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More Than 1 million New Yorkers Ask: Food or Rent?

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Two Shelters

by Michelle Nichols
(Reuters)

NEW YORK. Food or rent? That is the daily choice faced by about 1.2 million of New York's 8.2 million people.

Faced with that choice, mostly they pay rent and rely on emergency or charity food to survive, poverty activists say.

"It's a struggle," said 53-year-old Pierre Simmons, who has a part-time job, as he wrapped up a bagel from his soup kitchen lunch for later. "I have a job, but the cost of living is so high it makes it hard to buy food."

Hunger is not unique to New York. More than 12 million U.S. households — or 35 million Americans — struggled with hunger in 2005, according to the U.S. government.

But, of all places in the United States, New York has perhaps the most visible income gap.

While the city's Wall Street bankers are due to collect nearly \$24 billion in bonuses this year, more than one-fifth of New Yorkers are battling to make ends meet below the national poverty line of \$10,000 a year for an individual.

About 3,800 people were living on the

streets in 2006, according to New York City statistics.

From a 100,000 square-foot warehouse in an industrial section of New York's Bronx borough, Food Bank For New York City distributes more than 65 million pounds of food a year to more than 1,200 community groups and charities in the city.

"I feel angry that we still need to be in this kind of business," said Lucy Cabrera, the Food Bank's president and chief executive.

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Homeless Resources Info

Who watches the watchers in a surveillance society?



By Andrew Stern
(Reuters)

CHICAGO. — In some cities in Europe and the United States, a person can be videotaped by surveillance cameras hundreds of times a day, and it's safe to say that most of the time no one is actually watching.

But the advent of "intelligent video" — software that raises the alarm if something on camera appears amiss — means Big Brother will soon be able to keep a more constant watch, a prospect that is sure to heighten privacy concerns.

Combining motion detection technology with the learning capabilities of video game software, these new systems can detect people loitering, walking in circles or leaving a package.

New microphone technology can isolate the sound of a gunshot and direct the attached camera to swivel and zoom in on the source. Sensitivity may reach the point where microphones could pick out the word "explosives" spoken in a crowd.

"There's just not enough personnel to

watch every single camera," said Chicago emergency operations chief Andrew Velasquez. "We are piloting analytic software right now ... where you can set that particular camera to watch for erratic behavior, or someone leaving a suitcase on the sidewalk."

Since the attacks on the United States of Sept. 11, 2001, sections of New York, Washington, Los Angeles, Chicago and even a few smaller U.S. towns have been blanketed with closed-circuit cameras. Privately owned cameras are also proliferating.

FALSE POSITIVES

The encroachment on privacy in what civil libertarians call a "surveillance society" may be a price willingly paid by citizens who fear terrorism and crime.

But ever-alert software capable of maintaining a continuous "watch" on security cameras multiplies the risks of harassing innocent people, privacy experts say.

"I don't buy it. The number of false positives are going to be astronomical," said David Holtzman, author of "Privacy Lost." "It's extremely dangerous to abrogate legitimate law enforcement author-

ity ... to a camera."

In Chicago's darkened, windowless surveillance center, Velasquez looks forward to using new technology, which has had some success elsewhere.

The port of Jacksonville, Florida, has dispensed with human monitoring of cameras altogether by sending alerts and live video to the personal digital assistant of the nearest officer on patrol, according to a spokesman for ObjectVideo Inc.

ObjectVideo is one of two dozen companies seeking to perfect so-called intelligent video — an industry whose sales will grow from \$60 million to \$400 million within five years, according to global consulting group Frost & Sullivan.

Meanwhile, Texas is evaluating a pilot program in which it allowed Internet access to video of unmanned sections of its border with Mexico and urged viewers to send an e-mail if they spotted something.

"The cameras don't replace police officers. They are in essence a force multiplier. They serve as an extra set of

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A TALE OF TWO SHELTERS

Street News Service www.street-papers.org

by Hannah Klein

I was struck by the Washington Post's tale of two shelters: "Maximum Bliss at the Pound" (10/21/06) and "Families in District Struggling for Shelter" (10/22/06). The first article introduced Washington Animal Rescue League's (WARL) privately funded, \$6 million animal shelter. Its residents enjoy memory-foam mattresses, an oxygenated waterfall and harp music. Nothing is spared to ensure their physical and emotional healing.

(According to University of Massachusetts archives, one donor was the notorious Lizzie Borden, who left \$2,000 to WARL when she died in 1927.)

