

HOSPITALITY

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Who Owns The Streets?

By Denise Laffan

When six members and friends of the Open Door were arrested last July during a demonstration at the opening of Underground Atlanta shopping mall, who owned the street on which they were arrested?

The answer to this question could determine the outcome of the trial in which five of the six face charges of disrupting a lawful gathering. (One demonstrator pleaded out.) That trial, scheduled for March 13 and 14, was postponed until May 2 and 3 after lawyers for the Open Door objected to new charges filed just 10 days before the March trial date.

The new charge, disrupting a lawful gathering, replaces the original charge of criminal trespassing, which the state chose to drop. Instead of saying the five had no right to be present, it is accusing the demonstrators -- Ed Loring, Elizabeth Dede, Ty Brown, Pete Stinner and Steve Clemens of Koinonia Partners -- of breaking the law because they were too loud.

But was it a lawful gathering? Underground and city officials never applied for a permit to hold the event in that area. Also, lawyers for the Open Door are seeking documents and contracts to determine whether the section of Underground where the demonstrators were arrested is owned by the city or by private developers. If the street is public, as the lawyers contend, then the demonstrators had as much right to be there as ceremony officials.

The event featured then-Mayor Andrew Young, who stopped speaking when the Open Door and Koinonia demonstrators chanted and shouted questions as to why federal money reserved for housing for the poor was diverted into building the glitzy stores for the Underground.

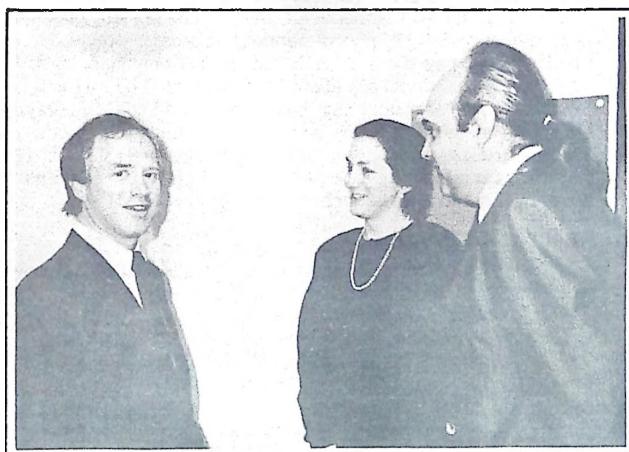
If the jury agrees that the demonstrators had as much right as Andy Young to be present that day, that verdict could help our homeless friends who are often harrassed with charges of criminal trespass by police in downtown Atlanta.

The judge presiding over the trial must decided whether to insist these documents should be produced and whether Andrew Young should be subpoenaed to appear as an eyewitness to the event. Michael Hauptman, a lawyer from the American Civil Liberties Union who is representing some of the defendants, said he also would like to call the former mayor (and Georgia governor candidate) as a character witness for Ed Loring because Andy Young is well acquainted with Ed's work as an advocate for homeless people. Judge Frank M. Hull is expected to rule on these motions soon.

The courtroom 206 in the State Court of Fulton County was filled with members and friends of the Open Door on March 13, and all are invited to come and lend their support on May 2, the new trial date.



Character witnesses Jay Frazier and C.M. Sherman stand behind defendants Peter Stinner, Elizabeth Dede, Ed Loring, Ty Brown, and Steve Clemens.



Counsel for the Defense: Brian Spears, Sandy Michaels, and Michael Hauptman (l. to r.)

Responses to the Ponce de Leon Development Committee

Editor's note: Ed Loring prepared this proposal for the Ponce de Leon Revitalization Committee. Many folk in our neighborhood are concerned about the homeless folk. Together we can respond in love and justice building a better business climate and a more just city for the poor and oppressed.

1. Basic to our problems are shelter and housing. This problem is soluble. We need to build Single Room Occupancy apartments throughout the city of Atlanta. We could reduce the homeless population by more than 65% immediately.

This problem and its solution have the following considerations: (a) neighborhoods are opposed to SRO's in their area; (b) the Atlanta Zoning Review Board and City Council have not yet developed ordinances and zoning laws which help us build SRO's. In fact, the recent Lake Clair Neighborhood decision against such a hotel exacerbates our problems on Ponce de Leon Ave.

There are resources for the solution of this problem: (a) developers who wish to build SRO's exist; (b) a few such places are under construction; (c) Mayor Maynard Jackson and several City Council members are interested in this response.

2. Another basic need for our city, and especially for our Ponce de Leon Ave. area, is Day Shelters for the homeless. The hell of homelessness is having nothing to do and nowhere to go. Day Shelters need to be placed near the direct services (e.g., shelters, soup kitchens, public libraries, part-time job opportunities, etc.). We could easily develop a Day Shelter in our neighborhood which would be a good place for the homeless and also greatly reduce their wanderings.

We have resources to meet this need:
(a) several churches who work with the homeless;
(b) the vacant library at St. Charles and Highland;
(c) interested business leaders who have property in our neighborhood.

3. Creation of Non-profit Labor Centers and reform of the present Labor Pools are a must. 40% of the homeless work and another 25% want to work. Many folk in our neighborhood cannot maintain jobs because the pay is low and the hours are few. Mr. Joe Martin of Central Atlanta Progress and others in this city are working to create alternative ways for people to find work and to get needed support while working. Jobs at a living wage are a must if we are going to be able to reduce homelessness and poverty in our neighborhood and city.

Yes, together we can address these issues and create an environment which is filled with life and joy for all people. Let us begin by appointing a sub-committee to make recommendations for a Day Shelter in our neighborhood. Let us go on record as supporting the construction of 6,500 units of SRO's to be dispersed throughout the city including our neighborhood. And let us give support to our leaders like Joe Martin and Mayor Maynard Jackson as they work to build alternative Labor Centers and Housing in Atlanta. As we help the helpless we also help ourselves.



