

# HOMeward

## STREET JOURNAL



### In This Issue

page 1  
**Rally**  
to Protest Closing  
of Overflow  
  
Press Release of  
"Illegal to be  
Homeless"

page 2  
Synopsis of  
"Illegal to be  
Homeless"

page 3  
"Beggarmen  
Troll" a story

Horseshoe  
Tournament

page 5  
**Max's View**

page 6  
"Homeless  
in El Paso"  
a story

page 7  
Obituary

page 8  
**Homeless  
Resources**

If current predictions of population growth prove accurate and patterns of human activity on the planet remain unchanged, science and technology may not be able to prevent either irreversible degradation of the environment or continued poverty for much of the world.  
- Royal Society of London and U.S. National Academy of Sciences, 1992

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## Advocates Release Report On Criminalizing the Homeless

### Loaves & Fishes to stage **Rally**

at the Board of Supervisors

**9:30 AM Tuesday  
February 26, 2002**

**Prevent Sacramento's  
Day of Shame,  
April 17th, 2002**

Loaves & Fishes and their associated programs are planning a rally on February 26th to protest the County of Sacramento's refusal to open a year-round shelter for homeless women and children. L&F staff are inviting all guests and other concerned persons to join with them to make it clear to the County Board of Supervisors how outrageous this continued disregard for Sacramento's poor Citizens is.

The Department of Human Assistance had proactively pursued funding and identified a possible site for the continuation of a 200 bed emergency shelter after the closing of Overflow, but their effort died due to lack of support from the Board. Last year, the County Supervisors unanimously approved a plan to voucher fifty families after that year's Overflow closed, only later to reduce it to 10 vouchers per night.

Local advocates find it hard to believe that the County cannot find the money when they have funded a \$30 million dollar "Juvenile Justice" Center, hired an additional two park rangers to harass homeless campers, and contracted with DHA to design a new tracking system for homeless persons in County programs.

By their actions, the County's direction of interest appears to be more about controlling the poor so that business interests can make a profit, than about keeping women and children off the streets.

When McCellan Air Force Base was closed, the County had the opportunity under the McKinney Act to provide about 1200 existing housing units to Sacramento's homeless for occupancy, but instead gave the base to commercial developers and only provided a paltry forty units of existing housing to the poor, leaving service providers with some land to build housing if or when funding can be raised.

In the using of Federal funds for redeveloping downtown Sacramento, the City and County have found ways to call middle-class people needy of affordable housing, so they can build to price low-income people out of the neighborhood.

Loaves & Fishes and other homeless advocates have labeled April 17th, 2002, the day Overflow closes for women and children, as Sacramento's Day of Shame. The February 27th Rally is only the first action. If the County Board of Supervisors again turn a deaf ear and blind eye to those in need, advocates say further actions may be taken on or after April 17th, 2002. \*



On January 15, 2002, the 73rd anniversary of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birth, homeless advocacy groups held a press conference on the steps of the California State Building, Van Ness and McAllister Sts., in San Francisco, to mark the release "Illegal to be Homeless", a report on the criminalization of homelessness in the United States.

The report distinguished California as the "meanest" state in the country for people who are poor and homeless, with New York City vying with Atlanta, GA and San Francisco, CA - the three meanest cities nationally - for top notoriety.

The National Homeless Civil Rights Organizing Project - a project of the National Coalition for the Homeless, D.C. - partnered with the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty to compile data samplings from 60 communities, both urban and rural, in 37 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty has published five similar reports in the past decade. This is the most comprehensive examination of its type on this issue to date.

The report finds that more jurisdictions are increasingly using ordinances that effectively criminalize homelessness by prohibiting activities such as sleeping or camping in public, even when no shelter beds are available. Almost 60 percent of the cities surveyed in the 2002 report have laws that prohibit sleeping/camping in public areas. Meanwhile, 100 percent of communities surveyed lack enough shelter beds to meet demand.

Since 1979, over \$28 billion has been cut from the Federal housing budget, and advocates note that homelessness has risen in direct proportion to these cuts. In a country where there is no city where

minimum wage earners can afford the lowest Fair Market Rent, and where rates of homelessness are rapidly growing, it is increasingly difficult for many to avoid jail as a substitute for housing.

Attending the press release were several members of homeless advocacy groups. The members of these organizations were there to give statements about the situation of the homeless in their various communities. A few brief quotes of their remarks is as follows:

Paul Boden, Director of the Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco, representing the National Homeless Civil Right Organizing Project said:

"[The Criminalization of Homeless Report]... is not just a survey, not just a report we will put on a shelf somewhere to get a 30 second sound bite; this is an organizing campaign by the poor and homeless joining together to combat a pattern and practice of local communities, responding to the abandonment by the federal and state governments... of implementing police practices to remove homeless people from sight.

"We have taken a whole segment of the community of poor people and said the problem is we see them. Not that the problem is the federal government out 38 billion dollars in the development of affordable housing for poor people. In 1963 communities across the country started opening shelters because there wasn't money for housing, so there were people in the streets. It was not lack of shelters that created homelessness, folks, it was lack of housing.

"So what we are saying is these homeless people have to be removed from sight so that they're

see Press Release page 3

## An Outline Synopsis of "Illegal to be Homeless" The criminalization of homelessness in the United States

Published by the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty,  
with outreach and organizing by the National Homeless Civil Rights Organizing Project

**Editor's Note:** This synopsis was compiled using the report's own chapter headings. A significant passage was then freely quoted or paraphrased to give a general idea of the chapter contents. The words used are those of the report's authors.  
The full report can be found on the web at: "http://www.national-homeless.org/ct/index2/ct/homeless.html"

### I. Introduction:

#### A. Working Definition of Criminalization

Criminalization is defined in this report as the practice of passing laws against basic life-sustaining activities such as bathing, sleeping, sitting, cooking, etc. in circumstances where people are forced to exist without their own housing. Criminalization is also characterized by selective enforcement. Selective enforcement comprises targeting certain classes or groups of people for arrest if they fail to comply with certain local ordinances, while ignoring others, such as tourists, who commit the same infractions.

#### B. The Housing-Income Gap

The shift over the past two decades of housing support to higher-income households, including the loss of federal preferences and relaxation of targeting requirements for subsidies, has excluded minimum wage earners and recipients of fixed incomes from housing. HUD's change in focus from the creation of new units of housing affordable to very poor people to issuing vouchers, has resulted in a situation where homeless families and individuals often return at deadline with unused vouchers because they could not find a private landlord who would accept them.

There are implications of conscious discrimination in the strategies embraced by developers and city planners who "improve" inner city neighborhoods by replacing deteriorating housing stock with middle and upper income housing and services. Development and neighborhood improvement proponents almost always deny the resulting displacement of poor families and individuals.

#### C. The Income/Employment Crisis

While housing costs are exploding, incomes have not kept pace, and the resulting gap between cost of housing and available income has widened to the point of requiring more than two minimum wage incomes per household to afford housing at HUD's "fair market rents".

The connection between impoverished workers and homelessness can be seen in homeless shelters, many of which house significant numbers of full-time wage earners. In 2001, a survey by the Conference of Mayors in 27 cities found 20% of homeless persons were currently employed. An astonishing 45% of homeless people, nationwide, earn some kind of income.

Families losing welfare benefits as a result of the Family Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act passed in 1996 are finding that even when they transition to employment, the cost of housing is prohibitive, and they remain homeless.

#### D. The Health Care Crisis

Homeless people receiving medication or treatment often do not continue to receive it while in jail. This lack of treatment is particularly harmful, even life-threatening, to those people with chronic illnesses such as HIV, diabetes or hypertension.

Nationally, 16% of inmates in state prisons and local jails, nearly 300,000 people, have a mental illness. According to the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, 1999, there are four times the number of mentally ill in prisons or jails than in state mental hospitals.