Meanwhile, the Post's second article described Kishi Washington and her 12-year-old brother, who share one twin mattress on the floor of a friend's mouse-infested public housing unit. In addition, D.C. Village, the only family shelter experiences "frequent water and sewer breakdowns, electrical problems and infestation of vermin." Apparently, photogenic puppies command more sympathy than the 138 homeless children who spend a typical night at the Village.

Sczerina Perot, staff attorney with Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless, cited a "lack of political will [and funding] to solve the problem." Perot pointed out that

many people erroneously believe that homeless individuals are responsible for their misfortune and that the government will aid them. In reality, more than 1,000 D.C. families who applied and qualified for shelter from January to August were denied.

We need not search far to discover the "lack of political will" that Perot described. In a gross understatement, Scotlund Haisley, director of WARL, conceded that his animal shelter is "nicer than some shelters for people."

Deputy Mayor Brenda Donald Walker euphemistically calls D.C. Village "not an ideal situation for families." When people hesitate to speak forcefully about a problem, they may be unlikely to act decisively.

We tend to sympathize with neglected animals, who are not responsible for their fate. Yet we overlook homeless children, who are equally blameless for theirs. We need to promote homeless rights as staunchly as animal rights. Lest I be pilloried for hating animals, let me mention Mitzi and Nibbles, two starving stray cats that I adopted. Nibbles has been with me for 7-8 years. Mitzi, an outdoor cat, apparently met a brutal end from a neighborhood gang.

Michael Stoops, acting executive director of the National Coalition for the Homeless, reports that we build

"more animal shelters than people shelters." Homeless people - like outdoor pets - are frequent victims of violence. Stoops is working to add protection for homeless people under a hate crimes statute.

Two years ago, I made friends with a loving street family, consisting of Michelle, David and their 11-year-old son, Matthew. Michelle is an active Street Sense vendor who also writes for the paper, and many of Matthew's poems and artwork have been featured in the paper. Their story is particularly apt at this season, which commemorates another couple and child who sought, and were refused, shelter.

Child and Family Services subsequently took Matthew away; he has now lived in four different foster homes. The resulting stress and despair caused Michelle and David to split up. No one offered aerated waterfalls or harp music to ease their heartache.

I do not profess to know the complex factors leading to this tragedy. According to one view, Matthew was taken away because his parents made themselves visible in their homelessness and vocal about incompetence in Child and Family Services.

In Michelle's monthly column for Street Sense - ironically entitled "We Are Family" - she observed that

"Childhood is short, but the scars from homelessness can last forever" (2/15/06), and she wondered, "How many more families will be destroyed before we bring all our resources to the table to solve this problem?" (9/15/06)

Certainly, unwanted pets deserve comfortable living conditions. Still, to afford them such luxuries, while some fellow human beings lack basic housing, medical care and social services, reveals our obscenely misguided priorities.

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Food or Rent?

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"I would rather be giving my expertise to try and solve the hunger issue in a third world country, where they have no food. Here we have the food," she said, as workers zipped about the warehouse floor on pallet jacks filling agency food orders.

HUNGRY CHILDREN

On the other side of the Bronx, people began to gather outside a soup kitchen operated by Part of the Solution (POTS) as rain started to drizzle from the sky.

"When I first came here it was a lot of minorities, drug users, now it's the families, the struggling person," said Executive Director Sister Mary Alice Hannan, who has worked at the organization for 10 years.

"There's just some kind of a lack of awareness of the size of your family versus your income, your ability to live," Hannan said.

One quarter of New York's 1.9 million children are living in poverty, 40 percent of families with children had difficulty affording food in 2005 and one-fifth of the city's children rely on free food to survive, according to a report by the Food Bank For New York City.

The Part of the Solution soup kitchen, in operation for 25 years, serves about 325 lunches and dinners a day and gives out around 2,700 generically packed shopping bags, each containing nine meals.

On a weekday shortly before Christmas, hot-dogs and baked beans, served with a bagel, are on the menu at Part of the Solution. More than 100 people stream through the doors during a three-hour lunch window and strangers sit silently together to eat.

"You don't have to be homeless to

be hungry," said POTS kitchen manager Daune Moore, who is known as Diz, as she stood with her arms folded watching over the lunchtime crowd.

OBESITY STRUGGLE

Ironically, many people struggling with hunger are also battling the bulge, and both the Food Bank For New York City and Part of the Solution aim to provide nutritious, balanced meals.

"I get my child a hamburger, French fries and soda and they're satisfied and it's only cost me 99 cents - I go to the supermarket and I can't even get a can of beans for that," Cabrera said.

