



A VOICE FOR
THE SACRAMENTO AREA
HOMELESS COMMUNITY SINCE 1997

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 1774
Sacramento, CA

HOMeward

Street Journal

Volume 10, No. 3

Member NASNA
North American Street Newspaper Association

May / June, 2006

The Root of the Problem

Street News Service www.streetnewsservice.org

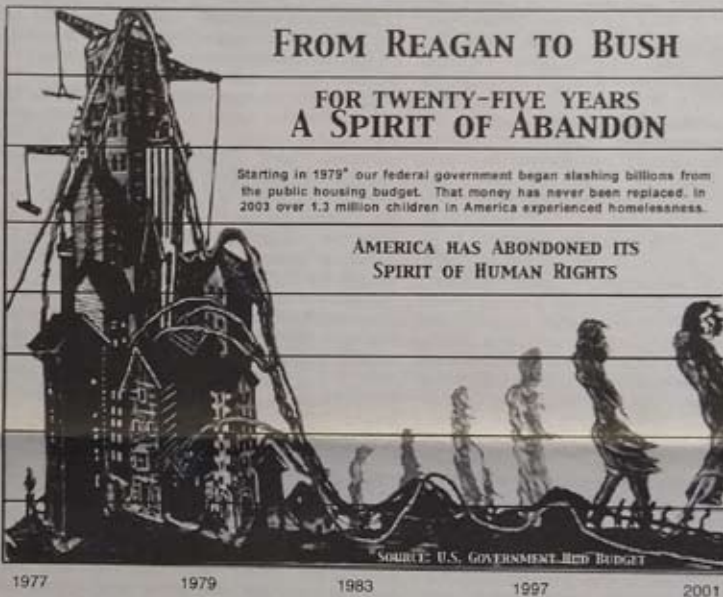
Page 2
Katrina continued
Page 3
Root continued
Hate Crime Report
Page 4
9th Circuit Overturns Anti- homeless Ordinance
Roving Reporter
Page 5
Maryland Considers Bill to Protect Homeless
2 Commentaries
Page 6
Katrina conclusion
Page 7
Fatgrocer's Ride West Nile Virus Poetry (No Obituary)
Page 8
Homeless Resources Info

Western Regional Advocacy Project \$16 Billion

All the recent federal plans on homelessness — FEMA emergency shelter plans, HUD Continuum of Care plans (5 years) and the 10-year plans of the Interagency Council on Homelessness — are based on the assumption that in the early 1980s, homelessness re-emerged in America because something was wrong with the people who were becoming homeless.

The federal government required local communities to submit competitive applications for federal largesse, and to show that they could effectively address the "problems of homelessness in America" within the grant amounts allocated. So local governments did just that: they formed committees; created task forces; hired tons of consultants (I should know—I was one); and they wrote grant after grant and plan after plan stating how they

continued **Root** Page 3



AFTER KATRINA: WHO WAS LEFT BEHIND - THEN AND NOW

Street News Service www.streetnewsservice.org

by Bill Quigley

Nearly six months ago, my wife Debbie and I boated out of New Orleans. We left five days after Katrina struck.

Debbie worked as an oncology nurse in a New Orleans hospital. She volunteered to come in during the hurricane so that other nurses with children could evacuate.

There were about 2000 people huddled in the hospital - patients, staff and families of staff and patients. Plate glass windows exploded in the lobby and on crosswalks and on several floors. Water poured in through broken windows, ceilings, and down the elevator shafts. Eight feet of brown floodwater surrounded us.

The entire city immediately lost electricity. Soon the hospital backup generators located in the basement failed. No lights. No phones. Even the water system stopped. No drinking water. No flush toilets.

You can imagine a hospital with 2000 people and no electricity, water, food, or flushing toilets. Breathing machines did not work. Cell phones did not work. Because the computers stopped working medicines were unavailable. Elevators in the 8 floor building did not work. We quickly ran out of food because the cafeteria and food were also in the flooded basement. The gains of 21st century medicine disappeared. Over 40 people died in the hospital over the next few days as we waited for help.

Now imagine an entire city with no electricity, water, food or flushing toilets and tens of thousands of people left behind.

Debbie and I left five days later by way of a small fishing boat, the back of a garden truck, and the kindness of strangers. We returned 15 weeks later. Many of those left behind then who evacuated with us have yet to return.

The Katrina evacuation was totally self-help. If you had the resources, a car, money and a place to go, you left. Over one million people evacuated - 80 to 90% of the population. No provisions were made for those who could not evacuate themselves. To this day no one has a reliable estimate of how many people

continued **Katrina** Page 2

Katrina

continued from page 1

were left behind in Katrina - that in itself says quite a bit about what happened.

Who was left behind in the self-help evacuation?

In the hospital, we could not see who was left behind because we did not have electricity or TV. We certainly knew the 2000 of us were left behind, and from the hospital we could see others. Some were floating in the street - face down. Some were padding down the street - helping older folks get to high ground. Some were swimming down the streets. We could hear people left behind screaming for help from rooftops. We routinely heard gunshots as people trapped on rooftops tried to get the attention of helicopters crisscrossing the skies above. We could see the people trapped in the Salvation Army home a block away. We could hear breaking glass as people scrambled to get away from flooded one story homes and into the higher ground of several story office buildings. We saw people swimming to the local drugstore and swimming out with provisions. But we had no idea how many were actually left behind. The poor, especially those without cars, were left behind. Twenty-seven percent of the people of New Orleans did not have access to a car. Government authorities knew in advance that "100,000 citizens of New Orleans did not have means of personal transportation." Greyhound and Amtrak stopped service on the Saturday before the hurricane. These are people who did not have cars because they were poor - over 125,000 people, 27% of the people of New Orleans, lived below the very low federal poverty level before Katrina.