HOSPITALITY is published 10 times a year by The Open Door Community (PCUS), Inc., an Atlanta community of Christians called to ministry with the homeless poor and with prisoners, particularly those on death row. Subscriptions are free. A newspaper request form is included in each issue. Manuscripts and letters are welcomed. Inclusive language editing is standard. For more information about the life and work of The Open Door and about others involved in ministry to Atlanta's homeless, please contact any of the following:

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6:30 AM

My God, My God, Why Have I Forsaken You?

My God has never driven a bulldozer.

by Ed Loring

Never once, but by breath, has she
Torn and twisted houses and left the
Residents to die on the streets. Hated by the housed.

So, then, how did it happen? When urban
Renewal brought yellow bulldozers onto green grass
To make the red clay bleed over the black top
Soil of Black neighborhoods for green sheets
of paper at white folks' will? The drivers of
bulldozers are never color blind.

Falcons fly far from the Hawks as aging
Braves batter the winds for profits. Where, once
in this city, old women dipped snuff and old
men listened to the stock market crash outside the windows
of their homes. Children cried and danced as children are
wont to do.

How did it happen? My God, Yahweh is the
name, never drove a bulldozer. Oh, of course, every
city from Babylon to Jerusalem has had a crazy
Jane who flees from the Bishop's boy. . . . but the
Interstate Highway--12 lanes wide--paved over the
lives and dreams and homes of 10 times 4,000
people. And their children and their children's
children walk the hopeless streets hopelessly.

And I, once a homeowner in Lake Claire, I
learned from the murderer Cain that I am
my sister's keeper, and my brother's, too.
So, I am dreadfully
confused: I, white male. . . . upper class. . . . exceptionally
well-educated. . . . I, with open hands, simply ask
How did it happen? My God who has donned
a cross to death has never driven a bulldozer.

My God, my God, why have I forsaken you?

The Hate that flows in the streets
The vile accusations against the poor
that spews forth at a city council hearing
The neglect of children
The demand by the neighborhoods that SRO's
Never, never, never be built in my neighborhood
(while simultaneously saying they
must be built somewhere)

The hunger for the hurt that Police
can inflict on those we cannot convict
because their crime is only poverty
and the horrible consequences of penury

The building of play places with Domes,
Tall buildings for those who eat
Pheasants for breakfast
The deafness that blunts the
cry of the poor
The blindness that leads
bright minds to see only scum,
inhuman animals, winos, bastards,
s.o.b.s and lazy no good drunks. . . .

All these lies and carnal weapons
of hate and murder
is making our Lord God Almighty
consider:

Slowly, oh so, very slowly climbing
up onto the seat of a big yellow
bulldozer and driving through
the lanes of the rich and powerful
who do not turn their lives to
the children, the men, the women
who are homeless



She may simply do it by her breath.

"I am coming like an enemy from the
North. Like my child General William T.
Sherman before me, with fire in my fingers
unless you
change your filthy language and wash
your mouths with soap.

"Unless you no longer call my daughter
"scum" and my son "you worthless bastard."
Instead you must say "my sister" and
"my brother."

"I am on my way to Atlanta like an
enemy from the North," says the God
of Exodus, "Unless you build housing
for the homeless, unless you feed the
hungry, not crumbs from your table, but
from the menu of their own choosing.

"I am mounting the bulldozer, its diesel
engine is hot, the exhaust now burns. You
must, Oh mongers of the wealth, you,
who sit on thrones of walnut and cushions
of velvet, pay all workers a living wage
and provide good work."

Thus says the Lord, "I love you Atlantans!
Turn away from your stupid greedy ways
let us and all peoples build houses and
live together.
Or I shall be coming from the North. . . ."



Labor Pools

By Denise Laffan

Gregory Lockett remembers the first time he sought work at one of Atlanta's labor pools, he was newly released from prison and in desperate need of cash.

After working eight hours, Greg went to collect his wages and was stung in disbelief at his reward for a full day's labor: \$21. That amount would never cover his needs for shelter and food and yet it was and is the standard wage for the thousands who seek employment at Atlanta's day labor pools.

"I'm almost ready to cry," Greg said, recounting his thoughts following his harsh introduction to labor pools. "I'm homeless and I need money."

Greg was one of five panelists at the March 1 inaugural meeting of the Atlanta Coalition for Labor Pool Reform, a movement that started after labor pool workers and homeless advocates began meeting at the Open Door Community earlier this year. This panel gave an insider's view of the legalized oppression of the labor pools which employ a largely homeless population. Workers receive no training and little or no equipment before being sent out on jobs which are sometimes hazardous and pay between \$18 to \$22 a day, which comes to less than \$3 an hour.

Labor pools are called a modern-day equivalent to slavery and they are private businesses contracted by other companies in need of temporary labor. Although labor pools generally received a substantial fee for each worker provided, they pay only minimum wage or slightly above. However, their practice of paying workers on the same day they worked makes them attractive to homeless people in need of ready cash.

Downtown Atlanta has about 30 labor pools which employ about 1,000 workers a day, mostly homeless men. Neither the federal nor the state government keeps statistics on labor pools, but panel moderator Michael C. Williams said the Atlanta metropolitan area is second only to Dallas, TX in the number of labor pools with 235 to Dallas' 259.

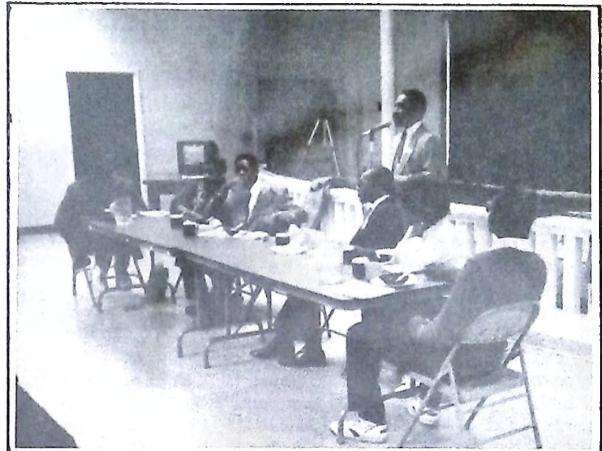
The March 1 meeting at Big Bethel A.M.E. Church in Atlanta drew 187 people including labor pools workers, three state legislators, city and county officials, homeless advocates and news media.

