the clock, hungrily searching for an unnamed happiness, buying anything and everything. They were missing the beauty of the sky and devaluing the importance of family and friends. I felt stifled and pined for my simple life in Gurabo, where surprisingly, I had never been so content.

So what is poverty? Perhaps it is the streets of St. Louis on a cold winter night, with no chance of seeing a friendly face or being offered a plate of food. Perhaps it is the Dominican Republic or Haiti, with their severe economic failure and non-existent social

programs. Perhaps real poverty is found within the arms of the rich, who search for meaning within the material wealth of their lives. Or perhaps it is none of the above or all of them combined.

I have come to believe one thing in the past year, which you may find naive and romantic (you could easily be right): poverty is a flowing term, incapable of a concrete definition. To me, poverty has nothing to do with monetary wealth or the access to air-conditioning or heating systems. Poverty is a lack of something much deeper, an emptiness of spirit that can be found in any culture, in any social bracket, in any economic condition. So I urge you to take a moment to redefine your own wealth and consider carefully where your poverty lies.

Mahri Leonard-Fleckmann lives among the poorest of the poor in the Dominican Republic with the Peace Corps.

## 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.

The SHA does not itself provide or manage housing.

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

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# About Carol's Place

## An Interview with Cheri Joerger

by Elizabeth Halloway

Carol's Place is a thirty day residential facility for homeless adults with a psychiatric disability who may also have problems from alcohol and other drugs. It is an alternative to traditional shelters, aimed at breaking the cycle of homelessness. Clients and staff work collaboratively to develop individual service plans. Carol's is staffed 24 hours. Clients have chores and must maintain reasonable rules of conduct. Carol's is affiliated with P.A.C.T. (People Achieving Change Together), a two year program providing personal goal planning, help with money management, housing placement assistance, vocational counseling, entitlement advocacy, substance abuse information including recovery services as well as com-

munity support services. Ms. Joerger commutes five days a week from Davis to share her compassionate energy at Carol's Place.

HSJ: Please explain your title and basic job description.

CJ: Program advisor. I assist clients with housing, connecting to mental health services, income, such as General Assistance and Social Security. I listen and provide encouragement.

HSJ: How did you become attracted to the work?

CJ: At American River College I was going for a certificate in Human Services, and I chose a work experience class at Transitional Living and Community Support (TLCS). I worked for

SHEP, and Palmer House, a program for adults with mental disabilities, for two and a half years. I've been at CPill (Carol's Place) for six years.

HSJ: What is your average caseload per month?

CJ: Three to five clients, assisting with thirteen others.

HSJ: Very generally, describe your clientele.

CJ: Primarily, individuals with mental health diagnoses and substance abuse problems, who are at different levels of functioning. Some people aren't on meds, some are.

HSJ: How is the program funded?

CJ: TLCS is funded federally by state and county. Carol's is supported by the Division of Mental Health.

HSJ: Does anyone else donate items?

CJ: Individuals donate clothes and furniture, KB Homes donates. Gifts in Kind provide toiletries and Senior Gleaners give food.

HSJ: How have budget cuts affected you?

CJ: A couple programs may be cut, this fiscal year, but otherwise we're okay.

HSJ: Where do clients go from here?

CJ: Palmer House, primarily, a one year program, Sunnyslope, hotels, room and board places, board and care facilities, but more are going back to shelters or even to the streets. We have four co-ops. One is on Bell Street, a small apartment complex with shared GA rooms and private SSI rooms. It's being renovated. There's an old house on 12th Street and then there's the River City Residence Club which is funded by HUD. Passages is a young peoples program. Cordosa Village is for families, but they usually stay there a long time.

HSJ: Can you estimate the success rate?

CJ: When people leave Carol's, sometimes we don't

see them again. Largely, it's an individual proposition. Some relapse. Some work the program and stay on track.

HSJ: What do you see as your toughest obstacles?

CJ: The growing homeless population, especially trying to place people who only have GA money. A lack of health services and recovery programs. They put people in jail for drugs, but recovery is actually cheaper. There's a lack of public education and understanding regarding mental health and substance abuse. For example, a CPS (Child Protective Service) worker asked me for the diagnosis of a woman trying to get her child back. When I told her she was diagnosed with schizophrenia, she said, "Oh no, that's a pretty severe diagnosis, where people hear voices and see things and the judges will probably deny her custody." I then explained she was taking medication, and not experiencing any symptoms and was very stable at this time. I asked her if she or the judges knew much about mental health and she said no. At the end of the conversation the worker seemed to turn around, and she asked if I'd write a letter to the court system saying the client should be judged by behavior, not diagnosis. Understanding of mental illness is better than twenty years ago, but uneducated prejudice is still a factor. After she took the letter to court, the client was awarded supervised visits with her child, and a chance for reunification.