The sick were left behind. Some government reports estimated 12,000 patients were evacuated. I estimate at least an additional 24,000 people - staff and families of patients - were left behind in the twenty-two hospitals which were open at the time.

The elderly were left behind. The 280 plus local nursing homes remained mostly full. Only 21% evacuated and as a consequence 215 people died in nursing homes, at least six people died at a single nursing home while they waited four days for busses. The aged who lived at home also certainly found it more difficult than most to evacuate as they were more likely to live alone, less likely to own a car and nearly half were disabled.

Untold numbers of other disabled people and their caretakers were also left behind. There were tens of thousands of people with special needs in New Orleans.

A physician reported hundreds of people in wheelchairs were in front of the Convention Center. A comprehensive study of evacuees in Houston shelters found one in seven physically disabled, 22% physically unable to evacuate, 23% stayed behind to care for someone physically disabled, and 25% had a chronic disease such as heart disease, diabetes or high blood pressure. There were no provisions made for their evacuations.

Children were left behind. While there are no official estimates breaking out children left behind, I know from what we saw during our evacuation that many, many children were among those left behind. About one-fourth of the people living in the areas damaged were children, about 183,000 kids, including 47,000 children under the age of 5. Over half of the children displaced were African-American and 30% of children in the damaged areas were poor nearly double the 2000 national census rate for child poverty of 16.6%. These children were almost twice as likely to live in a female-headed home than children nationally.

Prisoners were left behind. Local prisons held 8300 inmates, most on local minor charges awaiting trial and too poor to post bond. Thousands were left behind with no food, water or medical attention. Jails depend on electricity as much as hospitals do - doors of cells and halls and pods and entrances and exits are electronically opened and closed. More than 600 hundred prisoners, one entire building, were left behind once the prisons were evacuated - left in chest deep water, locked into cells.

Ultimately as many as 40,000 people took refuge in the Superdome which lost power, lost part of its roof, the water system failed and the toilets backed up. Another 20-30,000 people were dropped off at the Convention Center. Conditions at the Convention Center were far worse than at the Superdome because the Convention Center was never intended to be used for evacuees it did not have any drinking water, food, or medical care at all. Ten people died in or around the Superdome, four at the convention center.

Unfounded rumors flew about rapes and murders inside these centers - and the myth that rescue helicopters were fired upon - have all been found to be untrue. But those rumors so upset military and medical responders that many slowed down demanding protection from the evacuees - only to be greeted by "a whole lot of people clapping and cheering" when they arrived.

Debbie and I left the hospital after five days. Helicopters finally came and airlifted out many patients, their families and staff. Others, like us, left in small fishing boats piloted by volunteers. The Coast Guard reported it rescued 33,000 people and the National Guard reported rescues of another 25,000 people. Louisiana Department of Homeland Security said 62,000 people were rescued from rooftops or out of water - not including those already in shelters. Many, many others, like us, were rescued by volunteers in boats and trucks.

Some people never made it out of metropolitan New Orleans. February 2006 reports from the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals show 1,103 bodies were recovered from the storm and flood, with over 2,000 people still reported missing. About 215 people died in local hospitals and nursing homes.

Where did the survivors end up? According to FEMA, evacuees ended up all over - applications came in from 18,700 zip codes in all 50 states - half of the nation's residential postal zones. Most evacuee families stayed within 250 miles of New Orleans, but 240,000 households went to Houston and other cities over 250 miles away and another 60,000 households went over 750 miles away.

Who ended up in shelters? Over 270,000 evacuees started out in shelters. The Washington Post, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and the Harvard School of Public Health surveyed 680 randomly selected adult evacuees in Houston shelters on September 10-12, 2005. The results of that survey illustrate who ended up in shelters:

- 64% were renters
- 55% did not have a car or a way to evacuate
- 22% had to care for someone who was physically unable to leave
- 72% had no insurance
- 68% had neither money in the bank nor a useable credit card
- 57% had total household incomes of less than \$20,000 in prior year
- 76% had children under 18 with them in the shelter
- 77% had a high school education or less
- 93% were black
- 67% were employed full or part-time before the hurricane
- 52% had no health insurance
- 54% received their healthcare at the big public Charity Hospital

The people who were left behind in Katrina were the poor, the sick, the elderly, the disabled, children, and

prisoners - mostly African-American.

Who is Being Left Behind Now?

"Hurricane Katrina likely made one of the poorest areas of the country even poorer. Both those who were poor before the storm and those who have become poor following the storm, are likely to face a particularly difficult time in reestablishing their lives, have few if any financial resources upon which to draw." Congressional Research Service 2005

Debbie and I ultimately ended up spending several months in an apartment in Houston while New Orleans started its recovery. Loyola Law Clinic, where I work, moved into the Disaster Relief Center in Houston and our clinic students interviewed and gave assistance to over a thousand evacuees.

We were able to come back to New Orleans for good in mid-December because our house was located close to the University and only sustained roof damage. Very few of the people who were evacuated with us have been able to return.

It seems clear that most of the same people who were left behind in the evacuation for Katrina are being left behind again in the reconstruction of New Orleans. In fact, now there are even more being left behind. Hundreds of thousands of people have not been able to make it back.

Drive through the city away from the French Quarter, Central Business District and the St. Charles streetcar line and you will see tens of thousands of still damaged and unoccupied homes.

Hundreds of thousands of people have not made it back.

There were 469,000 fewer people in the metropolitan New Orleans area in January 2006 than in August 2005.

Why? Many reasons.

Most of the City was still without power in early 2006. About two-thirds of the homes in New Orleans did not have electricity in early 2006, even fewer had gas.

