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Homelessness on the rise in Washington D.C. Area

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By John Stauffer
Street Sense, USA

The homeless population in the D.C. region surpassed the 12,000 mark in 2006, and while the number of homeless families dropped 5%, the number of individuals increased more than 20% across the region.

These numbers come from the recently released 2006 Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Homeless Enumeration Report, prepared by the Homeless Services Planning and Coordinating Committee and based on a one-day count on Jan. 25, 2006.

Despite the increases, some find hope in these numbers. "As large as the number in this report is, it is not so daunting when we consider that it means less than 3 in 1,000 of all people living in the region are homeless, and this is a problem we can solve," said Stephen Cleghorn, an author of the report and member of the Homeless Services Planning and Coordinating Committee.

Still, in the District alone the number of homeless people totals 6,157, or

more than 1 in 100, compared with the city's entire population.

Outside of the District, Fairfax County had the largest homeless population, with 1,766 individuals. And despite improvements made in many of the Northern Virginia jurisdictions, Loudoun County reported a full 100% increase from two years ago. The Maryland suburbs likewise saw a negative rise, with double-digit percent increases in Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

Those increases may reflect the level of resources and not necessarily an increase in suburban homelessness itself, explained Michael Ferrell, executive director for the D.C. Coalition for the Homeless. Essentially, more available beds equates to more persons recorded in the yearly count. An increase in resources in the suburban counties shows that "people can become unemployed in the suburbs just as easily as they do in the District," Ferrell said. "Homeless persons in the suburbs face the same set of circumstances as the homeless in the city."

And across the region

when it came to homeless individuals versus families, the trends were notably divergent. In the District alone, individual homelessness increased 14% over the past two years, while persons in families had decreased by 8% over the same time period. In Montgomery County, the inequality proved even more extreme: individual homelessness increased 38.6% while the number of homeless families in the region decreased by 12.1%.

"There is always more empathy for families than there is for single adults," said Michael Stoops, Executive Director of the National Coalition for the Homeless. "Generally, services are better and more professional for families than single individuals."

Homeless families also work their way through a "centralized and coordinated system of resources," Ferrell said. The first question that agencies will ask families on the verge of homelessness is "What can we do to prevent this?" he explained. "Is there an outstanding bill, a late rent check or something else?" Those types of preventative resources are offered

less to individuals, a lack that may explain the disparities in the numbers, he added.

Additionally, all homeless families are directed to one organization, the Virginia William Family Resource Center located in the District. It serves as the central intake office for all families requesting emergency housing and assistance in the region. There, families receive unified resources and attention. Individuals, on the other hand, face a decentralized system of agencies threaded throughout the regions' nine jurisdictions.

The apparent disparity between the level of care for persons in families and the type offered to individuals, however, may stem in part from the methodology of the enumeration report itself, according to Darlene Mathews, Policy Analyst for the Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness.

She said that recent policy changes within the Department of Housing and Urban Development have required that the COG now use the federally mandated Homeless Management

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Information System (HMIS). The result of this new tool, Matthews added, may show increases in homelessness across the board because of improved counting methods and increased cohesion among the region's agencies, not necessarily because of an increase in the number of actual homeless persons.

The HMIS system has been at different stages of development, but 2006 is the first year it has been fully implemented. "We have more cohesion with other agencies as well as improved counting methods," said Matthews. "We worked with HUD to develop [HMIS], and D.C. was one of the first agencies to implement it."

In 2003, in an effort to obtain more reliable collection methods, HUD required that all publicly funded shelters use this system in the creation of homelessness enumeration reports.

The report is more than a yearly snapshot of the regions' homeless population. It also serves as a guide for HUD in determining where federal resources are allocated.

"The reports are a good guide for HUD, and it's easier for us to make a stronger argument in terms of the resources we need," said Michael Ferrell. "They [HUD] do pay attention to enumeration reports. It does have a bearing on how the federal government allocates resources."