Labor pool rip-offs do not end with the low wages according to Geralene Pope, a panelist who once worked out of a labor pool. Labor pools also charge an assortment of fees -- for transportation, a sandwich or equipment needed to do the work -- and subtract that amount from an already meager paycheck.

"When you go out and work, you get a surprise when you get back and look at the check stub," Geralene said. "And the women are put on the lowest paying job no matter education, previous experience or background."

Drug deals are common practice at labor pools. William Dukes, a self-described "ex-poverty stricken, homeless drug abuser," gave an impassioned account of how he could buy his drugs at the labor pool in full view of the supervisor and still be selected to go on a job. The dealers are so sophisticated, Dukes said, that they have a crack rock/cocaine credit system. His addiction kept him dependant on the paltry wage that often went to buy "scotty," the street name for crack.

The disregard for worker's well being is apparent from the moment one steps on a labor pool van to be taken to the job assignment center, said Jerome Smith.



The Grassroots subcommittee addresses the large crowd assembled March 1 to form the Coalition for Labor Pool Reform.

Jerome told how the vans arrive at the homeless shelters at 5 a.m. to pick up workers, crowd them in to a 16-passenger van in which the seats have been removed and careen through the city streets. The harrowing ride ends at the labor pool office where, Jerome said, "the nightmare has just begun."

Worker safety is blatantly ignored at the job site, and Jerome recalled once being assigned to operate a tree chipping machine, although he told the supervisor he had never seen one before. After one of his arms was almost pulled into the blades, Jerome refused to do the job.

Another time when working at a construction site, a nail went through his shoe and into his foot. (He had not been assigned work boots.) The site supervisor refused to call for help. He went on to tell of working in the rain without rain gear or at building sites without a hard hat.

"I'm homeless and a worker and I'm calling for an end to this abuse," Jerome said.

Following the panel discussion, six subcommittees to the coalition were organized to investigate various avenues to reform labor pools. Those subcommittees are: Grassroots; Political Advocacy; Legal; Labor Unions; Alternatives to Labor Pools; and Research. Coordinators from these groups make up the coalition's steering committee, which meets Tuesdays at the Open Door. Steering committee meetings are open to any member of the coalition.

The coalition plans to put the heat on labor pools to literally clean up their place of business, which are often dingy with no working bathrooms and in violation of many other building code standards. And the coalition wants an end to the institutionalized oppression of the labor pools which allows them to exist with virtually no government regulation.

The fact that government has turned a blind eye to this problem is no surprise, but this willful ignorance must end, said Rev. McKinley Young, pastor at Big Bethel Church who addressed the coalition. Creative ideas are needed to provide work without exploitation of the worker, but too often political leaders pass the buck when dealing with issues of poverty.

"We can find a way to get on the moon," he said. "Why is there a bankruptcy of ideas when it comes to dealing with poor people?"

Panhandling: Constitutionally Protected Speech

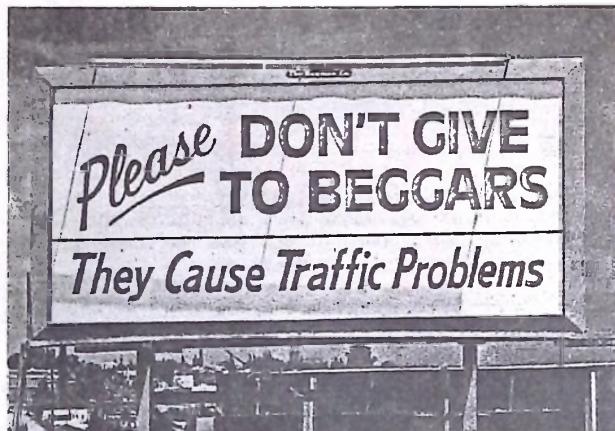
by Laughlin McDonald

Editor's note: Laughlin McDonald is a member of the Task Force for the Homeless and is executive director of the Southern Regional Office of ACLU. He specializes in civil rights and constitutional law. The following piece first appeared in the Task Force newsletter. We thank Mr. McDonald for his permission to reprint the article.

We all recognize that beggars, or panhandlers, can be disturbing and unsettling. They remind us that people live in poverty and often lack the essentials for survival. I also appreciate that beggars and panhandlers are sometimes aggressive, and that their presence and activities on the city streets can have a negative impact on retail business and tourism. Nonetheless, based upon established constitutional principles, and because we are advocates for the homeless--many of whom have been forced to beg to provide themselves with the necessities of life--I suggest that we adopt the following general policies in response to the city's recent proposal to rid the streets of beggars and panhandlers by requiring them to pay onerous license fees:

(1) The solicitation of charitable contributions, whether by professionals or volunteers on behalf of organized charities, or by beggars or panhandlers, is protected speech and its regulation must be narrowly tailored to promote a compelling state interest.

(2) The regulation or prohibition of begging for the purpose of keeping a social or economic problem out of sight and mind, or because it is bad for business or distressing to tourists or the public, is regulation based upon the content of speech and does not promote a compelling or legitimate state interest in violation of the First Amendment.



California Billboard

(3) The licensing of beggars, as opposed to professionals or volunteers who solicit on behalf of organized charities, is based upon the status of the solicitor and is thus class-based legislation in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment.

(4) The licensing of beggars, as opposed to professionals or volunteers who solicit on behalf of organized charities, would promote selective and arbitrary enforcement by the police in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment.

(5) Begging in a specific place of restricted access or at a restricted time, such as a hospital emergency room or in rush-hour traffic, can be prohibited, but begging in a public place cannot be prohibited outright or indirectly through a system of excessive fees or licenses.

(6) Assaultive behavior by beggars or other persons is not constitutionally protected and may be prosecuted under existing criminal law.

Two recent decisions have held that a state may not constitutionally prohibit begging and panhandling. In the most recent case, *Young v. New York City Transit Authority*, 89 CIV 7871 (S.D.N.Y. Jan. 25, 1990), the court noted that a "true test of one's commitment to constitutional principles is the extent to which recognition is given to the rights of those in our midst who are the least affluent, least powerful and least welcome." Slip. op. at 41.