HSJ: What gives you the greatest joy here?

CJ: The success stories, seeing people grow and move on with their lives blesses my heart. One guy came in to visit who had been off drugs for three years and was a different person.

HSJ: How do you envision this program in the future?

CJ: We recently got funding from the Emergency Housing Assistance Program to purchase Carol's Place. We're going to renovate, adding room for four more people and one, wheelchair-accessible room.

HSJ: What part does community or business play in all

of this?

CJ: Local neighbors are marvelous. Some neighbors in different locations fought against our being there. A few businesses contribute privately.

HSJ: Do you see any ways of defeating the rising poverty and homelessness in Sacramento and across the nation?

CJ: It's going to require overall changes in understanding, and people standing up together for better education in their local communities. Politicians have blinders on—they're not in the trenches. In New Zealand you don't see people walking around with no teeth. People's thinking needs to change. Until then, it's only going to get worse. Plus, 90% of our clients don't vote. If that one thing alone changed, I believe we'd see a big difference in the way things are, including who runs this country.

HSJ: If you could say one thing to policy-makers and legislators, what would it be?

CJ: Open your eyes.

From Synopsis of Psychiatry, 7th ed., Kaplan & Saddock, 1994: "...More than 15% of the U.S. population over 18 have serious substance abuse problems, with two-thirds of them abusing alcohol primarily, and the other one-third abusing substances other than alcohol..." and "...stereotypical skid-row alcoholic persons constitute less than 5% of alcohol-related disorders...These disorders are particularly high in persons who have advanced degrees and are high in socioeconomic classes..."

From The Care of Health in Communities-Access for Outcasts, Nancy Milio, 1975: "...a common denominator for all forms of mental illness is of fered. It is...of demoralization or being unable to deal with situations which one, and one's peers, expect can be handled. It is the sense of losing control...of powerlessness..."

If we knew these things nine, and twenty-eight years ago respectively, we are forced to wonder why the stigma, including that of homelessness, has become worse.

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# Self-Help Housing Mural: Downhome Utopia



by Lillian

Are you finding yourself in the dumps? Needing a place to live? Did you just lose your job or maybe you lost your girlfriend, or boyfriend. Maybe you're depressed. Maybe you're in a crisis. A lot of homeless people feel just like that when they go to John Foley's office to look for housing but they don't leave like that. There is a most beautiful mural painted on the walls of his office. One wall has a small town country like environment, another wall has a city with tall buildings and hilly green parks. John Foley wants his clients to envision themselves in one part or another. He wants to help them find out where they want to be, to be able to daydream

Shelter.

He wanted to turn his office into something positive and full of hope for the discouraged people who hear "no" far too many times. People who are angry or hungry. He wanted to be able to put his clients at ease. That very night, Ray envisioned a patio, with the door that opens the office opening onto the patio and he did the sketch of the girl with the butterfly perched on her nose leaning over a patio wall. A big beautiful monarch. This young lady has her kite tangled on the patio and can't get it free because the string is tangled.

mural has a therapeutic effect on those who gaze upon it as well as a mesmerizing effect. It captures attention.

Ray calls the mural a "labor of love. Lee and I had a lot of fun doing it." Ray has known John for 10 years and wanted to do it for him because there had been many times in the past when Ray had needed help. John was there for him with a smile on his face. John always went beyond the call of duty for him. "John is the kind of guy that'll jump right in between two guys who are fighting and sep-

I drew from our combined minds and agreed on every square inch as we created. We made many changes as we went along, for example, the brick wall was originally a picket fence. We used a lot of photos from magazines as models. We mixed our own colors using black, white, red, yellow and blue house paint. Lee painted the background: the rural town, the city and I painted the foreground, the scene of the girl and the young boy with the butterflies, the brick patio wall, the hanging pot of flowers."

It's amazing the sense of

about a happy future, living in a peaceful community, a "nice place to live." To people who feel that every door has been closed to them the mural is both encouraging and uplifting.

John Foley is in charge of Sacramento Self-Help Housing at the Francis House and his office was tiny with blank walls and no windows. John wanted to soften a cold feeling office, so he asked Ray Hillestad and Lee Parks, local artists, if there was any way they could open up the office by painting the walls. John had attended the VOA anniversary celebration, which included the official presentation of the Lighthouse mural that Ray and Lee painted at the Bannon Street

John Foley believes that a room can effect the way you feel about things and now when his clients walk into the office, a positive, interesting experience full of light, full of a sense of well-being is what they see. A girl and a kite. A young couple sunbathing. A neighborhood grocery store, children playing. A boy chasing a squirrel, pigeons on a window sill. There are no police, there is no mean-spiritedness about, you don't see long tedious lines of people standing, worn-out and shivering in the cold. Instead, love is in the air, peace reigns supreme. The



arate them," Ray recalls. He also remembers that at the bottom of John Foley's stationary were the scripture, "what you do for the least of my brothers you do for me." Ray continues, "when I got out of prison, John got a place for me to live in right away. John is a role model and I did the mural as a gift to him."