Seventy-three percent of the homes in New Orleans were in areas damaged by the storm. But, as the Brown University study concluded "storm damage data shows that the storm's impact was disproportionately borne by the region's African-American community by people who rented their homes and by the poor

continued Katrina Page 6

Root

continued from Page 1

were going to address the problem if only the feds would give them the lion's share of the money

Plans deemed groundbreaking and effective changed over the years as the "dysfunctional homeless subgroup of the month" changed. But one thing was always constant: The root of the "problem" was blamed on the homeless people, not on the federal government. After all, it was the federal government — not the homeless people — evaluating the proposals.

The federal government pretended — and legions of nonprofits and city agencies applying for federal grants were forced to believe — that the \$54 billion dollar reduction in affordable housing funding over the last 25 years could now easily be addressed with life-skills training for homeless single mothers. The federal government promulgated the myth that its tax credits for companies to send blue-collar jobs overseas could be easily offset by having welfare recipients sweep streets and pick up garbage in exchange for below-poverty-level welfare assistance, so that they will value "giving back" to the community.

Imagine this: suppose it wasn't the federal government evaluating these proposals to address homelessness. Let's say it was your high school science teacher. The average high school science teacher could, in a few hours, shred the flawed assumptions, half-baked hypotheses, and lack of factual evidence that comprise these weighty and endless volumes of governmental plans.

Therefore in honor of high school science teachers across America, we present you with some facts to consider the next time you're wondering, "Where the hell did all these homeless people come from?" Look for the common denominator amongst all these people. If we can identify that, we can begin to make some assumptions — and perhaps come up with a hypothesis about the causes of and potential solutions to "the problem" of homelessness.

Our government has formed a flawed hypothesis about homelessness because, from the very outset, it has conveniently turned a blind eye to its own role in drastically cutting federal housing funds. Instead of looking honestly at the factors that created an enormous shortfall of affordable housing, our government has simply jumped to an unscientific prejudice of homeless people themselves and has set out to "fix" homeless people with counseling and micromanagement instead of addressing the nation's calamitous housing shortage. Fact one: Compared to 1978, the U.S. government is currently spending nearly 65% less on developing and maintaining affordable housing units for poor people. (\$83 billion was appropriated in 1978, while only \$29 billion was allocated in 2005.)

Fact two: Compared to 1978, the U.S. government currently spends \$84

billion more on subsidies for homeownership programs. (It spent \$38 billion in 1978 on these subsidies for middle-class and affluent homeowners versus \$122 billion in 2005.)

Fact three: In 2004, 61% of all federal housing subsidies went to households earning over \$54,787 per year, while only 20% of those subsidies went to households earning less than \$18,465 annually. The 2004 federal poverty threshold for a household of four with 2 minor children was \$19,157.

Hypothesis: There is a direct correlation between the fact that, in the late 1970s, the U.S. government made a conscious decision to redirect expenditures for housing from rental assistance for poor people to homeownership and the reemergence of homelessness in America in the early 1980s. When President Reagan "reinvented government" by drastically slashing assistance to the poorest of the poor, he played a major role in reinventing homelessness so that it re-emerged in modern America.

If our federally mandated housing and homelessness plans (FEMA, HUD and ICH) and our locally politicized campaigns had been focused on addressing "what created this mess," the ludicrous current attempts to fill a \$54 billion housing hole with a mere \$1.37 billion of annual homelessness assistance funding would have drawn ridicule long ago.

How many life skills training courses would a homeless person need to take to compensate for the fact that, in the 20 years from 1983 to 2002, the U.S. government built 500,000 FEWER units of affordable housing than it did in the 7 years from 1976-1982? How many money management classes must a rural parent take to compensate for the 35,000 FEWER units being built in rural America each year?

Are money management classes and life skills training good things? Sure, why not? Is a lack of money management classes and life skills training the cause of a re-emergence of homelessness? Doubtful. Will money management and life skills training — or case management, or more outreach, or the repressive policing of homeless people for sleeping and living on our streets — ever create enough housing to make up for a \$54 billion cutback from the federal government? Hell no.

If we want to address homelessness in America, we need to stop looking at "them" and start looking at us. If we believe our government represents us, it's we, the people, who must force the federal government to create justice. What did we (the U.S.) do to contribute to this problem and what can we (the U.S.) do to address it? Acting in our name, the U.S. government has chosen to redirect our housing subsidies to homeownership, the real estate industry receives over \$120 billion dollars a year towards this goal. Acting in our name, the U.S. government has chosen to cut \$54 billion from housing assistance pro-

grams for poor people. We (as citizens of the U.S.) KNOW that 1.3 million children experienced homelessness in 2003.

Look at the information we present to you. Not only do the facts invalidate the current housing "plan" of the federal government, they invalidate their underlying hypothesis. A group of us — Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) — have gathered documented data from the U.S. government about its housing policies. We have converted this information, facts if you will, into easily understandable charts. Charts can give the same information in a direct visual way that more people can digest and understand. They also do a hell of a good job at cutting through the lies and misinformation of politicians and showing the real trends in our nation's housing policies.

The attached chart shows that when this nation first abandoned its commitment to funding federal housing programs, it abandoned millions of homeless people with the same stroke. Abandoned federal housing programs led directly to millions of abandoned, impoverished Americans languishing without housing in cities across the nation. Something else that is just as precious to our national identity has also been abandoned: the very spirit of human rights has been left by the wayside to die of the same neglect and callous disregard. San Francisco artist Art Hazelwood created an unforgettable image for WRAP, "From Reagan to Bush: For Twenty-Five Years, A Spirit of Abandon," that graphically shows how savage cutbacks in federal housing led to the cruel specter of countless Americans living on harsh and unforgiving streets.