There seems no principled basis for treating professional and volunteer fund-raisers for organized charities differently from beggars who solicit for themselves, or for each other. Both frequently approach passers-by and request a donation. Although a beggar's request may be more emotionally charged and personal, the entreaty is still a plea for charity. It is not fundamentally different from that of the solicitor on behalf of an organized charity. As long as one can buy a newspaper on a street corner, a beggar should be able to beg.

Government at all levels, national, state and local, should redress, to the extent that they can, the causes that lead to begging, such as unemployment, underemployment and homelessness. I also suggest that we adopt a general policy that homeless people are entitled to the same rights under the Constitution as other persons, e.g., "No person shall be denied any right under the Constitution or laws of the United States or any State on account of being homeless." □

ATLANTA COALITION FOR LABOR POOL REFORM

Labor Pools are a modern-day form of slavery and a direct cause of poverty and homelessness.

We are calling people of conscience, faith, good will and hope to gather together to abolish this festering sore from our beloved community. The journey will be long; the battle will be hard. The result will be love and justice (also with higher wages, safer work, better housing, good food and time to dance and play) !!

PLEASE JOIN US

Please call Ed Loring, 874-9652 or Task Force for the Homeless, 589-9495

Moral Responsibility and Homelessness

by C.M. Sherman

Editor's note: C.M. Sherman is a formerly homeless person who has lived and worked at the Open Door for two years.

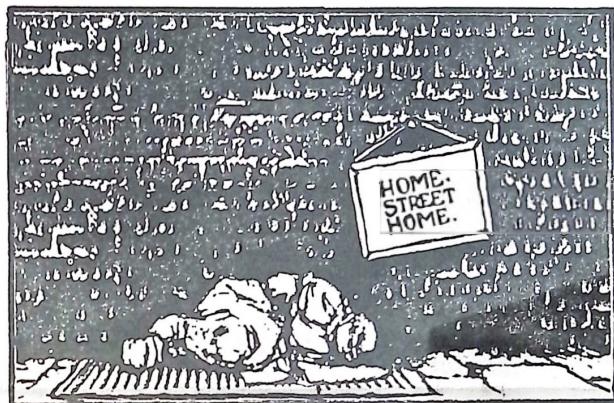
As a resident of the Open Door Community at 910 Ponce de Leon Avenue, I have been attending meetings regarding the residential, business and public safety conditions along the Ponce de Leon corridor. The most crucial issue of every meeting is always the hard problem of the homeless loafers in the area. The same critical concern is echoing not only around other sections of Atlanta, but in almost every major city across the nation. Business and civic leaders are becoming more frightened about the growing crisis. And to date, nobody has found a solution. But why are we unable to contain this rapidly growing epidemic? Simply because we accept the problem in every way--except as our moral responsibility. The chief component of this social irresponsibility is holding the homeless accountable for their own destiny. Consequent upon this foolhardiness is a constant increase in the number of homeless on the street and mounting public frustration, which has people from all quarters crying aloud, "How can we get the damned vagrants out of our neighborhood?!"

Sure, merchants and patrons alike are disturbed at the panhandlers. Sure, the general public is irritated and hurt by the sight of street wanderers. But it is not solely their presence that hurts the eye. It is the truth--deep down--that hurts the conscience. For the ragged vagrants represent, in truth, human products resulting from years of moral irresponsibility. They represent human creatures whom a brutal society has relegated to dirt. And the awareness of this hideous fact unconsciously burns so bitterly upon folks that, in defense of conscience, they say, "Those bastards can do better!"

Sure, they can do better, but in so many cases doing better requires doing the impossible, like correcting a mental handicap, changing one's gender, or altering one's color. This defense of conscience, "They can do better," may momentarily repel the feeling of guilt, but it will not be sufficient to stand up before the ultimate Judge and Judgement. And while the public keeps making no sense and leaders keep making excuses for making a moral commitment, the problem keeps mounting toward catastrophic proportions both in volume and virulence. And soon--if a commitment is not made--the crisis will be insufferable. The condition behoves not the homeless themselves--but society--to take moral steps toward solutions.

More pointedly, Atlanta has been unsuccessful in dealing with the homeless crisis because each neighborhood tries in its own selfish and unethical way, employing quick-fix tactics, to run the vagrants from their own communities without regard for where the poor souls may go. For example, the Ponce de Leon Development Committee is playing with the idea of acquiring an increase in police presence as an intimidating tool for driving the wanderers to another region. Leaders of the Peachtree Corridor have proposed such ridiculous measures as creating a "Vagrant Free Zone" and requiring licenses for panhandlers in an effort to remove the homeless from downtown Atlanta. Other neighborhoods have concocted

similar schemes to oust the loafers from their communities. The hard truth is that those businesspeople and civic leaders don't give a damn about the homeless problem--except as it directly affects their selfish interests. And in such cases they devise these inhuman methods to run the homeless to another area of town, to transfer the problem to another district. This is not only a brutality applied against the homeless, but also an injustice directed upon those residents of adjacent communities. It also complicates the issue. For any attempt to force a homeless being to "go away" when they have no place to go is like trying to force water upstream. It may go, but it will keep coming back down, for it has no other course. So is the condition of the homeless idler. They loiter simply because, with no place to go, they have no other recourse.



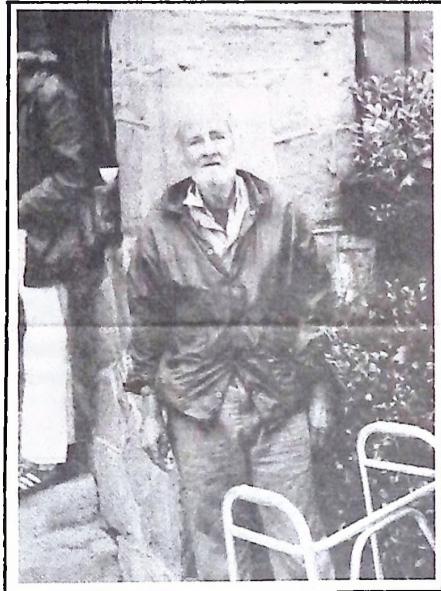
We must understand that human problems can never be solved by inhuman methods. Social issues are always compounded by strategic tactics, but resolved only by substantive measures. Because of this, and despite competing claims, the only logical (and morally sound) first step toward solving the crisis is to begin providing shelters and other facilities to relocate the homeless from the streets. All well and good! But every proposal to install single room occupancy units and day shelters around the city encounters hostile rejection by residents. There exists such a wide and unjustified contemptuous disposition against the homeless that nobody wants them as part of the environment. This shameful attitude is the greatest obstacle in the search for solutions.