Downtown Utopia was painted between March and May of 2003. Ray and Lee are both pleased with the mural and are looking forward to collaborating on other murals. Ray says, "It was truly amazing how well Lee and I complemented each other in talents and how well we got along sharing one canvas. I never shared a canvas before Lee and

depth one gets from the mural. In the scene of the young boy leaning on the window, you can see clear beyond the room into the back yard and fence of the house behind. The more one looks, the more one sees: rich, deep colors, flowers that pop out their pretty little faces at you, trees and bushes that seem alive. The city is reminiscent of San Francisco, the park reminded me of Buen a Vista Park, and there's a mission style church building.

Words cannot adequately portray the wonderful uplifting effect of that mural, you just have to go see it for yourself. The Francis House is located at 15th & C Sts.

**Obituary**

**Lita Rogers**  
b. 10/31/66  
d. 12/5/03  
had seizure,  
hit by car

**LeRoy White**  
b. 11/6/40  
d. 11/17/03  
of natural causes  
outside

**Ken Luberini**  
d. 10/23/03  
of cancer

**Linda "Red" Wiser**  
b. 9/26/55  
d. 10/12/03  
of prolonged  
illness



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## HOMELESS RESOURCES

### Night Shelters

Salvation Army: 12th and North B St.  
30 days per year. Dormitory living, C&S;  
Dinner, breakfast clothing for residents;  
Men/Women Sign-up SA patio weekdays  
at 1PM. 442-0331

Volunteers of America: 1400 No. A St.  
Women & Children only

St. John's Shelter: 12th & No. C Sts.  
Women/Children, 14 day max stay. 3:00pm  
to 7:30am. Weekday signups anytime at  
door. Weekend signups 3:00pm. Dinner &  
showers provided for guests, call 448-  
0701.

Union Gospel Mission: 400 Bannon  
St. Beds for Men Only, sign up 8:30pm at  
mission. Newcomers/Referrals have priority.  
7:30pm Chapel Service with meal  
afterwards. 8am breakfast for residents.  
Showers / shaves 9-11am & 1-2:45pm.  
open to all homeless men: 447-3268

SAEHC, Sacramento Area  
Emergency Housing Center: 4516  
Parker Ave. 24 hrs. Family Shelter.  
Families, single adults with children who  
have no other resource. Women's Refuge,  
single women, no children. Call for screen-  
ing/price availability 455-2100

### Day Shelters

Friendship Park: 12th St. & North D  
Weekdays 7am - 2:30pm; open to anyone.  
Many services.

### Meals

Union Gospel Mission: 400 Bannon  
St. 7 days, Evening meal, Men/Women  
Church service 7:00pm required, dinner  
following 8:30-9:15pm. Sunday 11am  
service, lunch at noon, 447-3268

Loaves & Fishes: 1321 No. C St.;  
Lunch every day 11:30am-1pm. Tickets  
available 7 am- 12:30 pm at Friendship  
Park weekdays; at 8 am on Saturday and  
10am on Sundays.

Women's Civic Improvement Center:  
3555 3rd Ave. 11:30-12:30 lunch M-F  
452-2568

### Women & Children

Maryhouse: 1321 No. C St., suite 32.  
Breakfast for Women and children 8am-  
9am. Day shelter 8am-3pm weekdays for  
women and families.

Wellspring 3414 4th St. T&Th full  
breakfast; M-W-F continental breakfast  
for women and children. 454-9686

see *Wind in Youth Services*  
for young adults

Food-not-Bombs: serves free food in  
Cesar Chavez Plaza, 9th & J St., every  
Sunday 1:30 pm. and Wed. 4 pm. All  
Welcome.

Food Closet: Wednesdays Only  
Cross & Crown Ministries 705 Del Paso  
Rd. behind Java City. 7pm Church service  
required, food following service

### Free Clothing

Sacramento Food Bank: 3333 3rd Ave.  
(at Broadway) 10am-2pm Mon - Fri. 456-  
1880

Union Gospel Mission: 400 Bannon  
St. Men: M-Sat 9-11am or 1-2:45pm  
Women and Children: Wed. only. Call for  
appointment to go in at 11am, 1 or 1:30pm  
or attend Bible study at 9-15am and get  
clothing at 10am. 447-3268

### Medical

Mercy Clinic: Adults, children; Nurse's  
office in Friendship park 7:30am &  
12:30pm. 446-3345

Capital Health Clinic: 1500 C St. (near  
15th) Adults 8-5 M-F also child's vaci-  
nations & well-visit. 874-5302.