The Food Bank for New York City, which helps distribute food for 250,000 meals a day, hands out more than 11 million pounds a year of fresh produce.

"It's about being able to feed people in a way so that they stay healthy, continue to work," Cabrera said.

But for some at the Part of the Solution soup kitchen, working is no longer an option. Virgilio Avilus, 45, limps back to his table carrying his lunch. In 1988 he was working as a window washer, earning up to \$1,000 a week, when he fell four floors.

After spending six months in a coma and 10 years in hospitals, Avilus now has an apartment of his own that costs him \$200 a month rent. His government income is \$250 a month.

"That's all I have to my name," he said. "I have to eat here. I can't be spending \$10 a day on food."

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Debate Sparked Over New Cambridge Public Housing Rules

Street News Service: www.street-papers.org

By Russell Weiss-Irwin

Public Housing Residents To No Longer Be Residents of Cambridge, MA, USA?

At a January 18 hearing in Central Square, the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) announced a controversial new plan for the city's public housing. The meeting brought together the CHA leadership, public housing tenants, and tenants' advocacy groups. The many parties all voiced their opinions forcefully. The usually comfortable common room of the Manning Apartments rang with the passionate words of people from all sides of several issues.

The meeting was well attended, with about fifty people there, but many complained that the CHA hasn't been good at letting the public know about meetings or changes, so perhaps there could have been more. Mary Regan, head of Cambridge Eviction Free Zone (CEFZ), told Spare Change News that probably most of the people attending lived in the building where it was being held or had been told about the hearing by her organization. City Councilor Denise Simmons told me that, despite her position, she had not been informed about the meeting until people from the advocacy groups CEFZ and Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee (CEOC) e-mailed her about it.

According to Regan, the CHA announces its meetings only by letting public housing building managers know, putting one legal notice on the back page of the Chronicle, and a note on the bulletin board in City Hall. The only way the CEFZ finds out about CHA hearings is by always sending people to CHA board meetings. The CEFZ then lets City Councilors and tenants know.

Regan sees this as a symptom of a larger problem of transparency with the CHA. "We

want changes to be subject to a more public process," she said. "We want the CHA to sit down at a table with advocates and tenants while considering options so tenants have more say in the policies that effect them."

Councilor Simmons agreed: "There needs to be more communication between the CHA and the elected officials," Simmons said. "If there was more communication between the CHA and other stakeholders, then we could form a united front and get them the money they need."

And they do need money. Greg Russ, the executive director of CHA, talked at length during the meeting about lack of money, lack of predictability about money, and other financial problems. To do the rehabilitation of public housing facilities that they want to do, it would cost \$117 million, even before the cost of architects, engineers, and other labor costs, bringing the real figure to more than \$200 million.

Before they can think about ambitious projects like those, however, the CHA needs to deal with its day-to-day costs. The public housing authorities in Cambridge, Brookline and Boston are together bringing suit against the state for not fulfilling its obligation to fund public housing. They want double the funding they now receive, and a more predictable flow of money, unlike the present system where the CHA has to make its budget before it knows if it will actually have the money to meet its needs.

During the question and answer period after the meeting, and after tenants' rights advocates had asked Russ a lot of questions, he finally said, "Look, you should be talking to your local elected officials, not me. Tell them to give us money so we can do the things you want."

Councilor Simmons stood up

and angrily told Russ that the city council and legislative delegation were public housing's best friends. "I was taken aback when Greg Russ said that people should go talk about this with their city council," she told me afterwards. "No group has been more proactive, more supportive than Cambridge's city council."

"It feels like the CHA is locked in a room, making all the decisions," she said. This seems to echo with many peoples' views. One formerly homeless resident of Section 8 housing, who didn't want her name to be used for personal reasons, said, "It's important with Cambridge housing that things are more transparent. They put a tiny ad in the Chronicle when they are going to make big changes. No one reads the Chronicle, so the changes aren't known."

This woman was also concerned about what seemed to be the most controversial change; a change in preference rules. Preference rules define who gets housing in a case where there is a waiting list (which there almost always is). Housing is first-come first-serve, unless you are a veteran, in an emergency situation, or a Cambridge resident. The change is in the definition of "Cambridge resident," so that it will no longer include a person "living in Federal or State public housing, receiving Federal or State voucher assistance or receiving permanent housing assistance," in other words, people who the CHA is responsible for. So, this new policy takes away Cambridge residency as far as housing assistance is concerned for people who are using housing assistance.