Nationally, as more American cities fully adopt the HMIS, the

numbers will become more comparable among regions. "These reports all have a shelf life of less than a year," cautioned Stoops, who also conceded, "at least now there's a coordinated attempt to quantify the problem."

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D.C: Protecting the Downtown Shelter Network

Street News Service www.streetnewsservice.org

By David S. Hammond
Street Sense, USA

With shelter closings in the last year and the trend to build new facilities on the outskirts of the city, homeless service providers are worried that there will soon be a shortfall of emergency shelter beds in the downtown area. But, with new initiatives from Mayor Williams and the City Council, they say there is a chance to improve the planning process and prevent gaps.

"You see people downtown because that's where the jobs are, and that's where the bus lines run," said homelessness activist Cheryl Barnes. Like Barnes, homeless people say that the downtown area is much more accessible than other parts of the city with the presence of meal programs, Metro stops and other needs, all of which can be covered on foot. There is also a sense that it is safer than many other parts of the city.

But changes in shelter space around the District have raised fears that downtown shelter space may not be secure.

The Gales School shelter near Union Station in Northwest closed in 2003 and has not yet reopened. The Randall shelter, off South Capitol street in Southwest, closed in 2004. Trailer-based shelters in Northeast and Southeast closed last year – moves widely praised as a step towards better quality shelter.

Emergency shelter, near North Capitol street in Northeast, may be moving from emergency to transitional beds, and the future of the Franklin School shelter near Franklin Square in Northwest is still being debated.

Meanwhile, the city has opened two large new shelters – one on New York Avenue, NE in 2003, and one at "801 East" on the campus of St. Elizabeth's in Anacostia in 2004.

Still, District government officials say keeping shelter beds downtown remains the city's goal.

"We all agree we should have some emergency shelter

beds downtown," said Lynn French, a senior advisor on homelessness in the Williams administration. "I do believe it is the city's duty to provide beds. To the extent that we're providing shelter to save lives, and we know that many of the homeless people with the most severe issues are in the downtown area, we need beds downtown."

But, she added, "On a larger scale, I do not believe that we owe specific locations to people."

That is where the debate begins – with the questions of where, and when, beds will be provided. But given the condition of some stopgap shelter facilities, time is something the city has not always had. "Gales was in jeopardy of collapsing, and we had to close it," French said.

Funding is also a big issue. "The first consideration is money – so we're limited to places we own" for emergency shelter. "There was a time the city owned more properties," she said, "but now, we don't have places." And when the city shops for property, she said, it often loses out to commercial buyers.

French cited a very tight real estate market. In Columbia Heights, the La Casa shelter must relocate while a new shelter is built. "So the challenge now is, where do we go?" French said.

Meanwhile, the new shelters on New York Avenue and at 801 East offer improved

living conditions, and more of the services like counseling that advocates and homeless people have long requested – but far from downtown.

A city shuttle bus circulates in and near downtown, including the old Randall shelter. It carries men to 801 East and will keep running after the winter season. Bus transport is also available to the women's shelter at D.C. General in Southeast.

However, these services are the subject of debate. "The most vulnerable people don't normally go in" to any shelter outreach worker Mary Ann Luby of the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless said. "So I don't think people will go to 801 East. Negotiating getting there, even though there's transport, and getting back, are things that don't come easily for them."

City officials maintain that the shuttles are a success. And the city's hypothermia vans, as well as public and private outreach efforts, are also widely credited with connecting people who live on the street to shelter. High occupancy rates at the new shelters show that these offers are finding takers.

Calls for better and more certain downtown shelter continue, and with increasing urgency. Catholic Community Services (formerly Catholic Charities), a major provider of homeless services, is calling for significant increases in the availability of shelter including downtown.