Treatment for addicts is not available for more than half those who seek it, yet authorities are willing to continue jailing users at a cost that has jumped from \$7 billion annually in 1990, to \$36 billion in 1996. The National Health Care for the Homeless Council has estimated that one dollar spent on treatment reduces continued use seven times more than one dollar spent on jailing the offender.

#### E. The Emergency

Shelters and transitional facilities are often gender-specific or available only for those people who are employed, have photo identification, or who can pass a criminal records background check. The vicious cycle of criminalization also prevents homeless people from passing scrutiny for admission into transitional and permanent housing because they have arrest records. Homeless men who are detained for "status" offenses often lose their jobs and their shelter.

No community surveyed has sufficient emergency shelter beds on any given night for the number of people homeless and seeking shelter. Needs so far exceed resources that specialized facilities operate at capacity, while thousands remain unsheltered.

### II. Methodology

The national network of organizations and individuals maintained by the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty was used as the basis for contacting local groups and individuals.

The group surveyed fifty-seven cities in twenty-nine states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia to determine the relationship between homelessness and incarceration patterns of local jurisdictions.

### III. Criminalization as Public/Social Policy

#### A. Expediency

Due to lack of adequate housing and services and the subsequent growth in homelessness, many city governments have resorted to the "out-of-sight, out-of-mind" approach that involves sweeping homeless people and their property from public areas. To support the "call the cops" approach, cities create legislation that criminalizes homelessness.

Businesses have organized to create Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). The typical BID involves a quasi-law enforcement force whose job includes, in large part, removing people who appear to be homeless from the BID area. Some BIDs and other private security firms have a history of discriminating against, harassing and physically abusing homeless and poor people in an effort to "cleanup" business districts.

#### B. Economic Motivation

Prisons become the alternative to housing and social services. The national punishment system is now referred to as the "prison-industrial" complex, producing profitable spin-off businesses. Because of their profit capacity, prisons and their attendant businesses have become important to the U.S. economy.

Since incarceration is, as an industry, profitable, there must be people to incarcerate. If violent crime is decreasing then more non-violent offenders must be jailed. We also must look at the means we employ for persuading the populace that mass "punishment" for fabricated crimes (disguised social problems) is acceptable.

The use of prison labor has eclipsed legal prohibitions that were instituted as far back as the 1930's. From cleaning urban streets to manufacturing computer parts, prison labor provides work at a fraction of the cost in the marketplace.

#### C. Racism

In spite of the data that African-Americans constitute only 13% of the country's drug users, they are 37% of those arrested on drug charges, 55% of those convicted, and 74% of all drug offenders sentenced to prison. Of the two million people in prison more than 70% are persons of color.

Although no person of color is safe from this abuse, those people who are homeless and obviously poor are without protection of housing or privacy and are exposed on a

moment-to-moment basis to the disregard of their human and civil rights.

#### D. Political Rationale

Anti-homeless policies are published by groups such as the Community Justice Legal Foundation (CJLF) and the Center for the Community in Interest/American Alliance for Rights and Responsibilities (CCIAARR). These groups draft policies to demonstrate to cities ways of controlling not only private space, but also public space using the rules of private ownership. When this rule of private property excludes people who have no access to private property from the use of public or common property, there is no place from which a homeless person "may not at some time be excluded as a result of someone else's say so." (Dr. Jeremy Waldron, "Homelessness and the Issue of Freedom, UCLA Law Review(1991))

### IV. Costs of Criminalization

#### A. Economic

The costs associated with police enforcement, court procedures, and jail detention are significantly higher, in the long run, than the costs of securing permanent low-income housing.

Harsh criminalization policies breed legal challenges. Anti-homeless ordinances often violate HUD's Consolidated Plan certifications and can jeopardize jurisdiction's access to CDBG, HOME and McKinney-Vento federal funds. These policies also frequently violate federal and state constitutions and expose city governments and police departments to civil liability.

#### B. Social

With dramatically insufficient resources for emergency shelter and services, punishing homeless people for "innocent" public behavior is not only inhumane, it pretends to regard an issue of social exclusion as one of public safety. Ironically, these policies and practices that are designed to bring development into our cities produce the opposite effect.

#### C. Political

Using prisons and jails as social housing exacts a high price from the criminal justice system that is not capable of meeting the needs of its population, from the housed in terms of tax expenditures and from politicians who are ultimately blamed for the failure of this strategy to permanently control groups of people.

The trend toward criminalization and the booming and private prison-industrial complex are "accomplishments" current political leadership, regardless of political party, will claim as a legacy.

#### D. Individual

Criminalization policies are counter-productive because they create barriers for people on the path toward self-reliance and undermine individual efforts to escape poverty. Often people miss employment, public benefits, medical and housing appointments due to incarceration or judicial proceedings related to so-called "quality of life" citations they receive. Further, criminal justice policies do not address the reasons people become and remain homeless. In this way, these policies put and keep more people on the street and increase the homelessness related problems that they are ostensibly put in place to address.

### V. Responses to Criminalization

Unfortunately, there is not yet a national awareness or space on the national agenda for debate on the criminalization of homelessness. Even when lawsuits challenging anti-homeless ordinances are won, the only victory is that homeless people are allowed to exist on the street; these lawsuits do not create affordable housing or accessible services. There are few instances where local business

see "Illegal" page 5



# Press Release

Cont. from page 1

not impacting our quality of life. You got to think about it - who's quality of life are we talking about? The quality of life of poor people who are being put on our streets... or are we talking about the quality of life of politicians using 30 second sound bites to get elected to office by beating on poor people. Just like we've seen in the past, identify the enemy, attack the enemy, and you can get elected to public office. The enemy to this administration, to previous administrations, and to local administrations across the country - is us. And if they see us as the enemy, then we had better get organized, we better get strong, and we better be fighting back.

"The tool that we are using today to fight back is education... We encourage the media to check our documentation, learn the actual issues, put in some time and energy to doing research instead of regurgitating bogus press releases... Because it is us that you are talking about, and we deserve better, we demand better, and we're educating people on our own."

Lillian Hanson, from SHOC, representing CHCROP said:

"California's designation as the meanest state has been felt by organizations working with homeless people in their cities for some time now... Homeless organizing and advocacy organizations and homeless service organizations have come together this last year in response to this crisis and have united to form the California Homeless Civil Rights Organizing Project (CHCROP).

"We have found that expanding our efforts to protecting the civil rights of the homeless in our communities crucial, since past individual efforts have not resulted in curtailing the escalating trend of criminalization of our homeless citizens... CHCROP will not be thwarted from the task of securing the civil and human rights of all homeless people on a state-wide level.

Cliff Crooks of SHOC, Sacramento said:

"Throughout last year people who have been camping out have been arrested and taken to jail. After two or three days in jail they'll be released, sometimes without even being charged. Just for the crime of sleeping, they've no other place to go... We just found a [2000-2001 City Attorney's] report about code violations. If you add up all the other violations together... [in that report], they don't add up to camping violations alone."

Mulaga Topologo from Community Homeless Alliance Ministry, San Jose, said:

"As we look around us it seems in the media the number one priority is to try to ban the homeless. We have rights. In 1948, America joined with the United Nations in signing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Articles 23, 25, 26, guarantee fair and affordable housing, living wages, health care. We don't see that happening.

"America had better wakeup, or we're doomed. In the book of Isaiah it says 'when you mock the least of my people you mock me.' That person who says me is God. It doesn't matter what lie the politicians use to wash their hands, because these kids, these homeless that die on the streets every day, the blood stains will never wash away. We

need to educate ourselves, and talk about a strategy. If we need to go all the way to the nation's capital, we should do so."