In a recent announcement to clean up downtown Atlanta, City Hall and Central Atlanta Progress outlined plans to create jobs for idlers and augment the police force for public safety. This tactic is designed only to pacify the public. It is an unsubstantial initiative, for it does not consider the homeless themselves who, even with low-paying jobs, could not afford adequate quarters. Moreover, the idea of "cleaning up downtown" refers to people as "trash" to be taken away and dumped into obscurity rather than people we should help to become acceptable agents in the community.

If we are to successfully deal with the problem we must first become sensitive to acknowledge our moral responsibility of recognizing the homeless as human beings and helping to relocate them. For if we are not guided by a moral sense when wrestling with social issues we are governed only by selfish and prejudicial inclinations which constrain us to reject any remedial proposals unfavorable to those propensities.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Because of these prejudicial and militant attitudes and material-mindedness which defy solutions, and because I cannot see folks readily changing their disposition unless they get a little shove--I see no other recourse for Atlanta--or for any other city--but to institute a city-sponsored, city-wide effort, beginning with the creation of a Central Authority on Homelessness, dedicated to the moral responsibility of housing the ultra-poor. This authority would consist of a selection of diversified businesspeople, civic and political leaders and homeless people and their advocates, with authority above hindering and opposing factors. The most difficult part of the task would be in determining those who are helplessly homeless and those who willfully select the street as a way of life. Since the latter are the ones who most often draw public complaints and criticism through their exhibition of drunkenness, their use of drugs, their boisterous profanity and panhandling for another fix, they misrepresent the thousands of helpless homeless.



This complicates the issue of social responsibility regarding homelessness, for it creates controversial perceptions which keep the general public and the advocates in conflict with each other. The advocates, through an accurate perception, see the homeless characters as the mentally impaired, the indigent mothers and children, the socially underprivileged, the victims of discrimination, the unskilled and poorly educated and the minimum wage workers who are unable to compete in an economic system designed to nurture only the educated and fair-skinned classes. But people in general, through their superficial survey, and often to assuage the feeling of guilt, perceive the homeless characters as a bunch of rowdy bums, too lazy to sustain their own existence, who just beg and take advantage of all available social grace to support their lifestyle. It is unfortunate that the small percentage who live in the street by choice projects the negative image for the thousands of helpless homeless who are in dire need of shelter and assistance. An all-out drive to make the populace more aware of the sad plight of the helpless homeless would attract more public sympathy and support for the problem. Once public sensitivity, sympathy and support is attained, the Authority could move forward with an effective agenda toward solutions.

With the Authority as a supporting and protective arm for the homeless, I offer these suggestions as agenda items:

(1) Creating a city-backed program to install SRO units for housing and day shelters for training and recreation. The use of vacant existing structures would be ideal for this purpose. One may ask, "Whence is the money coming from?" The problem is not so much of whence comes the money, but whither it goes. This is explained in the next item.

(2) Assuring that all grant funds directed to support the poor and homeless are not diverted to help finance other projects, such as the case of the money which was designed to assist the poor being given to support the development of Underground Atlanta. The Authority would safeguard against the misuse of such funds.

(3) Assuring that within every plan for business development there is a mandatory clause giving substantial consideration for those who may become homeless or unemployed by the implementation of such plans.

(4) Making certain beforehand that there are sufficient dwelling facilities for those whose homes are condemned and razed in the wake of DOT and other development. Much of the homeless problem today is the result of years of insensitivity on the part of businesspeople and politicians who authorized the destruction of complete neighborhoods without providing an equal amount of living space for those displaced by the development.

(5) The creation of programs to help develop the mentally incompetent, the marginal alcohol and drug users and others who idle the streets. Nobody has an inherent desire to do nothing all day long, but because of years of being rejected and failure after failure, many vagrants have given up the struggle against a cruel world, and have accepted their status as a way of life. But programs to motivate and give incentive for renewing their worthiness will suffice. Most street wanderers are congenial folk. They become harrassing and troublesome agents only for the lack of something meaningful to do.



Morally speaking, the whole problem is relatively simple, for the public, businesspeople and advocates are in accord regarding the disposition of the homeless. They all agree that the homeless should be relocated. Only their ideas of relocating differ. The businesspeople's idea of relocating the homeless is "Getting the bastards off the street," while the advocates' concern is getting the poor souls in shelter. The compromise is simply in taking them off the street by putting them in homes. □

Were It Not for the Grace of God

Editor's note: The writer wishes to remain anonymous.

Were it not for the grace of God. . . . Those of us who proclaim Jesus as Lord have often had occasion to whisper those words. Were it not for favor or fortune we concede that it could have easily been any one of us. It is an attempt, I believe, to comfort and strengthen, even though the empathy is abstract.

The compassion intended and expressed can also be a note of personal gratitude. We are thankful to be in a better situation, no matter how bad it might be.

How many of us have passed a lonely person on the streets and shuddered with the realization--it could have been me. The thought creates a panic--too quickly the strangers are foreigners: winos and whores.

Were it not for the grace of God?

We all know someone who "disappeared" after losing a job and a home, or filing bankruptcy after an expensive uninsured illness; but what of those who never had an opportunity to have a job or a home or those who suffer hourly because of a diseased government?

Do we understand social oppression? What of racism and sexism?

Were it not for the grace of God?

What would Jesus do in your place?

Well?

Would nightly prayers and annual donations be enough?

Is "more-than-most-people" acceptable?