Improved long-term, broad-focus planning may be on its way. The Homeless Services Reform Act that Mayor Williams approved last year will establish an Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) including city officials, service providers, and advocates. This is a much more organized effort than past years when participants in planning for homeless services held scattered meetings, forums and working groups all with changing membership, agendas, and goals. The ICH might put an end to that, homeless advocates say.

"It could be a link in the chain to hold all the parties together," said Barnes. "Hopefully it will be able to keep things on a level line where they're not juggled too much."

The fact that the ICH will be chaired by the city administrator, said Washington Legal Clinic head Patty Fugere, could give it the authority it needs, and shelter space and the city's neediest people the priority they deserve.

"It has the potential to create a vehicle for far more humane planning," Luby said. "The bottom line is that economic development always wins out, and economic development only benefits a portion of the city. I think you have to have a will at the very highest part of the government."

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INTERVIEW: TRADE SECRETS

Street News Service www.streetnewsservice.org

by Adam Hyla
Real Change News, USA

How does a movement succeed? By taking risks, winning the friendship of unlikely allies, and allowing people with no political power to find their voice. In England in the latter part of the 18th century, a group committed to outlawing the trade in human beings from Africa innovated such methods as it mounted the first successful mass movement in western history — against an institution that enriched some of their country's most venerable institutions, including the Anglican Church.

As they invented new symbols of protest, like the campaign button, England's abolitionists set interesting precedents for the great freedom movements of the 20th century, says Adam Hochschild, author of *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (Mariner Books, 2006). A founding editor of *Mother Jones*, Hochschild was in Seattle this spring to read from the paperback version of *Bury the Chains*.

RC: Did you have any particular movement or issues from today in mind when you began the book?

Hochschild: Not specifically, though I was involved in civil rights issues earlier in my life. I was a civil rights worker in Mississippi in 1964 and I was very much involved in the movement against the Vietnam War. I think that gave me a much greater appreciation of these folks, who did this pioneering social movement 200 years ago.

One thing that has been very moving and interesting for me to see is as I have traveled around promoting the book at libraries, college campuses, bookstores, there is always one, two, three activists in the audience. I know who they are because one of them always asks a really nuts-and-bolts question, like "Tell me about the antislavery movement's fundraising." There have been people from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, environmental groups of various sorts, the campaign against

land mines, and of course people working against the war in Iraq.

RC: And all of those have parallels to the movement you write about, in that we're talking about something happening very far away.

Hochschild: Yes. That's something that is interesting about these folks: that they drew the connection between the near and the distant, which is important for any kind of political work that needs to be done today. If you're going to talk about the war, about globalization, about anything that is so far off you have to make connections.

RC: Did you start out with any assumptions about what the antislavery movement was and what it changed to?

Hochschild: You only assume that a movement like this was incredibly noble. When you get into it you find the divisions, the fissures, the warts. Those were interesting to me: the tremendous difference in political outlook between Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce. [Clarkson was the chief spokesman for the abolitionists' cause; Wilberforce was a Minister of Parliament who sponsored antislavery legislation.] Clarkson was a radical in the terms of the day, a lover of the French Revolution — a little naive, since at the time they were lopping off people's heads — but in every other respect a lover of all kinds of good things: labor unions, rights for women. Wilberforce was a terrible reactionary on everything other than slavery; he felt labor unions were a terrible thing and that women should stay in their place. But the fact that these guys were able to be good friends and work together for more than half a century was to me really remarkable. I think we can take some lessons from that: you know, you have to practice coalition politics if you're going to get anywhere.

RC: Does any contemporary movement bear a resemblance to the antislavery movement?

Hochschild: Many of them are similar in that they conceive

of a problem on an international scale. In a way it's easier when you have one institution, like slavery, that is unquestionably evil. One of the pressing problems with globalization is to make it benefit poor countries instead of being set up so they fall farther behind. But that's an enormously complicated problem about which reasonable people can disagree. It's a vastly more complex thing than slavery.