Becky Johnson of HUFF (Homeless United for Friendship & Freedom), Santa Cruz, said:

"Santa Cruz has been chosen as one of the 12 meanest cities in the United States to homeless people. I am here to accept this dishonor since the Mayor has declined to come... I can assure you, our city well deserves this recognition. Visitors to Santa Cruz do not know that 1500 to 2000 people are homeless there in a city of 54,000. They do not know that 20 homeless people died there in 2001.

"It is illegal to fall asleep in the city of Santa Cruz between the hours of 11 pm and 6:30 am. It is illegal to cover up with a blanket to keep warm - but only at night. It is illegal to ask for anything of value after dark... It is illegal to sit on the sidewalk within 10 feet of a building. Somehow only homeless people get cited for this ordinance. And only last week the City Council, in a 7-0 vote, passed a resolution to expand the outdoor sidewalk dining area for two Pacific Ave. merchants so the public seating area on a large planter will be privatized, and for the use of paying customers only. This privatization of public space is for one purpose only. It is to 'move along' a class of people... 'illegal to be Homeless' is full of stories like ours. It amply documents the criminalization of a whole class of people for ordinary life-sustaining acts."

Ken Lane of the Coalition on Homelessness in Stanislaus County, Modesto said:

"The city of Modesto and Stanislaus County continue their aggressive campaign and opposition to basic human and civil rights. I'm talking about camping. A vacancy rate of about 1%, an unemployment rate about 12%, no emergency shelter, and the city and county still insist on ticketing and arresting people for camping.

"We at the Coalition have been documenting civil and human rights violations whenever we can... On the fourth of January of this year we received warning from the police department of another sweep. We printed up fliers, notified several service providers, visited the area affected to warn the campers. As a result only two people were ticketed. I would like to add that no personal property at all was confiscated because of the advance warning... The Coalition is constantly in contact with the District Attorney's office regarding the tickets and arrests for camping...

"Through the efforts of the Coalition we have made the county aware of the great need of shelter in our area, and we have committed ourselves to meet with city and county officials until this need is met."

LS Wilson Jr. of the Coalition on Homelessness in SF, said:

"From 1999 through 2001 there were over 51,000 citations given to homeless people here in San Francisco for life sustaining acts such as sleeping, camping, congregating, eating... The San Francisco police and other city departments use so called quality of life laws as a tool to keep homeless people out of sight.

"For years the San Francisco police department has teamed up with the Recreation and Parks Department and the Department of Public Works in organizing campaigns to confiscate homeless people's property. Even though state law mandates that abandoned property be stored for a minimum of sixty days, most of the property confiscated by DPW is tossed directly into trash compactors...

"I feel politicians must prioritize money for much needed services that would truly address some of the needs of our poor and homeless communities. Until that happens, criminalizing homeless people who have no choice but to remain on the streets is inhumane. Solutions to homelessness cannot be found at the end of a night-stick, or through tough love tactics."

Oren Sellstrom, staff lawyer for Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights said:

"We have heard from other speakers that criminalizing homeless is costly, is counter productive, and is bad public policy. Unfortunately, it is a trend that from a legal perspective we are seeing more and more of around the country... more and more homeless people are caught up in the judicial system for the simple reason that they lack affordable housing. And once homeless individuals are forced into the court system, there is usually no justice to be found, even if the law is on their side. In most cases, if you can't afford to hire an attorney, you can't enforce your rights, and if you can't enforce your rights, it's as if you never had them in the first place.

"As a practical matter that means for homeless people that their rights can be and are infringed upon every day across this country, in situations that would never arise if they weren't homeless. For example, you would never see a police officer confront tourists waiting on the street corner with their luggage, throw their luggage into the back of a dumpster, haul it off, and tell the tourists to move along. You wouldn't see that because the law doesn't allow that, and people with means can enforce their rights...

"That's called selective enforcement, going after the homeless, while ignoring the same conduct for others. It is illegal but it goes on every day in this country.

"Fortunately, in some cases, homeless folks and their advocates have successfully challenged unconstitutional laws, they have asserted their rights to be free of selective prosecution. They've won damages for property confiscation... Many of these successes are detailed in the report that is released today. But those successes are not the norm, and we don't fool ourselves otherwise. Ultimately, what homeless folks need is not going to be found inside a court room. What we need is to stop things before they get to the judicial system, to put an end to laws that criminalize the simple act of existing, and to start looking at long term, innovative, permanent solutions that address the root causes of homelessness."

James Tracy, Right to a Roof, SF said:

"I can't say this enough times, the only solution to the homeless situation is housing and living wage jobs. That's it. That's the only thing that is going to put this

away... Everything else is just political rhetoric...

"Cities facing dwindling federal support for federal housing programs choose the very cowardly act of abusing their most impoverished citizens. The signal is clear, they want a city for the rich. If you can't afford to shop here, get out of their Disneyland. But we can fight back, we can build a movement..."

Kimiko Burton read a statement from her father, State Senator John Burton, who was unable to attend:

"I'm certainly glad St. Francis isn't around to see his namesake city labeled one of the meanest in the nation when it comes to homelessness." Senator Burton's statement began.

His statement then went on to discuss a bill he is working on in Sacramento. It is a \$2 billion dollar housing bond that includes \$250 million for emergency shelters, \$140 million for supportive housing, and over one billion for low-income rental housing.

"Unfortunately, the other key area we need to focus on in Sacramento is making sure the state's \$14 billion budget deficit isn't balanced on the backs of poor families, or the elderly, blind and disabled - many of whom are already precariously close to homelessness." His statement ended.

At the close of the fiscal statements about the release of the NCH report, there was an open mike period. One remark notable for its common sense was made by a young lady who did an economic report on criminal law and homelessness for a college class. She said, in brief:

"The economic argument behind criminal law is to raise the economic price of criminal activity so much that people would choose not to do it. If you have this huge punishment for doing something, people will decide to do some other legal activity instead. The thing is though, in criminalizing homelessness, or activities that the homeless tend to do, like camping out on streets, or sitting on the sidewalk, or pan-handling, is that there is no substitute for the activity that they are doing right now.

"If I'm homeless, and I say, OK, I'm going to choose to sleep on the street or not sleep on the street, there is no substitute. There is no legal activity I can choose instead. I can only choose to sleep on the street.

"If you raise the price on that activity, if you tell me instead of getting a ten dollar ticket I'll get a hundred dollar ticket, or I'm going to be put in jail, my income is going to become even less than it was before. I'm going to be forced to do more of that supposedly illegal activity that you choose to criminalize. So you are just going to exacerbate the activity, you're going to make people do it more. If the purpose of criminal law is to deter the criminal activity, you are having the opposite effect here. It is going to actually increase the activity you wanted to deter. It's not going to work."

**You could have your cake and eat it too, if everyone would keep their hands out of your pie - Paula**



# The Life and Times of a Beggarman Troll

"originally published in STREET SHEET, a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco"

by Josh Brandon

I live under a San Francisco bridge and panhandle to survive. It's a hard life — one that I did not choose, nor want to continue.

As a longtime San Franciscan I have lived in housing ranging from a Haight-Ashbury flat to a Tenderloin residential hotel. I have earned my living here by working for a community newspaper, for a non-profit agency, and for San Francisco's Department of Public Health.

My only immediate family is two Siamese cats, Dungee and TL, and a wide circle of friends.

Contrary to the recent sensational headlines in our daily newspapers, I did not wake up one morning and decide that my life would be better if I simply camped beneath a bridge and asked people for change.

I did, however, wake up one morning, went to work for the Health Department as a homeless death researcher (as I had for nearly three years), and was told I was laid off. The last thing my supervisor told me as I cleaned out my desk was that perhaps I could get on SSI — a Federal income security program for disabled people.

The bone in my right hip is dying from lack of circulation, which restricts my mobility. Since I have lived on the streets, my hip condition has worsened with severe arthritis. As a result, I now use a cane to go with my pronounced limp.