What actually should you do?

If you were that man or that woman on Ponce de Leon what would you like to have?

A roof over your head?

Clothes on your back?

Food on your table?

You'd be surprised how many would agree.

Most would probably be satisfied with a fair chance, or a second chance, or just a chance.

Were it not for the grace of God. . . .

It actually causes a queasiness to realize that it could be you experiencing the misery and suffering the pain. Could you have done as well with so little?

Could you have survived?

It's something to think about, to appreciate--

Were it not for the grace of God.

MEANER THAN A JUNKYARD DOG

by El Gilbert

They said

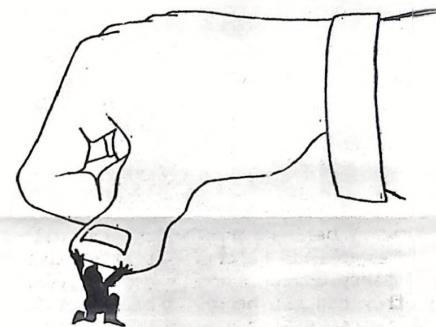
You can't park that gear here,
No loitering,
Hanging around
Or begging.

This is

A restaurant,
Not the rescue mission,
And we don't allow
Poachers or Dogs,
Secondclass citizens.

They were

Serious
Right down to the
Cop they called
To keep order,
Make sure the thirsty
Didn't get away with
A free glass of water.



SMALL DRUMS ON A BIG STAGE

by El Gilbert

St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York,
eight o'clock Saturday morning,
five men sleeping, heads bent forward
in awkward positions against the pews,
their belongings in shopping bags
and plastic sacks.

The patrolling custodian lets them sleep.
In blessed mercy he lets them sleep/rest
for a while. A little while.

Who are they. . . or who were they?
How did they end up here,
here in Manhattan. . . homeless,
taking refuge in one of the
greatest places of worship in the world?

Will we ever know and if we do,
what then?
What then? What then?

And if we never know,
does it matter?

Editor's note: El Gilbert is a homeless poet who mailed his work to us from Nashville, TN.

Grace and peaces of mail

Dear Friends,

Change comes sometimes all too quickly, and while it can be almost unendurably painful, it sometimes provides unexpected possibility or opportunity for maturity and growth.

As you've heard, the Sandinistas have lost the February 25 elections. UNO won 54% of the vote, the Frente Sandinista some 41%. What this finally will mean no one can be sure.

Strangely enough, while there was no celebrating on the part of UNO, Daniel Ortega and other Sandinistas--including Ray Hooker here in Bluefields yesterday in front of a cheering crowd of some several thousand--have made some of their strongest speeches ever. They have had numerous energetic, huge and impromptu rallies. While they will hand over the presidency and the Cabinate, they will remain by far the strongest party in the Assembly (UNO is an artificial coalition of 16 widely diverging groups). Violeta Chomorro has given one brief interview to the press, thanking Ortega for running the free election, and offering to work with the Sandinistas to try to rebuild the country; she has otherwise remained invisible. Virgilio Godoy, her vice-president, gave another speech which reports say wasn't nearly as conciliatory.

Somehow, I believe the Sandinistas will come out of this stronger than before. It saves them from becoming a party of bureaucrats and of power-seekers (not that they had yet become only that); it returns them to their roots in the streets, in the countryside, and in the people. They have, as years of experience here have shown me, by far the most dedicated, intelligent, and certainly the best organized people. (Habitat doesn't discriminate, but it's not accidental that 3 out of 4 of our responsible and permanent workers also happen to be Sandinistas.) There is no other truly organized body or party here in Nicaragua.

But then. . . why did they lose?

Nicaragua has been experiencing 10 years of grinding U.S. organized and sponsored war--killing over 30,000, maiming certainly thousands more (of a population of 3 million), 10 years of economic blockade, and several years of super-high inflation. The people are tired. UNO promises quick peace and easy prosperity. Many expect the quick inflow of millions of U.S. dollars and better access to consumer goods. "With Violeta everything will be easy."

The days immediately following the election were some of the saddest I and many of my Nicaraguan friends have ever spent. 10, 15, and 20 years of sacrifice and suffering appeared overnight to have come to naught: the majority chose the perceived easy solution. They remembered the 50's, 60's, and early 70's, forgetting for the moment Somoza, and forgetting, too, that in those years gasoline was cheap, and their exports of cotton, sugar, bananas, and coffee, unlike today, brought a reasonable return.

During the election I was in Pearl Lagoon, some hours north of here, where I'm working to start a Habitat housing project (50 houses in Pearl Lagoon, 50 in the neighboring Haulover). One of the key people on

our committee, and a good friend of mine--an Anglican priest of some 60 years old, who has studied in both Costa Rica and the U.S.--was the Frente Sandinista delegate for the town for Autonomy Assembly which will now be taking power in Bluefields. They will be in charge of organizing and running the government for the whole South Atlantic Region. His opponent, the UNO candidate who was slated as an afterthought is illiterate and has never been involved, as far as anyone can remember, in any community work or organization. His opponent won by the vote of some 2 to 1. No one out here, or anywhere else that I've talked to, seems to know what UNO's platform is--in relation to Autonomy, or anything else. (Though it appears they don't take the idea of Autonomy-- self-government--for the east coast regions too seriously!)

This story, though, is not unique to Pearl Lagoon (the largest town, of over 2000, and the "Capital" of the whole Pearl Lagoon area); it is repeated throughout the country where substantial charges of corruption and identification with the Contra and the old Guardia had caused over 130 of UNO's own delegates to leave the party in the two months preceding the election. That they left of their own will and for just these reasons is substantiated by the hundreds of official international observers. Of course, La Prensa, UNO's newspaper, made contradictory claims.

Reasons such as these, along with numerous pre-election polls, as well as the Frente's rallies around the country (animated and huge, often 10 or 20 times as big as UNO's), led just about everyone to expect a clear Frente victory.

But looking back, before the rallies and before the polls, I had for years sensed an increasing polarization, an increasing frustration (years of an unpopular draft, a war-economy, and lately, radically decreased subsidies): UNO could hardly lose.