The Section 8 resident I talked to expressed her concerns on this issue especially. She has a college age daughter who lives with her, and if her daughter wanted to move out and get her own place, she would have to get together the

rent for a pricy place in Cambridge or leave the city, because she would be treated the same as a non-resident as far as public housing is concerned. The woman believed that the reason behind the policy is that the CHA doesn't want living in public housing to become an "intergenerational thing," but she says, "Poverty is hereditary, and so assistance should be, too."

Defending the new preference system, Greg Russ told SCN that, "This program is trying to strike a careful balance. We're trying to address families with excessive shelter costs and at the same time address the needs of families already receiving housing assistance."

In response to specific complaints regarding the situation of people who grow up in public housing, Russ told SCN that he and the CHA board hadn't had time to sort through the many comments they got at the hearing, and so he couldn't express one point of view yet.

Russ emphasized that most important parts of the plan were actually their ideas around voucher reform and, of course, their financial needs. This is the most important area, according to Russ, because without more funding from the state and federal government, the CHA says it won't be able to keep all the units it now has.

Russ emphasized during the meeting and to SCN on the phone that that is their biggest goal. As he put it, "If we can't keep these units, well, no units means no tenants, and no tenants means no us."

As Councilor Simmons said, "If a person has less money, if they earn less, they are not less a person, they don't deserve any less respect." This, at least, we can be certain of.

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Glutton Spangled Economics

Street News Service: www.street-papers.org

By Jon Heinrich
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When I accepted the assignment to write an article about gluttony for this issue of What's Up, I didn't internalize the weight of the task. I usually don't purposefully venture towards evil, but I guess it's time to confront some fundamental darkness.

Come to think of it, the world does seem to be coming to a head right now. Corruption, war, and insatiable desire are pushing natural limits, and our planet is showing signs of wear. Typically, I have an undying pledge to always look positively at things, but what's going right now is not pretty. HA!

Gluttony

1. excess in eating or drinking
2. greedy or excessive indulgence (i.e. driving our metal tons to the local tavern to indulge our senses in copious cuisine and drink ourselves to bacchanalian stupor.)

In the beautiful dance of capitalism, the "haves" and the "have-nots" use each other to harness the pursuit of productive achievement as a means to motivate social advancement. "However," as Albert Einstein put so beautifully at the World's Fair in 1939, "the production and distribution of commodities is entirely unorganized so that everybody must live in fear of being eliminated from the economic cycle, in this way suffering for the want of everything."

Capitalism relies on gluttony to drive "success," epitomized by Hummers, cars with self-opening doors, and escalators in every lobby. We help fuel it every day by driving our cars and shoving McFat feasts down our clogged arteries for dinner.

I always try and remind myself that everything is happening perfectly right now in the grand scheme of things. Let's not forget that, one side of the world did try communism versus capitalism. In 1989 the USSR showed the world which economic system won. Was it human nature's tendency to look for the free lunch that caused the Marxist system to fail, or was it the same corruption that plagues capitalism now?

After all, we're all human. And with that, our vices.

Like the trained gluttons that we are, we do

know how to throw one HELL of a party to forget the world's woes and celebrate our dominion. In 2002 alone, the United States purchased over \$137 billion worth of alcohol. But aside from the booze-a-thons, we are exhausting the earth's limited fossil fuels with our cars. At the same time, we seem to be clueless about this fact. (Just in case any of you reading this right now don't know, we are running out of oil. I don't have time to go into it, just trust me.) Ironically, that global truth seems to have missed us Americans.

According to a recent J.D. Power and Associates market research study, one out of four vehicles purchased during the first three months of 2006 had an eight-cylinder engine. The study concluded that even drastically rising gas prices have not made an impact on the buying habits of new cars, SUVs, and trucks through March of 2006 compared with 2005 trends.

If there were not these material distractions however, we might begin to examine what life means. The Romans used "bread and circus" to control their people too - decadence to distract them from the problems in the world that they were creating. If we weren't so caught up in satisfying our endless cravings, we might decide, centuries later, to search for a better way of doing things - without war. You think the sale of a Hummer is good for the economy? Think about how much it costs for each smart bomb we shock-and-awe Iraq with - especially when we hire our cronies at Halliburton to rebuild what we've just pummeled. But just like the "bread and circus," war profiteering is an ancient form of gluttony that has survived the test of time.

It doesn't have to be this way. Let's use the pressure of war and global warming to raise our consciousness and take steps forward towards renewable energy and peace.

Hopefully the hindsight of posterity will help us rise above our gluttonous tendencies and lend a healing hand to our planet. Instead of fueling the helifire of destruction we could realize peace and happiness for all living things. Who's with me on this? Raise your awareness to how you interact with gluttony's god. The decision to change the world starts with the individual. You.