My meager unemployment benefits barely covered my rent, and when they ran out I tapped into my pension to keep my housing. Soon, faced with dwindling resources and a tight job market, I had no other option but to move.

It was an inevitable situation. No income usually makes for grumpy landlords, and mine was no different. My choices now were as slim as my wallet.

Going to a shelter came with many problems. For one, shelter space was as rare as Mayor Brown with a warm heart. People are routinely turned away, or compete with one another in a Dickensian lottery where the WINNER gets to sleep in a chair or on the floor. By the time one lottery is over for one shelter, the others are closed, or too far away. And there's no guarantee of space, either, once you do get to the next one.

To make matters worse, most shelters kick people out at 6 am and then ban them from returning until they reopen for the following night.

But the biggest problem is that shelters are a dead end if you really want to leave the streets. Too few people ever enter a shelter and later leave with a key to their own room or apartment. As rare as the shelter spaces are, affordable housing here is even more rare, with even longer waiting lists and even more people competing in housing lotteries for housing vouchers.

I couldn't carry all my possessions on my back or in a cart all day long, not with me using a cane and my two cats to care for as well. So I gimped over and through San Francisco's many bridges until I found one with a nook and cranny away from public view — a place where I could set up a permanent camp where I could keep my clothes and food — and my cats.

Once I settled in, I had to earn money, which I have done since I held my first job picking blueberries when I was five

years old. Although I had papered businesses and non-profits with job applications, I still needed to eat, to buy my medications, to keep my clothes clean, and to feed my cats.

By that time two other homeless people had moved in nearby, and they had money they had earned everyday — enough for them to eat well and take care of their daily needs. They were panhandlers, and they laughed when I told them I could never do that. I am a child of the fifties, when being a beggar was as loathsome as being a politician or lawyer is today.

But they became my mentors.

They explained that they panhandled differently than most people, and they did it by using two cardinal rules. They never asked for change and they were always polite to the people who passed by — even if they swore at you, or called you names, or vented all the fears and frustrations and anger from their own lives at the one group of people who could do nothing in return.

The first day I panhandled was, and continues to be, a hardship. Panhandling is one of the most difficult jobs I have ever had.

I have a morning shift across from Pac Bell on Third Street between Folsom and Harrison Streets. I wake up at 5:30 am, feed my cats, gather my gear, and get cleaned up at a nearby drop-in center or the bus station. By 7:30 am, I am at my spot.

In order to panhandle, I have to psychologically convince myself that I am not begging. I know that I am not the village drunk or the village idiot, but when I am working I do become the village greeter. I never ask the people who pass by for anything, but simply say, "Good morning, Sir (or Ma'am)," and smile. I never sit down, so I can look them directly in the eye with as much pride and confidence as I can pull up from deep inside.

By 10 am the sidewalks are nearly empty, so I take a break and read the newspaper over a cup of coffee. If I need to, I go to St. Anthony's for a meal, then head for my afternoon shift.

I go to a fire hydrant between the Museum of Modern Art and one of the luxury hotels. Here I work, sometimes for several hours, never sitting down, greeting people, and trying to make the best lemonade I can from the worst tasting lemons I have.

By the end of the day, after four or five hours of standing stationary on cold concrete, I can usually make anywhere from \$25-35, roughly minimum wage. But because I am always at those spots at the same time, I can earn this amount almost every day. There are worse days, and there are better days, but both are seldom. I now know several panhandlers; most are happy to get \$15-20 per day and they usually work longer than I do, so I consider myself fortunate.



I have panhandled during the wettest February and December in San Francisco's history, as well as during the hottest July. I have shivered from the cold so violently that my hands turned blue, my cup would shake and I couldn't count my money. I have sweated in the sun so much my clothes were as damp as if I'd been rained upon. My hip has hurt so much from standing that I could barely walk back to my camp, and sometimes I had to crawl to make it up under the bridge.

So when I read our daily newspapers and see the latest media Jihad against homeless infidels who panhandle and don't use shelters, I can only shake my head in disbelief at their arrogant ignorance. Because I am a beggarman troll, I do not steal, or rob, or become violent. I earn my money, and it comes at great personal cost. And I earn my privacy away from the public eye as I quietly, desperately apply for jobs.

But I am still standing on my own two feet — and my cane.

(Street Sheet Editor's Note: Josh Brandon was an editor for the now-defunct Tenderloin Times, and originated the "homeless deaths story" for that publication, later publishing exclusive articles on that topic under his byline for the Chronicle and Examiner. He was also my writing coach back when I was still busy determining whether I wanted to write about homeless deaths, or become one myself. — Chance Martin, San Francisco Street Sheet)

## Loaves & Fishes Christmas Horseshoe Tournament a Great Success

by Heather

Luckily the rain subsided long enough for the annual Christmas horseshoe tournament to take place. The grounds were quite soggy on the brisk Friday morning of December 14, 2001, but the games would still go on! Jesuit Volunteers, known in the park as Shawn and Heather, collected the names of those interested in the tournament about two weeks prior and right up until the morning of the event. Teams of two people signed up and it was a single elimination tournament offering the first place team a set of quality bicycles fixed up by another guest in the park. Second place rendered

velour blankets and the third place team was issued laundry vouchers to City Suds.

There were twelve teams in all and the games were played at a steady pace with barely any interruptions. Those teams making it to the second round of throwing were Ron Esta and Green Hat Garry Cox; Dave Doman and Warren Moody, who both ended up tying for the most ringers in the tournament, deeming them journey MVP's; Ricky Andino and Stan Paulson; Jim Gravely and Rick Wells; Johnny Hackson and David Morgan; and Dustin Olmstead and Tony M. Second round proved to be more competitive and the final three teams that went on to compete for 1st, 2nd, and

3rd were Dave and Warren, Jim and Rick, and Johnny and David. This is where it got down to the nitty-gritty. The first of the two games was played between ringers Dave and Warren and secret stunt throwers Jim and Rick. This game was for first place and put a lot of horseshoe reputations on the lines. The heat was on and Dave and Warren came out on top. Officials Shawn and Heather regrettably forgot to write down the scores but it was a close game.

The last and final game was to decide 2nd and 3rd places. It was a great game will played by Jim and Rick vs. Johnny and David. Although Johnny and David came out as the winners and received the blan-

kets as their prize, they wanted the laundry vouchers more and traded with Rick and Jim who wanted the blankets more (or something like that). Everyone was happy with their prizes and left the tournament feeling a lot more confident with their throwing skills. The tournament was extremely successful and a big thank you goes out to everyone who participated, except of course, Dustin and Tony who skunked Heather and Shawn 7-0 in the first round of play. Thanks to all of our scorekeepers and those who kept Garry Cox from getting too obnoxious about his loss! There will be another horseshoe tournament in the spring so keep practicing!



# Welcome to HOMEWARD:

Please help us make a difference!



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

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

**Submissions and Editorial Policy**  
We welcome any participation or contributions. Articles, poems and other writing can be submitted to the Sacramento Housing Alliance or given to Bits in the library at Loaves & Fishes.

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

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

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

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

Subscriptions are available with a \$15 contribution. Make checks out to SHOC. All correspondence can be sent to HomeWard Street Journal, PO Box 2430, Sacramento, CA 95812.

For information call 442-2156.

The paper may also be E-mailed at HomeWard2@yahoo.com

excerpts from the paper are published on the web at www.geocities.com/homeWard2

SHOC is now on the Web at http://users.cwnet.com/shochome

# MAX'S VIEW

Political Commentary on Poverty Issues

by Max Bidde

In a recent interview on one of the national news programs, a terminally ill man who lives in Oregon was lamenting and asking the question - do the voters really count anymore? Facing death he was taking advantage of Oregon's law that allows physician assisted ending life procedures. He was upset because Atty. Gen. John Ashcroft decided to interfere with Oregon's law. This led to his physician withdrawing his help for fear of the legal consequences that might ensue.