RC: There are economic arguments that the pro-slavery forces used that we can recognize today: that ending this trade would tear at the economic vitality of the British Empire. And there's a point where things kind of flip: where someone in a debate can openly scoff at that idea.

Hochschild: Yes, there was a man in Parliament that said that saying the docks of Liverpool would go to waste is like a highway robber man saying "I've got these horses that are only meant to be used to rob gentlemen and can't be used for any other purpose." He was saying to the ship owners, "You know, your ships could be used for something besides carrying human beings."

RC: What brought them to that point? Was it a change in the public will?

Hochschild: I think that was the most powerful thing. Public opinion was so totally behind this movement — not totally, since some people were making a living off this trade, in the ports of Bristol and Liverpool it was never popular — but the overwhelming mass of public opinion was very much behind this movement. Less than 5 percent of the population could vote, even after the great reforms of the 1830s the voting population was still pretty small. Even in countries that aren't complete democracies, people in power don't want to do something that's clearly against the will of the majority.

I think that was a key thing that made the change, as well as the huge slave revolts in the West Indies, particularly in Jamaica in 1831-1832, the biggest one ever to take place in a British territory.

More than 20,000 slaves were involved in it; more than 500 of them ended up dead. I think I quote some of the military officers who came back to London from the fighting and testified before Parliament, saying "These things are going to keep on happening and next time we might not be able to suppress it."

RC: It seems like the people's threat to destroy property also played a role in moving things forward.

Hochschild: One of the basic things about living in a democracy is you have to be able to find a variety of ways to light a fire under elected officials. If we look at some of the movements that have succeeded in history in forcing change, a lot of them have involved massive civil disobedience: the civil rights movement here, for example. I think those tools have to be there, they have to be available.

RC: Tell me what you think the effect of the "deliberate forgetting" of some of the movement's important figures was. I'm thinking of Elizabeth Heyrick, who was a strong passionate voice for immediate abolition.

Hochschild: And a wonderful pamphleteer. To read her pamphlets is to read the work of somebody who is just on fire with a burning desire for justice. We don't even have a picture of her today, just have her pamphlets and the accounts of others who wrote about how influential they were at the time.

It's interesting to see who is remembered and who is forgotten in these movements. The one who's endlessly remembered is Wilberforce, because he's such an attractive and unthreatening character who doesn't draw attention to anything like the slave revolts or to this large and occasionally unruly mass popular movement.

RC: You describe this meeting he has with another politician, who advises him on the subject of abolition: "You should occupy this ground before someone else takes it." How much of his long career working on this is

about opportunism —

Hochschild: — and how much is conviction? Well, I hesitate to judge him too harshly on this, because we all do things for a great mixture of motives. Egotism, the desire to occupy some ground before somebody else does, often plays a role in the actions of the most noble, the most apparently self-sacrificing of people. I imagine he's not too different from most human beings in having a mixture of motives.

RC: Can you pick the one most brilliant move on the abolition movement's part?

Hochschild: Their openness to new methods of getting their message across. They faced the problem of how do we ignite the outrage that we think is there about slavery. They used every new technique they could find: scale models of slave ships, distributing posters everywhere, one thing after another like that. Getting poet friends to write ballads that were sold on street corners. No one ever said, "We can't do this because it's never been done before." The kneeling slaves in chains: that logo was the first logo specifically designed for a political organization.

RC: There are so many parallels in this story to contemporary social movements. What do you think is different now?

Hochschild: I think the information glut we live in forces people to act differently. You can't say that there's no information easily available about almost any form of injustice in the world. About Darfur, for instance. Because it's there on your computer, just a few clicks away. I think that there is an increasing problem of people getting fatigued with the glut of information we have about war, poverty, injustice, whatever. So, how to operate in a world where that is the case — where you can no longer have the abolitionists' faith that if you just tell people the truth, then they'll act? That's what makes it harder.