But for the existence of the Frente, what would happen next would be sadly predictable: an end of land reform; the formation of a right-wing army ready to support the claims of the wealthy; banks refusing all credits to cooperatives and small landowners (I ache to think of what might happen to the cooperatives where we've had projects, and where I used to live); independent trade unions under attack; privatization, meaning sale to foreign multinationals of all state industries and lands (currently Nicaragua operates with a genuinely mixed economy). And, of course, the human rights abuses. The clock would be turned back 15 years--Nicaragua would be no different from Honduras or Guatemala.

To be the main force in the Assembly, to rebroaden their base, to defend the Constitution and the many other achievements of the revolution (including land reform, access to health care and education for the poor, guaranteed free elections), is the task now ahead of the Frente. It probably won't be easy for them, or for the rest of Nicaragua.

Sincerely,

Tom Klein

Editor's note: Tom Klein is a former Resident Volunteer and a friend of the Open Door Community who has lived in Nicaragua for the past several years as a Habitat for Humanity volunteer.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Dear Murphy Davis,

In the January 1990 issue of Hospitality, "Twelve Reasons Why We Should Abolish the Death Penalty" was printed.

In the March issue a response by William D. Leetch, a Pastor, was printed. He apparently believed that "Selective Killing" was sanctioned by the Bible and quoted selected scriptures to back up his belief.

It would be interesting to see his reconciliation of "Killing" with the commandment "Thou Shalt Not Kill."

C.R. Brown
Bilton, SC

Dear Ed,

I am on your mailing list, and although you don't remember, I was a classmate of yours at Myers Park. Of course I know about your work with the homeless and respect your convictions, efforts and contribution to the community. Clearly there are distortions in our economic system and we should be able to minimize, if not totally eliminate, the specter of homeless people walking the streets of Atlanta or any other American city.

My problem with your publication, Hospitality, is this. If you have to espouse the warmed-over 60's bullshit because this is what your readers (contributors) want to see, then by all means, you should continue to print it. I am pragmatic enough to realize that you have to have money ("funding") to function. But in reading what you write, and reading where you have been quoted in the local media, I think you are anything but a hypocrite. I am afraid you really do believe this stuff.

Maybe you haven't been reading the news. The ballgame is over. Except in Havana, Tirana, Pyongyang, and perhaps some obscure corners of Oxford, New York and Boston, no one thinks, believes or even imagines like that anymore. As my children say, Ed, "get real!"

For almost twenty years, I have been involved with people in this community from all walks of life, including not a few people who would probably qualify for help from the Open Door Community. I have seen my share of people whose disregard for their fellow man was their most significant characteristic. And I have seen my share of people whose unselfishness and sacrifice, in the face of heavy odds, has been not a little bit inspirational. If I have learned one thing from these experiences that applies here, it is that neither we nor our less-fortunate fellow man is well served by the kind of political and economic philosophy crap being circulated in Hospitality. God bless, and best regards.

Sincerely,

Albert C. Smarr
Attorney at Law
Atlanta, GA

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

A book you all must read if you haven't already is Jesus Before Christianity by Albert Nolan, a Dominican priest who lives in South Africa. The part that hit me very hard relates how Jesus completely identified with and mixed with the outcasts of that time--there is just no doubt about that!! Hey, you think if we follow Brother Jesus we better do the same with today's outcasts--homeless people, gays and lesbians, prostitutes, prisoners, African-Americans, native Americans, drug addicts, etc., etc., etc. You folks do that as well as anyone I know. I've got a long way to go but am praying hard for the guts and love to do this more and more.

At the Catholic Worker here things are really hectic, but we find time to go down and walk with the Greyhound workers who are on strike. It's a real tough strike with lots of scabs breaking the strike.

In Solidarity, Love, Hope, and Peace,

Jerry Robinett
Tucson, AZ

Dear Ed,

I just had to write and congratulate you on your excellent piece on the front page of Hospitality for March.

Just the day before the issue arrived I had explained red-lining to my class in social problems. In this case it was in connection with the chapter entitled "Race Discrimination in the U.S." Last week we discussed poverty, but it's all connected. I'll probably read in its entirety your piece to the class because you did such a good job of bringing out the connection between accepted, everyday practices and social problems. The directness of your words brings out so well what I try to do in this class. But I get frustrated and sometimes angry when these scions of the comfortable middle class are unable to put themselves in the place of the poor and homeless. And it's not always this group, either. Some of our self-made types are the worst ones to mouth platitudes about welfare mothers going out and getting pregnant in order to "get more from welfare."

One of the requirements in my social problems course is for students to give at least five hours in some kind of service (loosely defined) in connection with a social problem. Some tutor junior high students having academic trouble; some get involved with adult basic literacy; some go and visit and play with kids in our county shelter for neglected and pre-delinquent children, and so on. And a few over the past few years have fulfilled this requirement by serving for a weekend at your place there in Atlanta. I hope I can encourage others to do so, as well.

Let me close by saying how much I personally appreciate and admire Murphy's and your efforts there at the Open Door and in the prison ministry. Ed, you all are doing such a wonderful thing in this world. God bless.

Yours most sincerely,

Ted Hunter
Department of Sociology
Presbyterian College
Clinton, SC

Stop U.S. Training of El Salvador's Military in Georgia



Mothers of the Disappeared confront the Salvadoran military

REGIONAL CONTACT:
Atlanta Committee on Latin America
PO Box 4184
Atlanta, GA 30302
(404) 377-1079

DEMONSTRATE Noon, Sat. April 28

Army School of the Americas
Ft. Benning, Columbus, Ga.

March to the Gates
Ecumenical Service and Witness
Rally and Picket
Ben Linder Memorial
Killed by contras, April 28, 1988
Non-Violent Civil Disobedience
Optional, in the spirit of the event

El Salvador's Jesuit Priests: Present

Cut All Aid to El Salvador's Death Squad
Government
Support a Negotiated Political Settlement
Stop U.S. Intervention in Central America

Shut Down the U.S. Army School of the Americas

WE NEED BLUE JEANS!