Trends tend to reflect priorities and, after three years of studying these trends, we at WRAP feel it is the right time for us to make a hypothesis. Our educated guess, or hypothesis, is that an equal distribution of housing subsidies from the federal government will have a dramatic impact on alleviating homelessness in America. We also have a related hypothesis: that an honest evaluation of corporate welfare vs. citizen's welfare will show that our government urgently needs to balance out who is getting government help before our government decides who needs life skills training. We, the people, must stay focused, not on promoting the corporate "bottom line," but on promoting "the common welfare," as it says in the preamble to the U.S. Constitution.

[Western Regional Advocacy Project is a collaboration of 8 community organizations in CA, OR, and WA. WRAP can be contacted by email at wrapsf@yahoo.com, or at 2940 16th Street, Ste. 200-2, San Francisco, CA, 94103]

Article kindly donated to the SNS by Western Regional Advocacy Project © Street News Service: www.street-papers.org

HATE CRIMES AGAINST HOMELESS PEOPLE CONTINUE

Street News Service
www.streetnewsservice.org

by Valerie Wexler

From 1999 to 2005, the number of deadly violent attacks on homeless people has gone down, from 48 in 1999 and 42 in 2000 to 13 in 2005. However, the number of non-lethal attacks on homeless people has increased more than six times — from 12 in 1999 to 80 in 2004 and 73 in 2005, according to a report released in mid-February by the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH).

Since 1999, this nonprofit homeless advocacy group has been publishing annual reports documenting hate crimes against homeless people. The report is usually released in the late spring, but because of the brutal beating of three homeless men caught on video surveillance in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on January 12, 2006, NCH moved up the date of publication of this year's report, Hate Violence and Death on Main Street USA.

"What happened in both Ft. Lauderdale can occur in any city. As long as homeless individuals are forced to live outside, they are vulnerable to these attacks," said Michael Stoops, acting executive director of NCH.

Perhaps most disturbing is who the perpetrators of these violent acts are. In 2005, the majority of those accused or convicted of attacking a homeless person were between 12 and 19 years old. In Berkeley Calif., Jarell Maurice Johnson and Derrell Morgan were charged with kicking to death a 100-pound homeless woman, Maria Catherine King, who was lying in an alley. Johnson has been quoted as saying "I really kicked her ass."

Another large majority of attacks on homeless people are perpetrated by the very people who are supposed to be there to protect them — officers of the law. In Detroit, state trooper Jay Morningstar was charged with second-degree murder in the shooting death of homeless man Eric Williams. Two other Michigan state troopers have been charged with assaulting homeless man Roosevelt Dean, Jr with chemical spray.

The report also documents a link between violent acts against homeless people and the increased criminalization of homelessness. In it, advocates from around the country affirm a relationship between municipal actions restricting the visibility of homeless people and violence against homeless people.

"It seems that disturbed violent people take a cue from their cities' response to homelessness and become emboldened if the city has portrayed homeless people as the cause of unemployment, decreasing property values, or vacant storefronts," NCH's Stoops said.

Cities in California like Healdsburg, Palo Alto, Sacramento, Santa Cruz and Ukiah have proposed or passed legislation making it illegal to sleep or camp in public. Sixteen homeless people were attacked in California, and as a result, one person died.

Some Florida cities, such as Gainesville, Miami and Ft. Myers, have or are proposing legislation that prohibits serving homeless people food on public property. Other cities in Florida are trying to reduce the visibility of their homeless populations. In Sarasota, Fla., which the NCH also determined to be the most difficult city in the country for homeless people, being homeless or "having no other place to live" is in itself grounds for arrest. Thirty-two attacks occurred in Florida, and these also resulted in one death.

These attacks might be of greater number in Florida and California, but the violence is spread across the country, including the DC Metro area. In June of 2005, a homeless man was stabbed to death in Virginia.

Reprinted from Street Sense
© Street News Service: www.street-papers.org

This is outrageous!
Everybody knows
America is a land of the
rich, by the rich and for
the rich!

How can we get any
respect if the world
sees a bunch of
throwaways lying around
on the street?

It's time we fire those
Liberal Constitutionlists
and get some low that
understands that money
is power!



Ninth Circuit Court Overturns Los Angeles Anti-homeless Ordinance

Staff Report

Los Angeles had one of the worse public space/anti-homeless ordinances in the United States. It was illegal for anyone to sit, lie or sleep on any sidewalk, curb or public way unless watching a parade. It "Was", but since April 14 the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 2 to 1 that LA's ordinance could no longer be enforced because it violated the 8th Amendment of the Constitution, being cruel and unusual punishment. Since there are more people homeless than there are shelter beds, the necessity defense was also applicable.

The court concluded, in part: "We disagree with the analysis of *Robinson* and *Powell* conducted by both the district court in *Joyce* and the district court in the case at bar. The City could not expressly criminalize the status of homelessness by making it a crime to be homeless without violating the Eighth Amendment, nor can it criminalize acts that are an integral aspect of that

status. Because there is substantial and undisputed evidence that the number of homeless persons in Los Angeles far exceeds the number of available shelter beds at all times, including on the nights of their arrest or citation, Los Angeles has encroached upon Appellants' Eighth Amendment protections by criminalizing the unavoidable act of sitting, lying, or sleeping at night while being involuntarily homeless..." [Opinion of the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturning ruling of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California, filed April 14, 2006]

The ACLU and the National Lawyers Guild represented the 8 plaintiffs that were homeless, with documentation from many more people who were punished by the ordinance. This ruling should give warning to other cities, especially in the 9th district, that criminalizing homelessness lies on very shaky grounds.

To be continued.....