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Rangers Sweep on Counting Day

The rangers didn't seem to get the word about January 30th's early morning homeless count. The police and sheriffs were informed about the count and asked to refrain from their homeless sweeps and cleanups, hoping to reinforce the word homeless people were getting: They weren't to worry about hiding out during the count—they were to make it easy to be counted.

However, witnesses said that the rangers with a sheriff's work crew did a cleanup sweep along the river parkway a mere few hours after the count. Some campers expressed not only their distress about having their meager possessions taken, but also their disappointment in the homeless count outreach telling them they would be immune to law enforcement for camping, at least the morning of the count. A couple asked the rangers, while the rangers were throwing their possessions away, for their important papers and blankets. Their request was refused. It was reported by some people who's posses-

sions were taken that previously vacated camps and other messes were not being cleaned.

The homeless count, besides the above reported incidents, was a great success this year because many more community members, including many homeless individuals, were involved in the actual counting. It was a great contribution and sacrifice of their valuable sleep time, since they had to be out there at 4 AM and walked for a couple hours.

The homeless count is conducted annually and is required by HUD to qualify for funding for homelessness programs and services. It is very important to get as accurate a count as possible.

There is some concern about how accurate the count will be next year if homeless people are afraid to participate. Hopefully, this is one more lesson learned and the rangers will be cajoled into, at least, letting homeless people rest during the annual homeless count.



Homeless Hate Crime Legislation Introduced

State Senator Darrell Steinberg has just introduced legislation that would amend current state hate crime law to include "homeless status" as part of the protected classes. Current penal code sections 422.55 and 422.56 includes disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation as protected classes. The new bill SB 122 would add "homeless status" to the list.

This is very significant legislation and would help deter crimes that are committed against homeless people. These hate crimes have been increasing over the years and are committed by all age groups, but the majority are being committed by teenagers or young adults.

For more information about hate crimes against homeless people you can download a newly released report from the National Coalition for the Homeless - *Hate, Violence and Death on Main Street USA*, February 2007 at <http://www.nationalhomeless.org>.

Right to Sleep - Right to Housing

Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee has been striving for years upon years trying to bring about changes that would ensure that people are allowed to sleep, even if they do not have an indoor location to sleep. It's a person's right to be able to sleep (a necessary function of a living being, making it a right to live). It has not been judicially established that everyone has a "right" to housing, though the US signed the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that everyone does have a right to housing. It would have made things a lot easier if everyone that became homeless were just given an apartment or some form of housing. We wouldn't have had people dying on the streets, suffering, not able to jump through the hoops required because homelessness was defined as a problem the homeless individual created.

Sacramento is finally coming around about the intelligence behind giving people housing without qualification. Previously, the philosophy has been "Tough love" - the justification for making homeless people's lives miserable enough that they will choose to live indoors. Too bad there was no "indoors" available, even if they did tow the line. It has been found that criminalization of homelessness does not work, in fact, it costs communities less to house a person. With the stability of permanent housing, formerly homeless residents don't become involved in the criminal justice system as much, they use emergency medical and mental health

services less, their health improves and they more often make positive choices for their lives and seek help for their difficulties. So the new paradigm is now "Unconditional Love" - the just way to improve our community and to make people's lives better. Housing 1st is a program being embraced by Sacramento's continuum of care, where long-term disabled homeless people will be given housing without requiring them to be "cured" or seek treatments before qualifying.

How can you help? That's not a rhetorical question-think about it. But if you need some ideas.

Some Housing 1st units are already being implemented and will be on line soon through leased scattered site housing. Housing 1st apartment developments are expected for the near future. Its very hard to find appropriate sites and when suitable locations are found neighborhood opposition confounds the difficulties. The units will be spread out throughout the county so that services are not concentrated in one area. So your job could be to welcome these developments into your community-speak in favor of them at neighborhood, city council, and board of supervisor meetings.

Criminalization - if you could see it in your heart to understand what it must be like to be without shelter (there is not enough shelter for every homeless person in Sacramento), in too cold weather or too hot weather, vulnerable to hate crimes from punks that prey on those most convenient to abuse, hampered from seeking employment for various reasons related to homelessness (no storage for belongings, no access to showers and clean clothing, etc), exhausted from carrying around all your belongings all day to services and safe areas to sleep.