The dying man's question, about the voter's wishes, brings up an interesting phenomena. In the last election the results of the voters will and intent seem to have been ignored on a wide front.

First, lets review the obvious problem of the national election. Al Gore received over a half million more votes than George W. Bush, and had the intent of the Florida voters been truly represented in the election, Al Gore would have carried the state by about ten thousand votes or more. When you put together the nearly six thousand votes cast for Pat Buchanan, where people thought they were voting for Gore, and include the minority votes not counted, there is no doubt that the Florida voter's intentions would have chosen Gore. That is putting aside all the voting machine screw-ups and the interference of the court systems. Also, holding to the archaic and undemocratic use of the Electoral College is a continuing abuse of voter intent.

Then there is the voter intent about the use of medical marijuana. In every state that put it to the voters, the voters approved substantially. But the federal government, under the influence of the religious right and the tobacco industry, who does not want competition, again ignored voter intent, and proceeded to prosecute patients and doctors in the States that had approved medical marijuana use.

Let us consider two other instances where the voters of two states rejected two men for service at the federal level and were ignored by the Bush administration.

Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham and Attorney General John Ashcroft were both rejected by the voters in their respective States to another term in the U.S. Senate. Michigan had determined, after only one term in the Senate, that Spencer Abraham was not worthy for a second term. Likewise, the State of Missouri concluded the same about John Ashcroft, by refusing to return him for a second term in the Senate. By elevating these men to more powerful federal jobs, the Bush administration ignored the judgment of the voters in Michigan and Missouri. Another episode in the continuing political process where the voters judgment continues to be ignored.

The case of Spencer Abraham, elevated to the Energy Department, highlights an irony. As a U.S. Senator, he called for the elimination of the Energy Department, and wanted to turn all energy problems over to the so-called private sector - leaving us at the mercy of more Enrons.

There are numerous examples in the last decade of the voters intent being ignored. The many times that voters have to take to the initiative process because their representatives just won't listen. The car insurance debacle or an insurance commissioner who decided to misuse his funds for personal use. The examples go on and on across the country of voters intent being ignored.

After the last election, investigations across the country determined that as many as four-million votes or more were thrown out or ignored. That the process does not tell you if your vote had been registered or counted. And that the pressures to correct this problem are slowly being ignored. Republicans, especially, have traditionally been opposed to not only correcting this problem, they have always tried to discourage participation in the democratic process by opposing every reform intended to include more voters.

We must reflect with this poor dying man in Oregon that the voters' intent is being ignored. And he must wonder as he succumbs to his illness and goes to his death, if American Democracy will share his coffin.

"An unjust law is no law at all." - St. Augustine

## Joining SHA

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

The SHA does not itself provide or manage housing.

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

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

Organizations:

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

Send donations to:

Sacramento Housing Alliance  
PO Box 2430  
Sacramento, CA 95812

# "Illegal"

cont. from page 2

groups or downtown associations, often the main perpetrators of anti-homeless policies, have been conformed.

Changing the notion of elected officials that homeless people are not registered and do not vote will result in the beginning of political accountability. Solutions come from organizing and collaborating on campaigns like NCH's "You Don't Need a Home to Vote". Thousands of poor and homeless people are becoming registered voters.

## VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

Across the nation, cities are exacerbating homelessness under the pretense of "revitalizing" their neighborhoods. Local governments are creating a national trend of scapegoating homeless and poor people instead of providing permanent exits from homelessness and poverty. Worse still, the increasingly profitable private-prison industry uses homeless people as grist for the labor mill that replaces predatory labor pools. The only way the trend can be reversed is for the policy makers to feel some impact.

### A. Education and Communication

Keeping the data and experiences from local monitoring projects in a national resource repository allows isolated incidents to be communicated among local organizers and then shared at a national level. Legal and advocacy expertise is shared from national to local groups to continue the process of recognizing national trends, common issues and strength in numbers.

### B. Organizing and Direct Action

The action and advocacy agenda is designed through collaboration among homeless people,

providers of housing and support services, members of the legal community as well as concerned community members. Using documented information gathered through outreach, broad community participation, and expertise, this collaboration can develop ways to change ineffective and abusive policies. Fusing outreach, advocacy, direct action, and litigation with policy and program design can produce permanent solutions to poverty and homelessness.

### C. Legal Remedies

Regular court challenges to allegedly unconstitutional laws and policies that impact homelessness continue to provide important victories as well as useful precedents. Less frequently, however, do activists and advocates challenge the legality of zoning regulations and housing exclusion practices that may violate fair housing law.

Still less frequently have groups used HUD's regulations requiring local jurisdictions to certify that they are identifying and removing obstacles to housing and supportive services for poor and homeless people. Connecting each city's treatment of homeless people with its continuing to qualify for other HUD funds will provide enough potential financial impact that there will surely be some response.

### D. Policy Advocacy Statement

That all people will be assured housing, health care, livable income, education and access to public and private accommodations, spaces, and services, regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, age, gender, religion, familial status, sexual orientation, health status, socioeconomic status, or housing status.

Perhaps the greatest threat to freedom and democracy in the world today comes from the formation of unholy alliances between government and business. This is not a new phenomenon. It used to be called fascism... The outward appearances of the democratic process are observed, but the powers of the state are diverted to the benefit of private interests.

- George Soros, international financier  
Open Society: Reforming Global Capitalism  
(New York: Public Affairs, 2000), xi.



# Homeless in El Paso, Texas

reprinted with permission from the Denver Voice, Denver, CO

by Al Bliss

I knew it was a mistake but I knocked on the door anyway. Dressed in blue jeans, white tennis sneakers and checkered shirt, Walter invited me inside his apartment. After dinner, he had a fresh cup of coffee and a dish of Butter Pecan ice cream. I refrained. During desert is when the first argument started.

"Who are you this time?"

"What are you talking about? I'm your brother, Al!"

"Are you now? There are things about you that don't jive."

"Like what?"

"Every time I see you, you are a different person. First you were a manic/depressive, then an alcoholic, then a hitchhiking poet."

"Those were stages of my development, Walt."

"Development! Give me a break! Now you are fasting? You never did that before!"

"I met this Hindu on the bus to New Jersey and he taught me the proper way to meditate."

"So now you are a homeless Buddha? What about the money you owed the loan shark?"

"Walt, I was playing the role of a gambler. I told you that."

"It was more than just a role! Actors don't borrow \$5000, especially when they can't pay it back. Isn't that why you went to Alaska, because you needed the money to pay off the dept?"

"I got a job on Arctic Enterprise, spent four months processing fish in Alaska because I wanted to play the role of the deep sea fisherman."

"And now you are back here, still homeless and still poor."

"Life is an adventure, Walt. I can't be just one person! I would turn into a dope addict if I had to play the same role everyday, in every city I visit."

"A homeless dope addict I can understand, you I do not understand!"

"I refuse to settle into one tight little cubbyhole role. What is so hard to understand about that? There is no national law that says if I'm homeless I must behave like a needy user or compulsive booster or lazy grubber!"

Eleven days later it was time for me leave. My backpack was stuffed when I walked out to the parlor.

"Where are you going, Al?"

"To a homeless shelter. I know I'll find love and understanding among the poor and the alienated. Goodbye, Walter."

Monday, November 7, the coach arrived in El Paso Texas. My first steps were eastbound, six blocks from the depot, till I got to the "Opportunity Center", I walked in the door, stood in front of the contact counter and waited for help. I was third in line but I could see the clerk. He was one of the homeless residents here, I'm sure of it, doubling as a shelter monitor. In lots of the ghettoes I've visited, homeless men often play this dual role.

"Next."

A joint like this is called a "Day Center," a spot where I can hole-up for the day. A place like this also doubles as homeless shelter, a serene locale where I can sleep and eat and shower.