Wandering Words

The Roving Reporter

I went around Friendship Park the other day and asked different people "what's going on?" "Got any complaints?" "The agencies treating you O.K.?" I received many different responses and here they are:

"A homeless person cannot get G.A. if you have no place to live. You can only get G.A. if you are living in a shelter or in a residence."

"The police took away my medicine."

Several groups of homeless came out with the same complaint: "The police won't let us rest. At the mission, they'll come along if we're sitting down and make us move. If we're at the river, they make us move on, if we're downtown, again, we have to move on. Where can we rest, we're getting exhausted. Sometimes the police will take away your belongings, other times they won't. If you're watch-

ing someone else's belongings, sometimes they will take those belongings as well."

"We need a safe zone where we can rest."

"Sometimes the police take away your shopping cart, sometimes, they don't."

Several people, men & women: "Men belonging to a gang are robbing the homeless. They are telling us that they are going to take over the streets in 2006."

"I'm happy with the Riverside Homeless Program."

"Overflow is serving a cold breakfast at 5am in the morning and there's not enough food in the evening. There are no showers at all. Some of the people are mentally ill and they piss on themselves and we have to smell this. There is no boiler, no hot water, we wash our hands in ice cold water. A certain staff person threatens to send the clients out

in the cold in taxis if they complain that they didn't get enough to eat or if they complain about anything. It's very cold in the holding area. If it rains, we can go in the tin warehouse which is very cold. There is no heat provided at all. Last night there were 3 busloads of people, around 120, very near maximum."

"I need housing. I need Section 8."

"I was here in 1995 and came back in April of this year. Nothing's changed. The park has too many bullshit artists from Hotel California."

"I just arrived from Phoenix, Arizona and I would like to know if it's legal or illegal to set up a tent here."

"I need a place to live"

"I'm homeless and the cops won't leave us alone. They like to f--- with us even though it's raining. They give us camping tickets and tell us to move on even

though they know that we have nowhere to go. It just eats me up thinking about it. This is a serious issue."

"Two policemen took me to jail and towed my truck away saying that it was not registered even though there was a temporary registration sticker on the truck. One of them told me that he had to teach me a lesson for hanging around with the wrong people. I had just arrived in town and stopped to talk to some people on the streets. I don't think that this was right."

"People are crazy here at Friendship Park."

"In the men's bathroom, one of the sinks is cracked at the corner and is a safety issue. We need mirrors so that we can shave".

These comments were made about Friendship Park itself. "I have watched Friendship Park grow from a small courtyard to this big park. It's good." "Don't make it a career." "Don't give up

on yourself." "We need to remind them that there is another way to live other than Friendship Park." "People get too caught up in it." "Be kind to fellow people." "Don't be selfish."

"Hold off the rain."

"Turn off the air conditioner"

"It's icy cold riding a bike in this weather."

"The library closes from 11 to 12 because the librarian has to go to lunch. She needs a relief because we all have to leave the library when she leaves."

"Buffalo Bill will come and take your stuff whenever he feels like it."

"Do the Park Rangers have the right to take your stuff? I want to know because they do this."

[The opinions expressed are the free speech of those who made the remarks and has nothing to do with Leaves & Fiches staff or policy.]

Maryland Proposes to Protect Homeless Under Hate Crimes Law

Street News Service www.streetnewsservice.org

by David S Hammond,
Valerie Wexler

A bill now in the Maryland state Senate would seek to more firmly deter attacks against homeless people by adding them to those protected under the state's hate crimes law.

"It's a statement of a society's values — it's a statement about ... who is it in our society that is entitled to those types of protections," said Robert Nasdor, legal director of Baltimore's Homeless Persons Representation Project.

"Hate crimes" laws stiffen the existing penalties for violent crimes in which an attack is motivated by bias. Maryland law currently offers this enhanced protection to victims targeted because of race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and national origin.

The bill, introduced by state Sen. Alex X. Mooney (R-Frederick) at the beginning of March, is the first bill in any state to propose protecting homeless persons under the hate crimes law.

This bill comes in the wake of several high-profile attacks. In January teens beat a homeless man to death in Fort Lauderdale, and in early March a homeless man was brutally beaten and set on fire in Boston and someone videotaped a beating of a homeless man in San Francisco. Last year, there were 86 reported acts of violence against homeless persons in 22 states, resulting in 73 injuries and 13 deaths.

Michael Stoops, the acting executive director of the National Coalition for the Homeless, supports the bill and said that he thinks the bill has a chance. "I think because of the national stuff happening it gives the bill some momentum," he said.

Perhaps because the most recent publicized attack on a homeless person in Maryland was more than four years ago, Maryland's homeless people feel safe.

Outreach workers in Frederick County report a history of low-level harassment — sometimes simple vandalism of homeless camps in wooded areas, but sometimes more sinister. Todd Johnson, who coordinates homeless services for Frederick Community Action, said he knows of about a dozen fires at such camps in the last 16 years.

"We don't know if it's done maliciously, if it's homeless-on-homeless, poor-on-poor, or wilding gangs," he said, adding that there have been too many to ignore. "Lots of people double up or triple up in a camp. They watch each other's back, and there are very few lone campers."

In Baltimore, homeless people do not report the fear of being targeted as a primary concern. Bigger concerns are street crime and homeless-on-homeless crime — mostly theft and the occasional minor assault. But the city is seen as a far more dangerous place than are Maryland's suburbs and rural areas. Several homeless men sleep near the Camden Yards baseball stadium because the security cameras give them a feeling of safety. And while the police presence downtown and near the Inner Harbor brings more enforcement of laws against panhandling and other activities, it is also thought to scare away anyone meaning to harm homeless people.

Elsewhere in the city, homeless people find shelter in more isolated spots, such as abandoned buildings. Those places may be too scary or remote for attackers seeking easy targets.