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A Homeless Human Being (Part 3): *Living in today*

by Toe

Well, it's been awhile since my last article. My life is diferent today. There's hope, joy, and pain. But I'm alive today by the grace of God. It's hard for me to talk about today's stuff. I've always found it hard to express my day-to-day feelings, and now I'm sharing those with you, the public. What a change.

Well, I've talked to you about being homeless. Now I'm going to talk to you about the process of getting out of homelessness and how I'm doing something to change the way I feel, think, the way I'm changing my profession, surrendering the old me that was into going to the closet for a whole new way of life.

My hope is to touch each and every one of you who reads this article. I want us to understand that we are all one in the spirit, rather than looking at each other from our own eyes. I hope I can touch those feelings that we have inside of us all to see that I'm in you and you are in me. We have a responsibility to Love one another, rather than just trying to get that better job so that we feel better than the next guy or girl.

We have to break down those walls and false faces we have created, or we can never really fly to our true highs that God

wants for us. We have to look at each other from our hearts, this is the place where God lives inside of us. If I can start looking from my heart, then I will start acting with a God-like view. This I have found to be the hardest thing to maintain. I have to keep filtering out those things that block me from seeing through Gods eyes.

In a way, when I'm seeing through God's eyes my thoughts are on others rather than myself. I feel that what happens to you, happens to me. In this state of mind, I can't possibly harm you. There can be only love. In this is what Jesus said and meant when he said to love thy brother like you love yourself. So please see me through your heart. Understand when you see a homeless person on the street, there is more to that person than you see with your eyes. If you look at him with your heart, that is when you will see the responsibility to love your brother as you love yourself. That's where the riches of life are. This is where your true self lives. This is were God lives. Someone once said that evil lives when good men and woman say and do nothing.

The first thing I had to do is find a safe place to live. I knocked on a few doors. Some answered. I found the right place after a few set backs. This took me about a month

and a half. For the first 30 days I took care of the things that I needed to do. Like seeing the doctors for my knee, and GA, so I could pay my rent and feed myself. With the time I had, after two or three weeks I had completed my step work. This helped me through the room mates and the diferent personalities that some people find hard to be around. But I just stayed focused on me, and the reasons that I was there, which was to develop a new life. I had to be patient. But I found that through my downfalls, I don't care any more what others thought about me. It's all how I feel about myself. There's a freedom in being honest with ones self and others. Self-acceptance is the key to freedom for me from that closet I've spoken of.

While taking care of my knee and waiting to go to surgery I started looking into going back to college. I listed some of the things that I might be interested in. Looking into financial aid, seeing what was available to me. Well, I decided that I will start in the fall. That will give me enough time to get things in order, plus make sure that my head has cleared up. It's kind of scary, but when I look back I was always good at school, so I really don't have any grounds for fear I can do this.

As far as getting all that was needed to go back to school, I'm not done yet, but I've done all I can for the moment. My surgery went well. I had to stay in bed for 10 days. That was hard to do. I'm now waiting to go to therapy.

While I've been waiting for therapy, things are getting hard for me. The place that I'm

staying is a self-development program, and the people and personalities are different. Some have a problem focusing on themselves, they like getting into others' affairs.

I was having my usual problems with people, and I was getting sick of the people and the structure of the place. I'm getting close to fifty and I started to feel and think that it was time to move into self supporting again. I needed to be free to come and go. I needed to have some privacy. So I started to do things to head that way. But things seem to get worse. The more I tried to work spiritual principles, the more this seemed to harm me socially. When this happened, I started to stay in my room, thinking that if I stayed out of sight, the problem makers would focus on someone else. In the long run, that led to me putting one foot into my closet. I know now that hiding for me is like being in my closet. So I had to move.