"Next."

The clerk sat on his chair, hands clasped behind his head, swiveling slightly as he answered questions. He had one of those horseshoe mustaches, over the lip and down to the chin. Bursting from his unbuttoned short sleeve shirt was curly tangled red hair. Behind the clerk was a blackboard with writing, announcing the schedule of this morning's services. I noticed his half-heart shaped ears were streaked with the white chalky powder.

"Next."

"Hey brother, I'm new in town and I'm sort of mixed up. Do you think I could stay here for a while till I pull myself together?"

"All you need to use our services is a picture identification card and a social security card. Do you have those, Al?"

I gave Corey the documentation and he filled out my application, photo copying my personal information and stapling it to the intake form. We talked about the offerings at Opportunity Center, stuff like food, clothing, meds, laundry and etceteras.

"How did you find out about this place, Al?"

"I travel around the country, Cor. I rap with lots of homeless travelers and we share information. This dude from the Kansas City Rescue Mission had good vibes about this place and recommended it to me. The folks here treated the brother with kindness and respect. Right now, I can use a hefty dose of that treatment."

"So, Opportunity Center got a five star review?"

"Yeah."

"Are American homeless shelters that different from one another?"



"One location is pretty much like another, mostly. The poor people at LA's Midnight Mission are as homeless as the poor people at New York City's Bowery Mission. It's the folks running the shelters that make the difference, dig?"

"A bunch of train hoppers stop off here and then take off. I'm curious, Al. If one spot is like another, why do you guys travel?"

"I don't know who I am. I travel to find myself."

"What do you mean, you don't know who you are?"

"An alcoholic knows who he is. A day worker knows who he is, too. As I stand here now, I have a body and I have a name and a social security number but I don't know who the fuck I am."

"Hook up with Steve Mills, Al."

"Who is he?"

"One of the ca seworkers at Opportunity Center. He's about six feet tall, has a full beard and short grayish brown hair." Corey looks around the day room. "He's often down here rapping with the brothers and sisters. You'll spot him easily."

"Do you have your GED?"

"Yeah."

"Steve can you into get into El Paso Community College. And once in there, you can be whatever you want to be."

"College ain't for me, bro."

"Cool. We have classes here, right inside the Opportunity Center."

"What kind of classes?"

"Want to be a cook? We have classes here and Steve can get you in. Want to learn to use computers? He can get you in that class. Want to learn how to speak Spanish? He can get you into the English as Second Language class."

"I already speak English."

"So! You can learn to speak Spanish by helping the Mexican Americans speak English! You have to belong to be. Think about it, Al."

A line had formed behind me, so we had to cut the conversation short.

Tired and sweaty from the two-day bus trip, I needed to clean up. I put my name on the shower list and waited in the "Day Room," a huge open space with tables and chairs. A bunch of dudes and dudesses were puffing on cigarettes. I heard an exhaust fan spinning, sucking the tobacco smoke out of the room. The more sociable residents played five-card stud. The loners read the El Paso Times or talked to themselves, while others snored.

My knapsack was on the floor, between my legs. The sack was heavy, forty pounds of clothes and whatnots. When at the counter, I asked Corey about getting a locker but none were available. I asked him about a storage closet but, according to house rules, I needed a handbag or a backpack to store my excess stuff. I don't have to tell you how heavy a pack can get.

"Albert Bliss! Shower!"

Volunteers provided towel, soap and shaving cream. I got fifteen minutes under the nozzle and man did that feel good. After the shower and shave I meditated inside the dayroom. I looked mysterious to the other residents, I suppose, sitting on the floor with legs and eyes crossed, like a homeless Siddhartha.

At twelve o'clock I had a bowl of veg soup, a pepper salami sandwich on white bread with mustard, a piece of fruit and a cup of orange Tang.

After the meal I toured the area. From the bus depot I walked along Santa Fe Street and then turned right on El Paso. Outside the storefronts I saw product in cardboard boxes, Mexican cupie dolls, Indian-made belts and kiddy toys that made weird sounds. The strip was sunny and tranquil, reminding me of quality time I spent slacking on Los Angeles Avenue, Los Angeles California. A solo male was up ahead, singing a song and strumming his guitar. I listened to a couple of numbers and then dropped two dimes into his guitar case.

A retailer stood outside an electronic shop, smiling at the passersby.

He called me, waving me over. "Senor! Senor!"

As I crossed the street I saw he was fifty years old and stout. His mahogany cowboy boots were spit shined and his pants were creased, like his bronze facial skin. The boots made him look taller than his five foot four inches. His brown suede Stetson brim provided shade from the harsh sunny glare.

"You need a job, senior?"

"For today?"

"No. I need a strong man like you to work six and half days per week. I will pay you \$6 per hour."

"I quit working full time jobs, senior."

"Que?"

"Five years ago, I worked for General Motors. I started out as a stockman and moved up to selling auto parts over the counter. Eventually I became the Parts Manager. The money was excellent. I got paid sick days and four weeks vacation time. I got tired of the job, though. I needed to be more. I needed more intensity from my life senior, so I became a homeless wanderer."

We stood under the hot Texas sun. He twirled the cigar in his mouth and I adjusted the straps of my backpack.

"As a young man, I did traveled all over America. I picked apples in the State of Washington; I worked on cattle farms in Texas and I picked grapes in California. I was looking for meaning to my life, senior."

"Did you find meaning?"

"No. And what you seek does not exist, senior. Life is what it is, *mis o menos*." He paused a moment. "I see that you are wearing a 'Big Easy' baseball cap. I've always wanted to visit the French Quarter."

"Why don't you go? Louisiana is not far from here."

"No time, senior. I have a business to run and a family to feed."

"I spent two months in New Orleans. When I first got there I slept on the banks of the Mississippi River. I caught two catfish and cooked them over a fire. Most nights I had beans and beer. What a life! I felt like Huckbeery Finn."

"What happened, senior?"

continued next page →



"It started to rain a lot so I moved."  
 "To a hotel?"  
 "To a place called Ozanam Inn. It's homeless hotel where the rent and food are free."  
 "How did you get the money to buy beer?"  
 "I earned my money on Bourbon Street, playing the role of the panhandling moocher. I made mucho coin senior, drank mucho beer and had a motherfucking pissar but after three months of doing the same routine, I had enough. The role got old, understand?"  
 "S!"  
 "I kept playing the poor beggar man part, even though I didn't like what I was doing."  
 "Why did you beg if you did not like to beg?"  
 "Because it was easy pickings and because that was all I knew how to do. You should have seen me! I played my gig to a prime tourist audience, hand out, legs bent, tears falling down my cheeks, next to tap dancers and trumpet players and blues singers."  
 I left the proprietor there, smiling at the pedestrians who passed in front of his store. What else was there to talk about? That I love the bohemian life? That I change roles in order to squeeze more intensity into my existence? He had his life down pat. He knew who he was and I did not.  
 Meandering about the streets, I walked down a narrow alley and saw an abandoned handbag. I crouched down, unzipped my pack and took half of my belongings out, dividing the contents between the knapsack and the handbag.  
 Up ahead two homeless dudes, a Black and a Mexican, were passing a quart of vodka. I sat next to Chocolate on the asphalt, between two dumpsters, in a spot where pedestrians couldn't see us. Both vagrants were in their late forties, like me. Chocolate had conky hair, small ears and a square jaw. Pedro had light brown skin. Apparently he had fallen because there were dried blood scabs on his hands and nose and cheek. Pedro hardly spoke English and was nearly blacked-out. When the vodka was killed, I went into a bodega, bought a six of beer and a bag of pretzels. My head was right so they split the suds.  
 "Ever been to Seattle, bro. I hear it's a bum's nirvana!"  
 "I spent quality time in Emerald City, bro. Of all the American slums that I have visited, there is nothing that matches Seattle's services for the poor."  
 "What about LA?"  
 "Los Angeles is a close second."  
 "Man, Seattle is way up in the left corner of the map." He turned and pointed to a spot on the dumpster. "Here's El Paso, way down here. Seattle is way up here. When I go to the library I always look at maps. What did you do way up there, man?"  
 "I kept searching for the new me?"  
 "Say what?"  
 "The slums that I visit are my stage. Whenever I visit a fresh slum I play-out a new character. I've been a chronic alcoholic, a tin can and plastic bottle collector, a boardwalk harmonica playing bum, a street man's writer and more."  
 "Sounds like you are an actor!"  
 "All of us play a role."  
 "Innerestin!"  
 "Anyway, when I rolled into Seattle I did not know who I was. I walked till my legs pained me, day and night, till I could walk no more. I had no part to play so I returned to the role of the hapless drunkard. I woke from my stupor early one morning and found myself inside the pit of a construction site, beneath a pile of bent rebar and wood slats. I cleaned myself up at a joint called "Urban Rest Stop," where Seattle's vagrant population shower, wash clothes and use rest rooms without hassle. I returned to the construction site, hid three forty ounce bottles of Cobra Beer under my bed of wood planks. Through half drunk eyes I observed the work force. They were sitting under a makeshift roof eating lunch, backs against a brick wall, invisible to pedestrians but not to me. What struck me between the eyes was that the workers were mostly middle aged male Caucasians. I saw Blacks, Vietnamese and women but they were just tokens, dig?"  
 "I dig!"  
 "I got clean and sober and spoke to caseworkers about getting me a construction job. Not that I really wanted the job but I wanted to see where my questions would lead."  
 "You don't know how to operate machinery," is what I was told.  
 I spoke to homeless activists about getting my butt into a school that could teach me how to operate bulldozers and forklifts and other pieces of heavy equipment.  
 "I called the union hall Al, and the business manager said your name is on the waiting list."