Still, whatever the motivation, attacks on homeless people are not unheard of. One Baltimore man reported having been beaten a few times by groups of young men. And another homeless man, who uses a wheelchair, said he remembered seeing a crowd of young men, who looked like they were "up to no good," approaching him. One of the crowd called off the group because of the wheelchair.

It's this kind of fear, and this kind of incident, that the Senate bill's supporters say they hope to discourage. Adding homeless people to Maryland's hate crimes law would help address this concern, supporters say, because state authorities are directed to report and track incidents covered by the law. And that, said Nasdor, would in itself send a powerful message.

"It's not just about enhanced criminal penalties," he said. "What we're talking about are the full rights of citizenship, and that homeless people shouldn't be treated any differently than anybody else."

The tracking provision, Nasdor said, could help Maryland know the scope of the problem. And supporters hope that establishing a vigorous and reliable police response would help break down the distrust homeless people often feel for law enforcement.

You can learn more about Senate Bill 539 by going to <http://mlis.state.md.us/>.

(Dan Andersen conducted research for this story.)

Reprinted from Street Sense
© Street News Service: www.streetpapers.org

Caesar Chavez March

By Ed

I approached the longshoremen's halt with excitement, wondering if this event is going to take place despite the rain. We were attending the protest march on Caesar Chavez Day 2006. Some states are now passing their own laws concerning immigration. While remaining constitutional we may agree or disagree with some of these ordinances. Lawmakers seem to be placing the issue of economics first, stating if legal do not pay their share of taxes while working here in the United States.

Illegal aliens mainly enter this country for economic opportunities not available in their native countries. They often work for sub-standard wages and living condition, yet they seem satisfied and are able to support families here and abroad.

Leading the march are 3 horsemen, followed by an assortment of banners, particularly from union organizations. Supposedly the 2nd largest march that day was here in Sacramento. There were more than 5,000 participants.

Among the participants were Mexican/Indian dancers and a union organization from San Francisco demonstrating their talents throughout the entire walk. Familiar phrases were chanted by groups large and small, in particular "Si Se Puede (Yes We Can)".

The march ended at Caesar Chavez Plaza where many people spoke before this large audience, where there were tables throughout the park with literature as well as food vendors.

This is evidence we can join together and accomplish common goals. What we need are more activities as a group like this, as well as individuals willing to come forward and make our views and opinions known to those who make the decisions that affect all our lives.

Humanity?

Street News Service www.streetnewsservice.org

Real Change News
Staff Writer

Many people in the world make it part of their religion to tout the Glories of Humankind. Humankind, also stupidly called Man, as if the half that birthed and suckled it never existed, is supposed to be created in God's image. We are supposed to be the Pinnacle of Creation. Our Superior Intelligence is presented as one proof of this alleged fact.

Yes, we are undeniably the most intelligent species on this planet, when we have had our coffee. But we humans also account for all the most grievous stupidity that inflicts Earth, and the total amount of stupid human behavior outweighs the total amount of actual intelligent human behavior by at least a factor of ten, in both the amount of behavior generated and in the consequences incurred.

If a creature is a genius one hour every day, but throughout the remainder of the day the same creature is so stupid it can't figure out how to exist without persistently contributing significantly to the successful ongoing dismantling of the biosphere of a planet 40 million meters in circumference, then that creature is — in sum total — dreadfully pathetically, and laughably stupid.

If we were created in God's image, then God is stupider than the dodo. The dodo only managed to get itself extinct by being so stupid as to trust human beings. Humans are so stupid as to be utterly untrustworthy even toward defenseless dodos. That's stupid, and if it continues, humans will not only be as extinct as dodos already are, but they will have made of themselves much bigger jackasses in the course of becoming so, by taking down everybody else around them in the process

except for an assortment of lucky germs and insects.

This rant is brought to you by a man typing in the morning of March 20, 2006, contemplating the third anniversary of the start of the Iraq War, a war which was never urgently necessary whose "victory" is costing more than \$80,000,000,000 a year, not counting deaths, anguish, and other mere secondary costs.

This rant also comes from a guy who regularly hears people in the local homeless service community, some of them exceptionally intelligent people, when they have had their coffee, say that we need to practice "triage" to solve homelessness in King County and the rest of the country.

French wool traders used "triage" to mean "choose" or "select." Napoleon's surgeon used it in a medical context to describe the

systematic prioritization of the battle-wounded for medical care, under emergency conditions, when there is a shortage of medical resources, in the form of personnel, supplies, space, or time.

Where is the shortage of resources to solve homelessness, in the form of personnel, supplies, space, or time, in a country that can afford an Iraq War at more than \$80,000,000,000 a year for three or for 10 years, or however long it may take, whenever it feels itself in the freaking mood?

The ridiculousness of the situation we find ourselves in was brought home to me yesterday afternoon. I was waiting for a bus in front of the King County Courthouse. As the bus approached, a young man walked across the street to my side, slowly and steadily directly in the path of the oncoming bus.

deliberately forcing the driver to brake for him 40 feet before the stop, endangering the safety of the passengers on board.

The man got on the bus, and the driver asked him why he had walked in front of her bus. His defiant answer was, "I have a Purple Heart."

That pretty much summed up the stupidity of the situation we're in. Question: Why are we squandering our nation's resources in Iraq? Answer: 9-11. It's our country's collective Purple Heart, and in our collective stupidity it justifies any and all cowardly recklessness.

We are thus so much a part of Humanity.

Reprinted from Real Change News © Street News Service: www.streetpapers.org

Katrina

continued from page 2

and unemployed."