Well, that pretty much brings everything up to date. I hope to have some more you in two months. Remember to love someone that you don't know today. God bless you all. Toe

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Cost and Consequence

Max's View

by Max Biddle

I have mixed feelings about a new sports arena for downtown. I must admit the idea has certain appeal. It is certainly time to develop the railroad area to complete the ongoing redevelopment that is making Sacramento a first-rate city. No doubt keeping the Kings here is an admirable endeavor. Being a fan I would be upset to see them leave, but everyone must weigh the cost and evaluate the consequences of a project that requires public financing. My feeling about public financing of any project is that it should benefit the widest possible public use and participation. Especially, it should benefit those living within Sacramento County who will be paying most of this tax. But after indulging in the fantasy

of seeing the great results of such a project, reality and common sense take hold.

Citizens must realize that tax dollars should go first to real problems facing the community. The growing crime rate griping the County requires more funds for public safety. The infrastructure of a growing city always needs repairs. The growing problem of homelessness, affordable housing, and schools are always in need. The list goes on and on.

Considering that most people can't even afford the price of a ticket to attend the games, it looks like again the poorer members of our community will be subsidizing the well-off so they can indulge in their pleasures.

So caving in to a clear conscience and setting aside one's fantasies, one can only conclude that a new sports arena should be financed by the private funds of those who can afford to take advantage of it's use!

Speaking of weighing the cost and evaluating the consequences, it appears that the Republican Party leaders will again distort the congressional election coming in November so that the real issues will be obscured. They already are dragging out the wedge issues they use in every election, issues that they think will get out their so-called base. Going after gays, immigrants, catering to the baseness of human emotions are their usual and well-worn

strategy to win elections at any cost.

Polls show that many Republicans are getting just as concerned about the Bush Administration's policies as anyone else. Certainly by now Republican constituents must realize that these wedge issues are used to cover up failed policies like Iraq, health care, jobs and a failed drug program. Are these people as ignorant as the politicians think they are? Are they so gullible that they will walk into this same trap again?

Democracy can only survive if there is maximum participation by its citizenry. That means getting informed, because one's vote always has a cost and a consequence. Let's hope it's not too late.



Hey! — I'm a businessman and I was elected to run the government like a business, so quit whining about your so-called constitutional rights. I'm here to make a profit for the voters, and if your "rights" get in the way, maybe I'll do something about that!



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FILM REVIEW: *Sophie's Story*

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by Rochelle Siemienowicz
The Big Issue Australia

A young German's moral courage echoes through the ages in *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days*.

"Nothing is so unworthy of a civilized nation as allowing itself to be governed without opposition by an irresponsible clique that has yielded to base instinct."

These are powerful fighting words. Simple and righteous. It's tempting to apply them to any number of current world governments, including our own. Yet these are the words of a small band of German university students protesting the Nazi regime in 1942. Calling themselves the White Rose, the Munich-based group printed leaflets calling for non-violent resistance, and for an end to the inhumane and doomed German war effort. Such rebellion could not go unpunished and, in early 1943, siblings Sophie and Hans Scholl became the first of many White Rose members to be caught, interrogated and guillotined when they failed to recant their beliefs and incriminate their friends. In Germany today hundreds of primary schools are named after Sophie Scholl and the members of the White Rose are regularly voted "best Germans of all time". Yet there's also a growing international interest, thanks primarily to the quietly inspiring Oscar-nominated film *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days*.

"The things that the White Rose stood for are universal," says director Marc Rothmund, on the phone from his office in Munich. "Curiously These young people wanted to know. They sought information about politics. And also, the White Rose was about feeling for other people, weaker people, and exercising civil courage. We screened the film in the United States and the audience said, 'This is unbelievable! The exact same things these people were punished for - undermining the troops and treason against the government - are the things we are accused of if we speak out against the war in Iraq'."

The film begins gently with its fresh-faced heroine (played by The Edukators' Julia Jentsch) singing along to American songs on the radio and teasing her brother's girlfriend. After eight months of Allied bombing, Munich has a deserted feel and danger lurks even in university corridors. When Sophie and her brother are caught distributing leaflets on campus they are whisked away for questioning, and the razor sharp teeth of Gestapo police-work quickly shreds their denials and alibis.