It seemed that whoever I spoke with stonewalled me. A couple more interviews yielded a whole lot of nothing, until I had an insight. I wasn't doing this to get a job for me. I was doing this to open doors for the homeless brothers and poor sisters that I slept with, that I ate with, that I fornicated with."

Pedro was now unconscious. He leaned his head on my shoulder. Chocolate and I laughed.  
 "Where was I?"  
 "You said you were trying to get a union hard hat job to open doors for other homeless."  
 "I began instigating people of color to take a stand, to fight for the right to work on a construction job site. Wherever I went, soup kitchens and rescue shelters and day centers, I incited vagrants out of their slumber. I visited newspaper joints and prompted journalists to interview homeless people, about working for chump change at temporary job agencies; about working on hazardous jobs without proper equipment (boots, rain gear, dust masks); about being excluded from union jobs because we were homeless. Overnight I became a homeless activist. I found the new me."  
 "Right on!"  
 "I graduated to the next stage of my development as a homeless man."  
 "I'm still at stage one, trying to get beyond this bottle." Chocolate picked up the liquor bottle and threw it against the wall.  
 "What happened, bro? How come you ain't up there doing the activist thing?"  
 "As soon as I got the role down pat, I felt the urge to self-destruct."  
 "Man! Too bad! You were on a roll."  
 I looked at my wristwatch. "Wow! It's six o'clock! It's time for me to split."  
 "Taste this, bro." Inside his cupped hand were seven or eight tiny pills. "Ecstasy, bro. I sell 'em for two dollars a hit."  
 "I've had enough, man."  
 "Enough? We just fucking started!"  
 "I practice self control. If I do any more I'll be breaking my rules."  
 "Oh! Listen to this shit, Pedro." He shook his buddy awake. "Take that control shit and stick it up your fucking ass!"  
 "S!" Pedro added, shaking his fist and spraying me with saliva. "Get fuck outta here!"  
 I reached the Opportunity Center, walked right through the front door and sat down. Most homeless shelters have basic rules for reentry and especially for those guests who are staying the night. Generally they'll ask me to do a breathalyzer test (check my breath for alcohol content) before they let me inside. Some shelter bosses do a shake-down upon entry, checking my person for weapons. I'm not a child. I know that if I'm soused I'm out. Here, they did not check my breath and they did not "bottle me," (make me take a piss test).  
 "Chow time!"  
 All the tenants marked their chairs with a book or a bag and took a spot in the line. I did the same. The line inched along, following the shape of the wall. When we reached a long wooden picnic table, we had to print and sign our names to a roster. When I got to the top of the ramp, the cafeteria volunteer gave me a plate of spaghetti with meat balls and red gravy. I took my tray, nodded to the volunteer server and found a seat.  
 "Seconds!"  
 The beggars and the maimed, the addicted and the dejected formed a line that looped around the hall. An ancient human rite, for sure. The hungry homeless approached the food window for a second helping, with disposable plate and plastic fork in hand. Each gave gratitude by means of a smile or a nod and returned to their seats.  
 I've been here for only one day and I'm no closer to finding out just who I am but there is something that is bedrock human about this place. I know that you know what I'm talking about vagrant brother/homeless sister but I gotta say it anyway, if only to enlighten the non-homeless. At Opportunity Center, like other homeless monasteries around the United States of America, I see no racism, hear no rich folk exploiting poor folk, smell no effort to keep up with the Jones', feel no pressure to behave the "correct" way and taste no malice for my fellow vagrants. For a bum like me, who sheds old roles and adopts new personas, the homeless shelter is the perfect place to evolve into an authentic human being.

While volunteers folded the tables and mopped the floor, guys and gals watched television. Others chewed the gift out of earshot, displaying respect for the people who watched the tube. Around eight o'clock tenants found a premium space and lay down. I was stone tired and followed suit. I grabbed a blue mat and a gray blanket from an open closet. I saw spot on the floor, squeezed between a Black and a Mexican and fell asleep.


The next morning, Tuesday, November 8, I was up at four o'clock meditating. My thought was fixed on the image of a wandering homeless monk. At five I pulled on my socks and tied my bootlaces. After returning the blanket and mat to the closet, I got on the breakfast line. Because I'm fasting, I ate one donut and drank one cup of coffee. A couple of hours later three fellows walked into the Center grabbed as many "barber chairs" and started cutting hair. I put my name on the haircut list. I learned that every Tuesday at nine o'clock, Elders (student-ministers) from the Church of Later Day Saints gave free cuts. At fifteen minutes to ten Elder Davies, a twenty something blond with light complexion and pink puss pimples did me good. He gave me what I asked for, a cut to the skin, with only bristles on top.

At ten-thirty I got a tuberculosis test. Anna Luisa pricked the soft side of my forearm with a point. I held the sterilized cotton ball over the needle hole while she dated my file. In most shelters the TB test is mandatory; here it was voluntary. That's another thing I dig homeless cloisters, they respected my right to choose.

I left the nurse's office, returned to the day room and sat cross-legged on the floor. ☺



**Edward Burns**  
"Ned"



Of natural causes at 81 years old

Ned was a volunteer at L&F for about 14 years. He started in the Dining Room, went to the Hope House, and for the last six years worked in the Library.