Poor people were hardest hit and are having the hardest time returning. "The population of the damaged areas was nearly half black (45.8% compared to 26.4% black in the rest of the region), living in rental housing (45.7% compared to 30.9%), and disproportionately below the poverty line (20.9% compared to 15.3%)." Renters are not coming back because there is little affordable housing. With tens of thousands of homes damaged, the cost of renting has skyrocketed. An apartment down the block from my house rented for \$600 last summer - it now rents for \$1400. Trailers have not arrived because of federal, state and local political misjudgments. Over 10,000 trailers were still sitting unused on runways in Hope, Arkansas in February 2006. In my interviews with evacuees who were renters, few were protected by any insurance - most lost everything.

The little reconstruction that has started is aimed at home-owners. Louisiana is slated to receive \$6.2 billion in Community Development Block Grant money and the Governor says \$1 billion "could be used to encourage the rebuilding of affordable housing." So with 45% of the homes damaged occupied by renters, affordable housing "could" end up with 16% of the assistance.

Public housing is politically out of the question in early 2006. There is no national or local commitment to reopening public housing in the city. U.S. Congressman Richard Baker a longtime critic of public housing in New Orleans, was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* after the storm saying "We finally cleaned up in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did." As the Brown study politely observed "people who previously lived in public housing seem to have the least chances to return, given current policy. All public housing has been closed (and special barriers bolted to the doors) plans for reopening the projects or for constructing new affordable housing have not become public."

Debbie lost her nursing job when her hospital failed to reopen. She is not alone. There are now 200,000 fewer

jobs in the area than in August.

When I teach about the working poor I tell my students to look for the working poor at the bus stops in the morning and in the evening. The working poor have not returned. As the Brookings Institution Katrina Index tells us pre-Katrina public transportation in New Orleans averaged 124,000 riders per week; in January 2006 there were 11,709 a week, only 9% of the pre-storm number.

The sick are not likely to return anytime soon. Healthcare in New Orleans is now difficult even for those with insurance but nearly impossible for the poor without it. While there were 22 hospitals open in New Orleans in June, in early 2006 there were 7, a 76% reduction. Before Katrina there were 53,000 hospital beds in the area, in February 2006 there were 15,000 - waits of more than 8 hours in emergency rooms are not uncommon. With so many hospitals closed, people needing regular medical care like dialysis or chemotherapy cannot expect to return. Worse still for the poor there is no public hospital in New Orleans any more - the Charity Hospital that over 50% of the people in shelters went to has not been reopened.

Many of the disabled are still in the areas where they evacuated to, causing financial and medical concerns in those states. Others of the disabled, who lived at home prior to the evacuation, fear being institutionalized. Children have not returned to New Orleans. Most public schools remain closed or have been converted into charter schools. Before the storm there were 117 public schools with 60,000 students. In January 2006, there were 19 open, including 8 new charter schools, serving about 13,000 students. Houston alone has nearly 20,000 evacuated students. The failure to reopen public schools in New Orleans has prompted litigation to force the charter and public schools to accept children.

Prisoners have again been left behind. Some of those evacuated were kept in jail long after their sentences had run. Only 7 of 42 public defenders have returned to represent the thousands

still held in jail.

Even among homeowners, it is much more likely that white homeowners will have the chance to rebuild than black homeowners because of deep patterns of racial disparities in income - white median income is \$61,000 compared to black income of \$25,000. Black businesses were severely impacted by Katrina. Rebuilding by homeowners in mostly black low-lying neighborhoods is much less likely at the time of the writing of this article because of bulldozing plans by the city and because rebuilding in those areas depends heavily on planning and homeowners insurance and flood insurance issues, many of which have yet to be resolved. As a result, because renters, poor people and those without work are overwhelmingly African-American, "New Orleans is at risk of losing 80% of its black population."

"New Orleans is not going to be as black as it was for a long time, if ever again," Alphonso Jackson, the secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, told a Houston audience. Recall some of the characteristics of people who ended up in shelters, then compare to the situation currently in New Orleans:

- 64% were renters - now rents have skyrocketed and public housing is mostly closed;
- 22% had to care for someone who was physically unable to leave - now there are many fewer hospital beds;
- 52% had no health insurance - now the main center of public healthcare is closed;
- 76% had children under 18 with them in the shelter - most public schools are closed;
- 93% were black - the areas hit hardest were black and poor;
- 67% were employed full or part-time before the hurricane - there are now 200,000 fewer jobs than before the hurricane.

The people left behind in the rebuilding of New Orleans are the poor the sick, the elderly, the disabled, children, and prisoners, mostly African-American. Again left behind. The tele-

vision showed who was left behind in the evacuation of New Orleans after Katrina. There is no similar easy visual for those who are left behind now but they are the same people.

Conclusion

There is not a sign outside of New Orleans saying "If you are poor sick, elderly, disabled, children or African-American, you cannot return."

But there might as well be.

The people left behind in the evacuation of New Orleans after Katrina are the same people left behind in rebuilding of New Orleans - the poor the sick, the elderly, the disabled, and children, mostly African-American.

Now that we are back from Houston, Debbie has just started a new job at another hospital. I am fortunate enough to work at one of the universities which was not severely physically damaged by the storm and floods.

We are back. But where are our neighbors, the people we rode out of the city with? Where are the hundreds of thousands of our neighbors and will they ever be allowed to return?

Where is New Orleans now and more importantly, where is it going to be?

Finally, if all levels of government and corporate power allow this to happen in New Orleans, do you think it will be any different in your city?