Based on diaries, letters and transcriptions of the interrogation, the film is essentially a tale of a young woman's discovery of her own moral strength and courage.

"Everybody always thought that when Sophie and her brother were arrested they were just like martyrs, saying 'All right, kill

us'," says Rothmund. "But if you read the interrogation reports - which have only become available recently - you see that these kids were fighting for their lives. They are lying like hell trying to save themselves. They were not born heroes. They become heroes in the process. And you see that it takes several days for Sophie to come to the point where she says her most famous line, that she doesn't regret a thing, and that she would do it all again."

The director was determined not to present Sophie as a doomed death-craving saint. "It was very clear from my research," he says, "that these young people in the White Rose loved their lives. They loved music and the arts and the open air. They made excursions out into the countryside. They drank wine. They had sex without marriage. They were very modern young people. And they loved life. So it was a very real sacrifice that they made."

Rothmund, who was born in 1968, says his generation is the first to be able to look back at this period of German history without debilitating and repressive guilt. "My parents' generation, born in the 30s and 40s, spent their childhood in the shadow of the Nazis and maybe still feel the guilt of their parents. But people of my age, we feel responsibility yes, but not guilt. This is how we are educated in schools now. We are taught about the Holocaust and about war crimes but we

are also given examples of the very few Germans who did resist - people such as the White Rose, and also religious people like [pastor and resistance hero] Dietrich Bonhoeffer."

The legacy of Germany's dark history, according to Rothmund, is a contemporary culture that quickly reacts against any kind of fascism or racism. "We still have maybe five per cent of the population with these fascist tendencies," he says. "But the other 95 per cent of people really keeps an eye on them and speaks up against them. This is because we take responsibility for what has happened."

While he speaks with astonishing energy and detail about his own country's history, Rothmund is eager to expand the discussion again. "In so many countries there have been dictatorships, genocide, racism," he says. "We even see things on the TV about your [Australia's] Aborigines, about immigrants being chased through the streets, and about refugees who are just sitting in camps in Australia for years and years without a trial. So civil rights, human rights - the things the White Rose was all about - is an international topic. And in every country you find that there are a few 'Sophie Scholls' - people who are prepared to resist."

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BOOK REVIEW: *America Theocracy*

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by Timothy Harris
Real Change News, Seattle

The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century By Kevin Phillips
Viking, 2006

Kevin Phillips, as one of America's most clear-eyed critics of the contemporary conservative movement, is hard to dismiss. His landmark 1966 book, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, was an instant classic of the Right. This former Nixon speechwriter and Republican strategist, however has come around.

American Theocracy completes the series of books that started in 2002 with *Wealth and Democracy* and continued two years later with *American Dynasty*, his critical history of the Bush family. Together, the trilogy represents a searing indictment of a Republican Party whose base has become untenably narrow and whose politics have grown increasingly dangerous.

He assembles a broad array of evidence that America is a decaying empire. Our infrastructure of oil - which doesn't seem to recognize that

fossil fuels are a non-renewable resource - is well past its peak and utterly unsustainable. Half the political base of the ruling party seriously believes that the world will soon end. And we are spending, consuming, and racking up crippling debt as though the rest of us pretty much agree.

Phillips foresees a combination of crises that are, if not inevitable, at least somewhat probable. And he marshals a strong historical argument that America is not the first empire to be extinguished in a puddle of dumb energy policy, millennial fervor, and rentier excess. In examining the histories of Rome, Spain, the Dutch Republic, and Britain, the writing on the wall for an America in decline looks eerily familiar.

Perhaps most disturbing is the fact that the Republican Party by dint of its overwhelmingly fundamentalist political base - led by the powerful Southern Baptist Convention but supported also by the Mormons, Pentecostals, and a coalition of right-leaning denominations of Lutherans, conservative Catholics, and other fundamentalist sects - has left the world of reason for the world of faith.

