

HOSPITALITY

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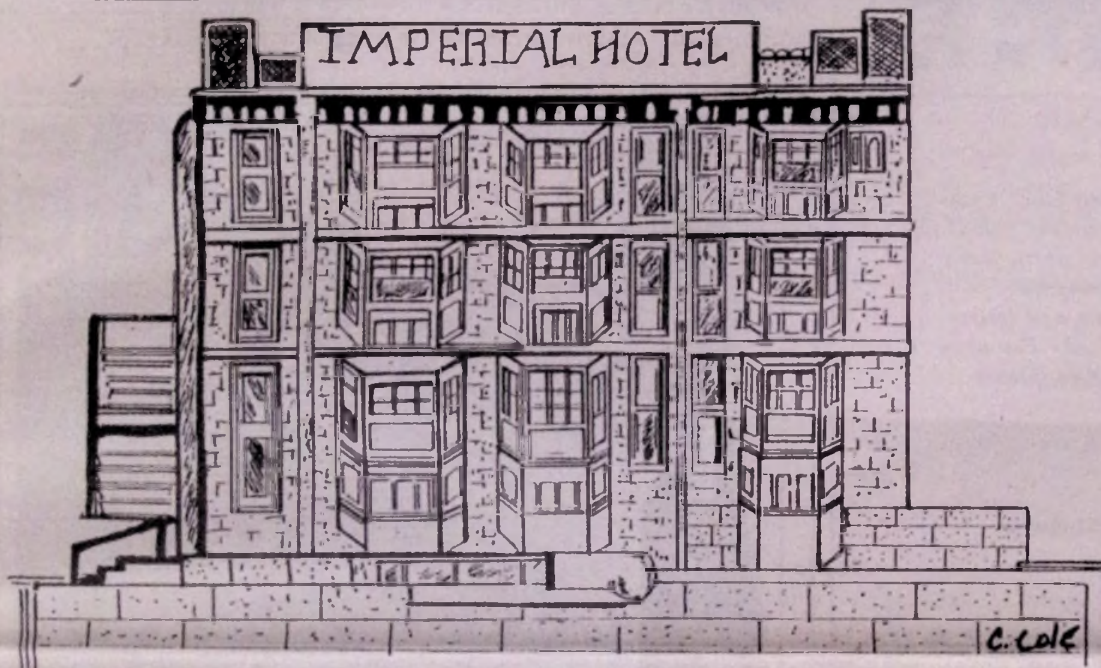
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February 1997



A Miracle on Peachtree Street: The Reopening of the Imperial Hotel

by Stacia M. Brown

(Editor's note: Stacia Brown is a native of San Francisco, and a second-year student at Candler School of Theology.)

When I think of the Imperial Hotel, two women immediately come to mind. These women symbolize for me the miraculous changes which have taken place inside the hotel and which will, hopefully, soon take place within the life situations of those who enter the Imperial's doors. Who are these women? What are these drastic changes?

One woman is not real. But she represents a number of very real women from earlier days in the hotel's colorful history. This woman is actually nothing more than a faded painting slapped upon the outer wall on the lower level of the Imperial Hotel: Scantily dressed, busty, this painting of a striptease dancer offers us a quiet, painful reminder of the days when the Imperial was a businessman's watering hole, when the hotel basement included a nudie bar, filled with women struggling to earn a living and men seeking a quick thrill away from home.

The second woman is not a painting. This woman is very much alive, even fiercely so. Her recent battle with cancer a rousing testimony to her courage and will to live. Her name is Karen Thomas. Formerly a resident at the Open Door, Karen now lives in the newly renovated Imperial Hotel on Peachtree Street in downtown Atlanta. Karen represents the new "clientele" of the hotel:

The businessmen are long gone; the shabby and vacant Single Room Occupancy Hotel, (SRO), has also finally fled; and in their stead stands a living miracle: The Imperial Hotel, source of controversy and conflict for six long years, has at last been transformed into a low-income, residential living facility with special services, recreational facilities, 24-hour desk service, a community kitchen, and views of the city which would beat any CEO's high-rise vista.