Bill Quigley is a civil and human rights lawyer and Professor of Law at Loyola University New Orleans School of Law. He donated this story to the Street News Service. All opinions held in the article are the author's you can reach him at Quigley@loyno.edu

BANDAG RETREADING • TRUCK TIRE SALES & SERVICE
ALUMINUM WHEEL POLISHING

 **RELIABLE TIRE**
BUY FINE THINGS OUR SERVICE



**SMITTY'S PALLET
SERVICE**

537 Houston Street West Sacramento CA 95831

Elveine Smith
Owner

(209) 367-2642 Office
(916) 375-8620 Yard
(916) 375-2852 Fax

EXECUTIVE
AIR REPAIR

COMPLETE AIRCRAFT
REPAIR & RESTORATION
CERTIFIED REPAIR STATION #C54D419N



6273 Freeport Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95822

Phone: 916-421-6756
Fax: 916-421-6267

www.executiveairrepair.com

JUST TO HAVE GOD

I had pain
 I had hardship
 I had rain
 I have been hated
 I have been beaten
 I have been lied to
 I have been lost
 I have been discarded
 I have been looked over
 I have been betrayed
 I have been laughed at
 I have been broke
 I had to surrender
 But in the end
 I have been saved, now
 I can have hope
 I can have courage
 I can have forgiveness
 I can have love
 I can have strength
 I can have power
 I can have worth
 I can have dependance
 I can have brotherhood
 I can have service
 I can have life
 I had to lose it all
 Just to have God

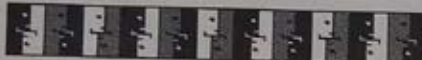
BY TOE

Yellow

The paper says we're on yellow alert
 Whatever the hell that means.
 Yellow roses draping caskets say good-bye
 To soldiers in their teens.
 Some may call you yellow
 If you wait fight their war.
 But war is just a lemon,
 And your King bananas to his core.
 Pull the cardboard yellow ribbons
 From the bumpers of your cars.
 Put them back where they belong
 Tied in your front yards.
 "Yellow ribbons, old oak trees"
 Welcome your soldier home,
 Coast to coast and house to house
 From Miami to Nome.
 Hugs and Kisses, tears of joy
 Then to the roof to bellow
 You can keep your stupid war!
 I am proud to be yellow!

Laughing Tree
 3-11-2006

[quoted remarks from song
 "Tie a Yellow Ribbon"]



FATGROCER'S

**Ride
 Against
 Hunger**



Keith stopped by the Homeward office on his way through Sacramento on March 30th. According to his blog, on April 19th, he was in Chico, CA. - HW Ed

My name is Keith Stahr and I am formerly a grocer. I will be riding across the United States in the hopes of raising awareness and money for programs that address hunger in local communities. I am 35 years old, with a round belly, surrounded by many people who think that crossing the states on bicycle is too ambitious. I am not a professional bicyclist, and I am not an accomplished athlete. This journey is one in which I hope to do some good.

My desire is to raise money for organizations like our very successful Sacred Heart Community Service in San Jose, CA. As a grocer that stocked shelves in the mornings, I would climb on my bike to help bag produce at Sacred Heart in the afternoons for families in need. Part of my motivation stems from the frustration of witnessing my fellow employees

at grocery stores that have to go to food pantry programs themselves. Those that need help are part of our community, our friends, our neighbors, our co-workers. While there are no simple solutions, the grassroots programs around the United States are a model and inspiration for addressing hunger wherever it exists.

I have a good bike, a special trailer, a roadmap, and a purpose. I hope to raise some money and I am asking for your help. I am encouraging folks to ask themselves what my effort is worth. I do not have an answer to this question. Some have pledged a contribution to my effort by the mile, some by the month, some by the state. My weblog www.fatgrocer.blogspot.com will document my journey and will highlight opportunities to donate.

Thank you, Keith Stahr

FLIGHT THE BITE!



**Protect
 Yourself and
 Your Family
 from West
 Nile Virus**

DRAIN

Mosquitoes lay their eggs and grow in standing water. Empty water from buckets, old tires, flower pots and toys, and change water from pet bowls and bird baths every few days.

DUSK AND DAWN

Mosquitoes bite in the early morning and evening. Protect yourself by wearing long sleeved shirts and pants, and use insect repellent.

DEET

Use insect repellent with DEET in it. DEET keeps mosquitoes from biting you. Follow the directions carefully.

THE ILLNESS

Many people who are infected with WNV have no symptoms. Approximately 15% will develop a flu-like illness with fever, headache, nausea, body aches, skin rash, or swollen lymph nodes. About 1% of those who get sick will develop the severe form similar to meningitis or encephalitis. The elderly and immunocompromised are particularly susceptible to the severe form of the illness, which can be fatal.

ANIMALS

An infected mosquito can bite any animal, but not all animals will become infected. Horses, emus and ostriches become ill at about the same rate as humans, while cats and dogs generally do not get the disease. The most severe illnesses are seen among the corvid birds, which include crows, jays, ravens, and magpies. American crows constitute the majority of birds reported dead due to WNV. Stay away from dead birds, as they may be contagious. The Department of Health Services is tracking dead birds, if you want to call about any suspicious fatalities.

For more information:
<http://www.westnile.ca.gov>

To report dead birds:
 1-877-WNV-BIRD (968-2473)

For Mosquito abatement:
 Sac-Yolo Mosquito and Vector Control District
 1-800-429-1022

Information from California Department of Health Services

Frame Repair & Straightening
 Suspension Repairs
 Wreck Rebuilding
 Trailer Repairs
 Wheel Aligning & Balancing
 Steering Gears & Systems
 Axle Straightening
 Maintenance

BEE LINE
 ALIGNMENT SYSTEMS

TERMINAL TRUCK SERVICE
 971 F Street • West Sacramento, CA 95605

OWNER (916) 371-1380
 MELVIN GARRISON FAX (916) 371-2822

MANAGER
 LLOYD HUSTRIE

Obituary: The list was not available for this issue.