American politics, Phillips reveals, has always been driven in large part by religion. In the early '80s, however the Reagan administration was the first to harness what was clearly a politics of a resurgent South, based in large part on race, resentment, and radical religion. As the evangelical movement spread like wildfire to form significant political blocs beyond the traditional south, the electoral math of courting this movement became irresistible to a party whose other base, the upper-middle class and the rich, is simply too small to prevail in a democracy.

This has led to a politics based in theological correctness, or TC, as Phillips puts it. The TC worldview is one of diametrically opposed good and evil, in which women are caretakers, life begins at conception, and homosexuality is a sin. In this world, God created the world in six days and still runs the environment.

The Republican Party in pandering to its politically indispensable fundamentalist base, has internalized those values, and in doing so has placed itself in opposition to science and other "reality-based" ways of thinking.

No longer content with rolling back the New Deal, born-again Republicans now attack the Enlightenment itself.

The overreach that has characterized the Right, however might be our best basis for hope. Phillips thinks that the fundamentalist movement has probably peaked, and that the more moderate are deserting the party. Adam Smith's invisible hand, as Warren Buffet once said, has transformed into a boot, and the plainly visible hands of energy and financial sector lobbyists have turned America into a giant fire sale for the rich.

If you want to know what drives America in the 21st century *American Theocracy* is a must-read book. Oil politics, religious extremism, and unsustainable debt are the signposts to our future as a declining empire. Phillips is a careful historian, a thoughtful analyst, and a political moderate who has dished up a hefty serving of harsh reality for a nation in denial.

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In Memory of Tommy Clinkenbeard

by Paula

Tommy Clinkenbeard passed away on July 20th at the age of 51, after a struggle with cancer. We at SHOC, and me in particular, will miss him. I first met Tommy when I was homeless and working with SHOC. He became our mentor and was always there for us if we needed advice and legal help, even though he was very busy with his work at the Public Defenders Office.

The legend goes that one day many years ago, Tommy was out by the river interviewing a client when the police came out to do a sweep and treated him with the same disrespect they would have treated any homeless person. That was when he became a strong advocate against Sacramento's anti-camping ordinance.

There are two very huge absurdities in our society: 1) There is not enough housing and shelter for poor people, yet it is against the law to

sleep outside: And, 2) Society must commit premeditated murder in order to punish premeditated murderers. These are two areas where Tommy was a great champion for change. He dedicated himself to changing these absurdities by defending homeless people and by being a leader in the statewide advocacy effort against the death penalty.

He was the Assistant Public Defender and spent much of his time defending capital cases, but he somehow made time for the homeless population and would come out to Loaves & Fishes to consult with people experiencing legal problems. He obtained support from the Public Defenders Office to provide attorneys for a legal clinic once a month at Loaves & Fishes. He also helped found a daily legal office that is open for routine legal issues, such as getting court dates, warrant checks, doing community service hours, and other problems that homeless people face. The Legal Clinic will be renamed the

Tommy Clinkenbeard Legal Clinic in his memory.

He was a great man and though there is much work left to do, he has left a better world because of his life. There is no way to convey the personal losses of all the people that knew him because he touched so many lives in so many ways. To me he was an inspiration.



Obituary

Garold Roller
d. 7/8/06 aged 44
natural causes

Larry Hornack
d. 7/10/06 aged 60
cause pending

Gary Fowler
d. 7/24/06 aged 47
natural causes

Michael Chadaris
d. 7/24/06 aged 70
natural causes

Charlz Deavers
d. 7/24/06 aged 60
natural causes

Fernando Verula
d. 8/2/06
of cancer

Steven
"Wolff" Greene
d.8/16/06
natural causes

Michael Lopez
d. 8/14/06 aged 45
natural causes