But miracles do not usually happen overnight. How did the miracle of the Imperial Hotel take place? When the hotel doors opened officially on December 18, what exactly did we all celebrate? We celebrated a story which began exactly 6 years and 6 months earlier, when the People for Urban Justice, (PUJ), in protest against the City's abrupt closing of a homeless shelter, decided to take over the then-vacant Imperial and demonstrate graphically the crucial need for affordable housing in Atlanta. Spurred to creative action by the always mild-mannered Ed Loring, PUJ entered the hotel on June 17, 1990 and staged a takeover of the building. Eight persons, (Ed Loring, Murphy Davis, Elizabeth Dede, John Flournoy, Sister Carol Schlicksup, C.M. Sherman, Larry Travick, and Sr. Joann Geary), forced their way inside the facility; others stood outside and brought public attention to the scene; and soon 300 homeless citizens joined the ranks of the "squatters" and formed a peaceful sleep-over party of protest. A stand-off ensued between PUJ and the City and continued for 16 days, until finally then-Mayor Maynard Jackson, concerned to clear

the hotel before the Fourth of July parade down Peachtree Street, brought the battle of wills to a close by promising to provide 3,500 units of SRO housing before his term ended in December 1993.

But promises are always more easily stated than kept; and the mayor failed to uphold his end of the deal. Disappointed yet not despairing, PUJ was aided by an organization called Progressive Redevelopment, Inc. (PRI) in their effort to find affordable, safe housing for Atlanta's marginalized people. PRI, an "independent, non-profit developer of quality, affordable housing," shouldered the bulk of the work involved in claiming the Imperial Hotel as a site for affordable housing. Bruce Gunter, President of PRI "took the bull by the horns," says People for Urban Justice leader Houston Wheeler. In other words, PRI acted as communication hub for all the various persons and groups needed in the process of transforming the Imperial from a vacant SRO into a fully-funded, fully-staffed housing facility.

With PRI playing the important role of coordinator of negotiations, the standoff between the City and local activists was gradually eased, and as funding sources began to open up for the Hotel, the City finally capitulated. And so PRI has helped transform the Imperial Hotel from a vacant shambles into a beautifully remodeled, historically significant site. It has helped change that once-infamous nudie basement into a recreational area, a lounge area, a community kitchen,

(continued on page 2)

HOSPITALITY



910 Ponce de Leon

Hospitality is published 11 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, please contact any of the following:

Brenda Smith—Volunteer Coordinator
 Dick Rustay—Group Work Project Co-ordinator
 Ed Loring—Correspondence
 Elizabeth Dede—Resident Volunteer Co-ordinator; Guest Ministry;
 Hardwick Prison Trip
 Murphy Davis—Southern Prison Ministry

Newspaper

Editorial Staff--Chuck Campbell, Murphy Davis, Elizabeth Dede, Joyce Hollyday, Jennifer Lee, Ed Loring, Gladys Rustay, Brenda Smith, and Stan Saunders

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Circulation--Phillip Williams and a multitude of earthly hosts and guests

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(A \$7 donation to the Open Door would help to cover the costs of printing and mailing *Hospitality*.)

(A Miracle, continued from page 1)

and a place for Mercy Mobile Medical Clinic to house three offices for supportive services.