Then imagine finally getting to some obscure place to lay down, exhausted, you fall asleep and soon (or later) are loudly woken up with a flashlight in your eyes, maybe a nudge from a boot and a police officer telling you that you can't "camp" here. He or she doesn't tell you where you can sleep. You gotta go. Or you get a citation for illegal camping. Or you go to jail because the officer finds out you didn't make your last court date for illegal camping. Imagine having to sleep outside and have all your possessions taken at any time without warning, blankets in the winter for instance.

So, call, write, email anyone you think might be able to change this condition. Ask for an end to the anti-camping ordinance. Ask that we recognize that everyone has a right to housing. Ask that people's property not be confiscated without warning. Donate money or volunteer at homelessness service organizations. Convert your garage into affordable housing.

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BLACK HOLES IN OUTER SPACE

From *Infinity and the Mango Tree* by the homeless science writer, Chongo

Have you ever pondered the fact that the universe is filled with many very heavy things - really heavy things, like planets much bigger than our own and suns big enough to encompass our entire solar system, for example? Physicists ponder this fact in great depth and detail.

In their pondering, physicists have discovered just how heavy and dense things in the universe can be, by means of a body of ideas termed "physical theory," or, more commonly termed, "theoretical physics." Physicists use this body of ideas for explaining nature and for determining just how heavy and dense things can be because this body of ideas has yet to ever fail to model nature accurately - not even once.

Using this failure-free body of ideas, physicists have come to recognize just how heavy and how dense massive objects in nature can become. Indeed, they have discovered what are among the heaviest and unquestionably the densest objects in the universe. Physics has given a special name to these objects, appropriately calling them by the name of "black hole." They are so called, because their weight and corresponding density is so great that their gravity prevents them from emitting hardly any light at all. A black hole is a "dark star" - a star that emits no visible light. In short, they are darker than the darkest night. They are called "holes" instead of stars because these dark objects are like one-way "exits" from the universe around them (hence the term, "hole").

Black holes are formed when an enormous star "burns up" (that is, exhausts all the nuclear fuel) that is constantly "holding up" the star, keeping it big. Without sufficient energy being released to counterbalance the immense gravity that is the outcome of its immense mass, gravity overcomes energy and the star collapses inwardly. If the star is massive enough, it collapses into a black hole,

"sinking" into space and time, "separating" from the rest of the universe, leaving only a "one-way exit" behind.

There is no other kind of object in the universe that is anything like a black hole. This is because there is no other kind of object in the universe where, at its surface, time does not pass. At the surface of a black hole, which is called its "event horizon," time stands completely still according to the measures of the pace of time for anyone outside, not experiencing the effects of the immense gravity.

Theoretical physics, specifically, the Theory of Relativity, explains why time stops at an event horizon surface. Indeed, it predicts that there must be black holes with surfaces where time actually stops. And this is how and why.

As the distance from a source of gravity (a mass) decreases, gravity increases. And, according to relativity, as the effects (the force) of gravity increases, time progressively slows. This fact has been demonstrated conclusively by repeated scientific testing, and there exists no testing anywhere demonstrating the contrary. Thus, a clock placed upon the summit of Mount Everest will run faster than a clock placed at the bottom of the ocean. A clock "floating weightlessly" in outer space, far from any other mass, will run faster than either.

However, to someone next to each clock watching it tic, time's pace would seem identical, regardless of whether it was the clock in outer space far from any other mass's gravity, or the clock at the bottom of the ocean, very close to the great mass of the earth. On the other hand, for the individual watching the clock "weightless" in space, the clock at the bottom of the ocean, subject to the greater effects of the gravity of the earth by virtue of its close proximity, would tic more slowly. The same is true for a black hole.

A star collapsing into a black hole collapses into a smaller volume, becoming denser as it is compressed. As a matter of fact, when a star is so heavy (i.e. so massive) that it collapses into a black hole, it collapses into such a small volume that (among other effects), according to the measures for anyone outside the enormous gravity, time effectively stops altogether at its event horizon surface. In other words, time "freezes" there, which accounts for why - again, according only to the measure of time for anyone outside - light (effectively) never escapes from a black hole (thus making it "black"). Rather than simply being redirected back, inwardly, light "never" escapes from a black hole for a completely different reason than that. That reason is that, at the surface (again, according only to the temporal measures of someone far away from the effects of the black hole is gravity), there is simply never any time for the light to move. From the perspective of anyone outside (their measures), the surface is an impenetrable barrier frozen in time because the gravity at the surface overwhelms time itself. Appropriately, one can call the surface of a black hole a one-way ticket to the "end" of time (lying billions or even trillions of years into the future).