We would like to purchase used blue jeans for our clothes closet. If you know of a source, please contact Ed Loring at 874-9652 or 876-6977.

New Church Resource for Affordable Housing

BUILDING ON FAITH: Models of Church Sponsored Affordable Housing Programs in the Washington D.C. Area handbooks are currently for sale by CCSH. The handbook is clearly written and organized for ease of access by lay and pastoral leaders alike. It contains case studies of ten successful church-based affordable-housing programs, profiles of 30 other noteworthy programs, and a glossary of key affordable housing concepts, resources, and terms.

Programs in the handbook include: Anne Frank House, Carpenter's Lodging, Bethesda Interfaith Housing Coalition, Community of Hope, Jubilee Housing, and more! To obtain copies of "Building on Faith", please fill out and return the order form below.

Price List for Building on Faith

- Non-member churches, non-profits, and their members: 1 to 3 copies, \$10 per copy
4 or more copies, \$8.75 per copy

To the general public: \$12.50 per copy

Please add the following amounts to your check to cover book rate postage costs:
1 copy: \$1.00
2 copies: \$1.86
3-4 copies: \$1.75

If you are contemplating larger orders, please contact us about postage and delivery.

To order **BUILDING ON FAITH**, please complete and return the order form.

Mail to: THE CHURCHES CONFERENCE ON SHELTER AND HOUSING
1711 14TH STREET NW
WASHINGTON D.C. 20009

Please make checks payable to: CCSH

BUILDING ON FAITH: # COPIES AT \$ A COPY + POSTAGE = \$ TOTAL

NAME PHONE (H) OR (W)

ADDRESS

CITY/STATE/ZIP

CHURCH OR NONPROFIT AFFILIATION

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY IN ATLANTA, INC. has openings for full time construction staff. Applicants should have both construction skill and ability to organize and lead volunteer groups. Workdays are typically Tuesdays through Saturdays. Salary of \$7.00 per hour, group health insurance and other benefits.

Please send resume or call the Habitat office, 468 Moreland Ave., SE, Atlanta, GA 30316. Phone 622-4595 by April 15.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Join people of faith across Atlanta for the annual Good Friday pilgrimage through downtown Atlanta, Friday, April 13, beginning at 10am. We will meet at Martin Luther King, Jr.'s tomb at the King Center, 449 Auburn Ave.

Groups and individuals representing issues of homelessness, hunger, apartheid, racism, labor pool reform, Central America and militarism will lead reflections and singing.

We will not travel to Fort McPherson this year, and therefore, we should finish by 1:30pm.

Bring your lunch (and carry a sign if you like!).

For more details contact:
Beth Brubacher
Atlanta Clergy and Laity Concerned
(404) 377-6516

WE ARE OPEN. . .

Monday through Saturday, telephones are answered from 9:00am until noon, from 1:30 until 6:00pm, and from 7:00 until 8:30pm. The building is open from 9:00am until 8:30pm those days. (Both phone & door are not answered during our lunch break from noon until 1:30.) Please call in advance if you need to arrange to come at other times. On Sunday we are open from 7:00am until noon. Sunday afternoon our door is answered until 5:00pm.

OUR MINISTRY. . .

SOUP KITCHEN--Wednesday-Saturday, 11am-12 noon

SUNDAY BREAKFAST--Sunday morning at 910, 7:15am

BUTLER ST. CME BREAKFAST--Monday-Friday, 6:45am

SHOWERS & CHANGE OF CLOTHES--Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 9-11am
(Be sure to call; schedule varies)

USE OF PHONE--Monday-Saturday, 9am-noon, 1:30pm-5pm.

SHELTER REQUESTS--Monday-Saturday, 9am-noon.

BIBLE STUDY--Alternate Tuesdays, 7:30-9pm.

WEEKEND RETREATS--Four times each year (for our household & volunteers/supporters), April 27-29.

Our Hospitality Ministries include: visitation and letter-writing to prisoners, anti-death penalty advocacy, advocacy for the homeless, medical services, and daily worship and weekly Eucharist.

NEEDS

CHEESE	MEN'S UNDERWEAR
MAYONNAISE	MEN'S SWEATERS
MULTI-VITAMINS	KITCHEN STOOL
MARTA TOKENS	DRAPERYES
POSTAGE STAMPS	GRITS
MEN'S LARGE SHOES (12-14)	CARPET
COFFEE	BOOK SHELVES
NON-AEROSOL DEODORANT	EASEL
HAMS AND TURKEYS	HAND TRUCK
DISPOSABLE RAZORS	SHRUBS AND SMALL TREES
MEN'S WORK PANTS	PICNIC TABLES AND BENCHES
MEN'S WORK SHIRTS	BLUE JEANS

From 11am - 1pm Monday- Saturday, our attention is focused on serving the soup kitchen and household lunch. As much as we appreciate your coming, this is a difficult time for us to receive donations. When you can come before 11:00 or after 1:00, it would be helpful.

Newspaper Requests - If you or a friend would like to receive HOSPITALITY, please fill in this form and return to Willie London at the Open Door Community, 910 Ponce de Leon Ave. NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30306-4212.

Name _____

Street _____

City, State, Zip _____

OPEN DOOR COMMUNITY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

We gather for worship and Eucharist at 5:00pm on Sunday evenings followed by supper together.

Join us!



April 1	Worship at 910 Fr. Tom Francis, Preaching Monastery of the Holy Spirit
April 8	Passion Sunday Worship at 910 to begin Holy Week with the Homeless Rev. Tom Brown, Preaching Butler Street CME Gospel Choir
April 15	Celebration of the Resurrection 6:30 AM Rev. Cynthia Hale, Preaching Ray of Hope Christian Church Choir Ham and Eggs Breakfast with the Homeless (Call us for details)
April 22	Worship at 910
April 27-29	Spring Retreat at Dayspring Farm (no worship at 910)
May 6	Worship at 910
May 13	Worship at 910
May 20	Worship at 910
May 27	Worship at 910

Four times each year the Community has a weekend retreat outside the city. This replaces our evening worship at 910 Ponce de Leon Ave.