---

**Michael Quinn**  
dob 4/4/39  
d. 1/19/02  
Found lying outside in the 1700 block of 59th St.  
Cause of death pending

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**Charles Jay**  
age 62  
d. 1/31/02  
in his sleep at Salvation Army



# HOMELESS RESOURCES

## Night Shelters

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

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

**Union Gospel Mission:** 400 Bannon St. Beds for Men Only, sign up 8:30pm at mission, Newcomers/Referrals have priority, 7:30pm Chapel Service with meal afterwards, 6am breakfast for residents, Showers /shaves 9-11am & 1-2:45pm, open to all homeless men: 447-3268

**SADHC, Sacramento Area Emergency Housing Center:** 4516 Parker Ave. 24 hr; Family Shelter, Families, single adults with children who have no other resource; Women's Refuge, single women, no children; Call for screening/space availability 455-2160

## Day Shelters

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

## Meals

(Times may vary, call to make sure)

**Daily Union Gospel Mission:** 400 Bannon St. 7 days. Evening meal, Men/Women: Church service 7:00pm required, dinner following 8:30-9:15pm; Sunday 11am service, lunch at noon. 447-3258

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

**Women's Civic Improvement Center:** 3555 3rd Ave. 11:30-12:30 lunch M-F 452-2866

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

**Wellspring 2414 4th St. T&T full breakfast:** M-W-F continental breakfast for women and children. 454-9668

see Wind in Youth Services for young adults

## Limited Days

**Monday:** Stanford Settlement: 5:30-6:00 pm 3525 Norwood, No. Sac 566-6419

**Tuesday:** Church Temple Apostolic 12:00 9000 La Rivera Way & Folsum 857-1589  
Calvary Christian Center

7pm 2665 Del Paso Blvd. 929-1586  
St. Philomena's 6pm 2320 El Camino at Bell

**Wednesday:** Hillhaven Comm. Outreach 6-7pm Firehouse 810 Grand Ave, Del Paso Heights. 566-2428 (call about transportation)  
Holy Family 8:30pm 8717 Old Auburn Rd, C.H. 721-1176  
4th & 5th Wed. only St. Ignatious 3245 Arden Way 482-8666 x217

**Thursday:** Church Temple Apostolic 12:00 La Rivera Way & Folsum 857-1589

St. Lawrence 6pm 4325 Don Julio Blvd., N. Highlands 332-4777

**Friday:** Last Friday of month T.L.C. 8:00 Robertson Center 3525 Norwood 566-6419

**Saturday:** 3rd Sat. month Bible Way Overcoming Church 12:00 Roberson Center 3525 Norwood 922-0421

**Sunday:** Sac. Food Bank 12-1 3333 3rd St. Bag lunch  
Sunday Lunch: Food-not-Bombs serves free food in Cesar Chavez Plaza, 9th & J St., every Sunday 1:30 pm. All Welcome.

## Free Clothing

**Sacramento Food Bank:** 3333 3rd Ave. (at Broadway) 10am-2pm Mon - Fri. 456-1580

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

## Medical

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

**Capital Health Clinic:** 1500 C St. (near 15th) Adults 8-5 M, W, and Th., also child's vaccinations & vet-clinic: 440-5302.

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

## Mental Health

**Guest House,** 1400 N. A St.: Homeless Mental Health Clinic, M,W,Th,Fri., 8-11:30am Tues 8-11:30am only. Mental Health evaluation, medication if needed. Housing referrals for mentally ill. OA refs, SSI appt. refs to A & D counseling: 443-6972

**TLC'S Emergency Outreach:** 1400 No. A St. 24hr answering machines; adults; referrals to clinics; help w/SSI appt. booking. M-F 9am-4pm 443-2996

**Consumer Self-Help (South):** 3031 Franklin Blvd. or 4972 Dale Ave. A daytime mental health self-help program with activities and groups for mental health consumers. Referrals to mental health and other services available. 727-7100

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

## Youth Services

**Diogenes:** youth 16-21 yrs old. Hot Line call 1-800-338-7177

**Wind Youth Center:** 300 Ahern St. Serves youth ages 12-19. Serves breakfast and lunch, offers clothing, case mgmt. and access to emergency shelter. Open six days: M-W & F from 8:30am to 1pm and Sat 11am to 12:30pm. Youth outreach.

## Crisis Intervention

**WEAVE:** Services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children. Referrals to court mandated battery intervention programs. Safe house. 24 hr. crisis line: 920-2992

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

## AIDS / HIV

**AIDS Housing Alliance** provides residential care, transitional housing & permanent housing services to homeless persons living with aids. 979-0897 weekdays.

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

**Breaking Barriers:** Homeless Outreach Program provides direct services to people living with AIDS and HIV. Transportation to social services, medical appointments.

job interviews, and housing assistance. 447-2437

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

## Legal Aid

**Protection & Advocacy Inc.:** Free legal services for people with disabilities. Call for appt. toll free. TTY: (800) 778-5748

**Legal Services of Northern California, Inc.:** 515 12th St. (at E St.) M-F 8:30am-12pm, 1pm-5pm. Problems with public benefits, landlord/tenant, divorce clinic. Call for appt. 444-0700

**Welfare Rights:** 1901 Alhambra Blvd. (2nd floor) M-F 9am-5pm. AFDC, Food Stamps, Workfare and Medical rep at hearings. 738-0616

**Health Rights Hotline:** 861-2100

## Miscellaneous

**Francis House:** 1422 C St. 9:30-11:30 am M-F. walk-in or referrals provides resource counseling, advocacy, emergency vouchers and referrals 1-3 pm weekdays. 443-2646

**Social Services (Workfare):** 28th & R St. M-F 7:30am-5pm. Call for asst. & location. 732-3156. TANF 732-3456. GA 732-3459. Food stamps, 732-3500

**Employment Development Department (EDD):** 2901 50th St. (at Broadway) or 8230 Big Horn Blvd. M-F 8am-5pm. Unemployment, job services. 227-0300

**Medi-Cal:** 4875 Broadway M-F 8am-5pm 732-3400 7220 24th St. (at Hont) M-Th 8-11am, 1-3pm Fri 8-11am. Phone ap OK, ID needed 399-4551

**Social Security Office:** 8351 Folsom Blvd (College Greens Line-rail stop) M-F 9am-4:30pm 381-9410. Toll line 1-800-772-1213

**Infoline Sacramento:** Tele-info & referral service: 498-1000

**California Youth Crisis Line:** 1-800-843-6200

**VA Outreach:** 923-8787

## CLASSIFIED

Mail your classified to the Homeward office or submit it at the paper meeting every Wednesday at 10 am at Loaves & Fishes. One ad free to private parties and non-profits. Try to keep it under 25 words.

## Donations Wanted

**Loaves & Fishes Retail Store**  
1225 N. 'B' St.,  
Open 10 am to 3 pm  
Mon-Sat.  
Donations of unwanted items appreciated.

## Jobs Wanted

Give hope and happiness. Give a job, such as moving or yard work, to a homeless worker.

Call  
**Loaves & Fishes**  
job phone at  
446-9316;

Or mail to  
**Loaves & Fishes, Jobs for Homeless,**  
PO Box 2161,  
Sac, CA 95812

## Special Thanks to Volunteers:

**Paula,  
Art  
Lillian,  
Lee,  
Arlene**



**Aud Kowler**  
1009 L St.

**The Metro**  
11th and K St.

**Bibb Street Cafe**  
700 H St.

**Bakery and Donuts**  
1122 11th St.

**Tony's Deli and Mart**  
1131 J St.

**Cyssa Book**  
930 J St.

**Lianos**  
1474 10th St.

**Weatherstone Coffee**  
813 21st St.

**The Book Collector**  
1008 24th St.

**Bluff & Bluff**  
914th and H St.

**F.D. Coffee Shop**  
19th and L St.

**Geeta Coffee Shop**  
19th and Capitol

**Noah's NY Bagels**  
1901 J St.

**Beers Books**  
15th and L St.

**Dubois Importing Co.**  
1877 J St.

**Sacramento Public Library**  
826 J St.

**Senior Citizens Center**  
3 and 27th St.

and a special thanks to our  
**Underwriters:**

**Robert Norse  
Cathleen Williams**

**Yes!**

I want to see **HOMEWARD**,  
a newspaper produced by homeless people, and read in Sacramento.  
Enclosed find my donation of \$15 for a one year subscription.  
Please mail my copies to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street & Apt: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to the Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee (SHOC) and mail to: P.O. Box 2430, Sacramento, CA 95812

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