Now, what about anyone who happens to approach the surface, with the intention of crossing it? Would time stand still for them? If time did indeed slow for someone falling into a black hole, then, correspondingly, the laws of physics would have to change appropriately with the change in the pace of time \dot{h} except that according to physical theory, the laws of physics absolutely never change anywhere, ever. Likewise, neither does the pace of time change. So, according to the measure of time for anyone or anything subjected to the immense gravity at the black hole's surface, time is still passing at the same rate as it ever passed anywhere at any time in the universe for them, no less than it does always for

anyone else. This being so, then the measure of time for anyone or anything approaching the event horizon surface will be no different from the pace at which it was passing at any moment during its approach to the surface, no differently than it passed while still far from the hole's immense gravity at the surface. But, even though time would be passing normally for anyone as they fell towards the surface, what would be only a brief moment for them, would be (taking relativity to its "extreme") infinite according to the measure of time for anyone or anything outside the immense gravity of the black hole.

Now, pondering such a journey, one should consider that in approaching the event-horizon surface, one would be heading into an eternal moment on a hot, compressed star, and just how sensible a journey that would be to make. Even though it would take billions or trillions of years to happen from the perspective of anyone outside, the effects to anyone or anything plunging into it would be no different from crashing into the surface of any other star: you'd burn up.

So, because they are frozen in time at their surface, are black holes eternal objects? That question can be answered in the next issue, along with the question of whether or not there exists something called a "singularity" at the center of a black hole. At relativity's extremes, another physical theory, the theory of energy (quantum theory) applies.

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(To see all the books that Chongo has written, go to chongonation.com, which is a web site dedicated to educating those excluded from the opportunity of learning genuine science.)

Watchers continued from page 1

eyes." Velasquez said

OGGLING

The Chicago center is manned 24 hours a day by veteran police officers. A dozen screens depict a few street corners and a stadium, while others are tuned to cable news or Web sites.

They can retrieve video from thousands of cameras and their universe is expanded by private cameras owned by cooperating buildings and stores, but they can monitor only a few at a time.

Velasquez said his officers receive training on privacy and constitutional rights — for example it is illegal to look into private homes and offices — and digital recordings hold his offi-

cers accountable and prevent abuses that have occurred elsewhere.

In Britain, which has 4.2 million government security cameras, 2 million in London alone, a study showed that male surveillance workers sometimes ogled women on their screens, while others focused on minorities excessively.

But privacy experts also note another British study, from 2002, which said surveillance cameras did not lower overall crime rates, and merely pushes crime elsewhere.

"Cameras are great tools for solving crime. They're not really that helpful in preventing crime," said Ed Yohnka of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Velasquez disputed the conclusion that cameras don't prevent crime, saying he constantly fields requests from residents asking for a camera to make their neighborhood safer.

He said cameras contributed to a drop in violent crime in the city of Chicago in recent years, a drop that is widely attributed to improved police work in countering gangs and street-corner drug dealing. At the same time, gang activity has surged in some Chicago suburbs.

The city's prosecutors said they rarely use video evidence in court from the cameras, which are encased in bulletproof boxes topped by blue flashing lights and are a common sight in crime-ridden neighborhoods.

Downtown, the cameras are less

obtrusive, though a pair mounted on a park fountain were removed after an outcry that they defiled the art.

Holtzman, the privacy expert, wondered where the line will be drawn if authorities opt to use the cameras to spy on suspects or to sniff out low-level crimes.

There are no legal barriers to video being subpoenaed by, for instance, a divorce lawyer seeking evidence of infidelity, he said.

"I think there's a certain amount of freedom you want to give people that live in the city to kind of screw up a little bit," he said.

Courtesy of Reuters
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Book review: The Disposable American: Layoffs and their consequences

Street News Service www.street-papers.org

by Jay Thiemeyer

Book review: Author examines the human causalities behind lay-offs

The Disposable American: Layoffs and Their Consequences, by Louis Uchitelle. Knopf, 2006

Something for the business types who volunteer at Project Homeless Connect. Their mid-level white-collar management jobs are the ones showing greatest increase in outsourcing these days. Consider, when you deign to "look the homeless in the eye," when for a day you "interact" with the slime of society, across the table, that gentleman may well be yourself down the road. You could easily be tomorrow's discard, showing up at Homeless Connect for the scraps remaining of the Safety Net and at the end of the day damned grateful for the vague I&R tips you were handed. "Housing" - how to get on a waiting list at TPI men's shelter. "Dental care" - in your dreams and your children's.