Sacramento Dental Clinic: 1500 C St.  
(near 15th) Adults-Emergency Dental Call  
for Appt. M-F 7:40am-5pm. Walk-ins  
screened for eligibility. 552-8300

### Mental Health

Guest House, 1400 N. A St.: Homeless  
Mental Health Clinic, M,W,Th,Fri., 8-  
11:30am Tues 8-11:30am only. Mental  
Health evaluation, medication if needed.  
Housing referrals for mentally ill, GA refs,  
SSI apt. refs to A & D counseling. 443-  
5972

TLCS Intake Offices: 1400 N. A St.  
Building A, Adults 18 yrs & up. Referrals  
to transitional living programs, independent  
living, mental health support services;  
SSI/SSDI application assistance;  
Walk-ins 8am-12pm M-F. Office hours  
8am-4pm M-F

Consumer Self-Help (South): 3031  
Franklin Blvd. or 4972 Dale Ave. A daytime  
mental health self-help program with advi-  
sories and groups for mental health con-  
sumers. Referrals to mental health and  
other services available. 737-7100

Genesis: Professional Counseling for  
life problems. Referrals. Next to Friendship  
Park gate

### Youth Services

Diogenes: youth 16-21 yrs old. Hot  
Line call 1-800-339-7177

Wind Youth Center: 300 Ahern St.  
Serves youth ages 12-18. Serves break-  
fast and lunch, offers clothing, case mgmt.  
and access to emergency shelter. Open  
six days: M - F from 8:30am to 1pm and  
Sat 11am to 12:30pm. Youth outreach.

### Crisis Intervention

WEAVE: Services for victims of domestic  
violence and sexual assault and their  
children. Referrals to court mandated  
battery intervention programs. Safe house,  
24 hr. crisis line: 920-2962

Sacramento Mental Health Center  
(County): 2150 Stockton Blvd (at T St.)  
24hr. Will evaluate anyone for voluntarily  
or involuntary psychiatric care due to  
danger to self or others. In-patient care  
facility, drop-in. 732-3637

### AIDS / HIV

AIDS Housing Alliance provides resi-  
dential care, transitional housing & per-  
manent housing services to homeless  
persons living with aids. 975-0697 week-  
days

CARES (Center for AIDS Research,  
Education and Service): 1500 21st St.  
Serves people with HIV and AIDS. Medical  
care, mental health, case mgmt, health ed  
and regional prevention classes. 443-  
3299

Breaking Barriers: Homeless Outreach  
Program provides direct services to people  
living with AIDS and HIV. Transportation  
to social services, medical appointments,  
job interviews, and housing assistance.  
447-2437

Alternative Test Site: Free anonymous  
testing. Wed / Thurs. Call for appt. 874-  
7720.

### Legal Aid

Protection & Advocacy Inc.: Free legal  
services for people with disabilities. Call  
for appt. toll free: TTY: (800)776-5746

Legal Services of Northern California,  
Inc: 515 12th St. (at E St.) M-F 8:30am-  
12pm, 1pm-5pm. Problems with public  
benefits, landlord / tenant, divorce  
clinic. Call for appt. 444-6760

Welfare Rights: 1901 Alhambra Blvd.  
(2nd floor) M-F 9am-5pm: AFDC, Food  
Stamps, Welfare and Medical rep at hear-  
ings. 736-0616

Health Rights  
Hotline:  
551-2100

### Miscellaneous

Francis House: 1422 C st. 9:30-11:30

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weekdays. 443-2648

Social Services: 28th & R St, M-F  
7:30am-5pm. Call for asst. 874-2072

Employment Development  
Department (EDD): 2901 50th St. (at  
Broadway) or 8030 Big Horn Blvd. M-F  
8am-5pm. Unemployment, job services.  
227-0300

Medi-Cal: 4875 Broadway M-F 8am-  
5pm 732-3490. 7220 24th St (at Florin)  
M-Th 8-11am, 1-3pm Fri 8-11am. Phone  
ap OK, ID needed 395-4551

Social Security Office: 8351 Folsom  
Blvd (College Greens Lite-rail stop) M-F  
8am-4:30pm 381-9410. Natl line 1-800-  
772-1213

TSH Advocacy Group: asst. with  
service providers & legal advocacy. 247-  
8502

Infoline: Tele-info &  
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498-1000

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