In "The Disposable American: Layoffs and Their Consequences," author Louis Uchitelle gives witness that there is nothing sacred about America's prosperity. The American Century was way yesterday. After the long struggle to establish "job security" from the end of the first Gilded Age in the 1890s to the beginning of the 1970s, job security had become a central feature of business management. Loyalty to the company was integral to its success. Layoffs were anathema - immoral and destructive of business success, it was assumed. Then, foreign competition emerged and temporary layoffs were grudgingly implemented. Then, the guilt wore off, and some acquisition types saw it as a real opportunity. Damage to society at large is damned.

When Peter Drucker first came on the scene, shortly after World War II, he dismissed layoffs as immoral. Bad practice. Not sound, what would be called today "evidence-based," practice. In his final book he embraced layoffs as not only necessary but "good practice." Would weed out the least productive employees and keep the company fit. A new emergence of Social Darwinism.

Of course, Reagan, back 25 years ago, had embraced layoffs as business management at its best, a prac-

tice for the government to encourage. It was emblemized by the dismissal of the striking air traffic controllers at the beginning of his reign. They were denied the prospect of any future federal employment of any kind. They were, you see, the villains in the piece, the ones obstructing progress, according to the Reaganites. Jobs With Justice (and less so, Industrial Areas Foundation, initiated by Saul Alinsky and his disciples and a model for the local Metro Alliance for Common Ground, once full of promise, now not so much so) now represents what progressives promise the labor movement once represented as a whole. But the point is in our society there is little wholeness. Community is so secondary to financial gain as to barely scan. And with ascendance of private equity firms and the new wave of mergers and corporate acquisitions, white collar workers, like all other workers, are vulnerable. Even doctors, even specialists. Even those middle management types doing intake at Homeless Connect, who in my experience, spend their energy on expediting the process, getting your name, etc., moving you along, to a photo op with a politico, with no more human connection than isn't avoidable. They're so mentally locked into fealty to a "business model," they can't see themselves in those homeless skegs - can't afford to see these people as workers for real, not some job center fodder. The homeless once were workers working for a sustainable wage. They were the backbone of community. Now, like the suits slumming for a day, they are simply discards of a system which will use them, then slough them off like an old pair of socks.

One very important point Uchitelle stresses is the mental health impact of the layoffs themselves, not merely on the individual worker but on the viability of the entire community of which the workers are part. In the receding past, workers were the backbone.

The financial primacy of investor groups serves this country poorly. While a handful of barons make a killing, the safety net is replaced by well-advertised occasional voluntaristic festivals, their rarity spun as how well they're received by "welfare clients," themselves doled to these events by their herders, the providers.

As to a solution, Uchitelle says we need a return to government intervention, as in regulation of industries such as the airline industry, which was probably the sole beneficiary after Dubya, of 9-11. He details the lack of coordination in Indianapolis, for example, where a huge center was built for airline repair, complete with lavish tax abatement for the airlines. It stands largely empty today. If the government had interceded to help with the development of a rational regionalized system, this waste - of dollars and people - would have been avoided. Government and organized labor need once again to take an active role instead of labor's acquiescing in its own demise by cooperating with corporations' layoffs.

Government intervention - which reached its heyday under FDR, with the influence of British economist John Keynes, with the arrival of government intrusion to save capitalism's ass from the outrage of the people subject to the predations of the Depression - has been completely marginalized as "voluntarism" has replaced it. The inadequacy of voluntarism was a lesson too thoroughly learned during the 30s Depression, yet Reagan and his progeny successfully imposed it. (As well as Ford. Do you remember WIN buttons? And Nixon would have if he could have, in other words, had a Republican Congress.)

There is also the question of tax cuts. Reagan considered his tax cut of '81 as the single moment of his administration to which he didn't hesitate to point with pride. And his, of course, was only the opening shot. When reading daily of the manipulations of K Street - the new Kingfishes, the lobbyists, and the new moneyed Barons, the private equity groups such as Texas Pacific Group that tried to swallow PGE - balance it with the good sense of longtime business writer for The New York Times, Louis Uchitelle. When he considers collateral damage, he means what being laid off feels like. To a single person, their family and their community. The human cost. His interviews are of real persons not corporate headlinks.

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Obituary

Keith Wilkins

D. 1/3/07

aged 43 yrs.

killed in fire

Brenda Trujillo

D. 1/16/07

aged 52 yrs.

stabbed to death

Cicero Runey

d. 1/17/07

aged 54 yrs.

pending

James Gorman

d. 1/29/07

aged 59 yrs.

pending

Jerry Farris

d. 2/11/07

aged 48 yrs.

pending

Felicitas Martinez

d. 2/21/07

aged 79 yrs.

pending, probable natural causes