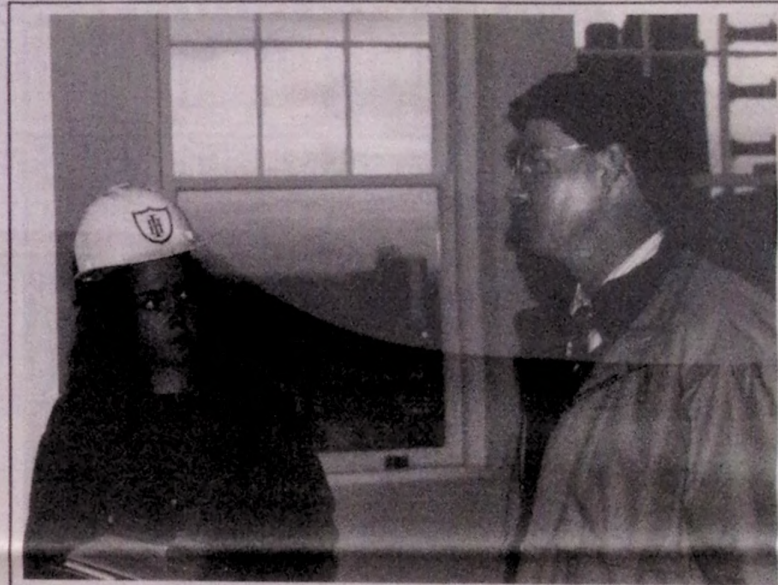
And where has the money come from? Director Mike Griffin states that PRI's "magic is to use public subsidy to leverage private financing." With the help of The Reverend Woody Bartlett and the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), PRI has located 11 sources of funding to renovate the hotel. Of the \$9.5 million raised, \$1 million stems from historic tax credits; these credits ensured that the hotel's unique lobby and portico were rebuilt according to their original appearance and will be maintained as points of local historical interest. Other financial sources include private sector construction loans, federal low income housing monies, the City of Atlanta, the State Department of Community Affairs, the State Housing Trust Fund for the Homeless, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta, the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership, and the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust.

And how will the Imperial work? Who will reside in its apartments? The hotel includes 120 units of both one-bedroom and efficiency apartments. Of these units, 35 have been dedicated to formerly homeless persons with special needs. These 35 spaces will be filled by persons referred

from AID Atlanta, Fulton County ACCESS, Veterans' groups, Mercy Mobile Clinic, and Grady Hospital. Persons accepted by the Imperial from these various agencies can move in with a variety of special needs and disabilities, but they must be linked to some form of case management before arriving. Once they settle in at the Imperial, they will be offered access to additional on-site supportive and social services from Mercy Mobile.

The remaining units will be filled by persons who qualify as "low income," that is, those who make less than 60% of the median average. Of these units, 73 have been specifically allotted as Section 8 housing; and 50% have been set aside for "Very Low Income" persons, or persons whose income stands at 50% or less than the median Atlanta income. Individuals accepted for non-special needs units will have full access to the social services offered on-site by Mercy, but neither these residents nor the 35 special-needs folks will be forced to make use of the available services.

So what are we celebrating when we look at the new Imperial Hotel? We are celebrating several things: First, we are celebrating the truly heroic effort of PRI and other activists to get the Imperial off the ground and to obtain the funding and legal sources needed to transform a building of bad memories and run-down dreams into a place of new life and hope.



Stacia Brown and PRI Director, Mike Griffin, discuss renovations while standing near one of the many windows providing a scenic view of Atlanta's skyline.

Secondly, we are celebrating the ongoing task of finding creative, energetic persons willing to continue the work of seeking affordable housing facilities. For as encouraging as the Imperial Hotel may be, it is, in the end, only 120 units of housing; and the people of Atlanta desperately need more. As Griffin suggests, we need new housing units not so much in the already over-crowded downtown as we do in the scattered neighborhoods of suburban Atlanta.

Who will arise to activate such neighborhoods? Who will take the challenge of informing upper-class churches of the demand for affordable housing in their own midst? Who will act as a bridge between the world of the rich and the world of the homeless? The call to action is, indeed, a crucial component of our celebration.

And finally, we are celebrating the replacement of that sad painted dancer on the wall with the very real, very alive, very dignified presence of Karen and others like her who also will live in the Imperial. Karen could not wait to move into her new home. She was ready to have "my own kitchen and my own space." The smile in her voice as she speaks offers just one more reminder of the dramatic changes which have taken place in her life and in the life of the hotel during these past years.

Yes, a miracle did indeed happen at the Imperial Hotel. But it was not a miracle stumbled upon by fate or by chance; no, this miracle arose out of sweat and persistence, out of a few folks' gritty determination to see a dream realized. May we all find the courage to sweat our way towards more such miracles. ♦



Karen Thomas at the door of her new apartment at the Imperial.

Response to Atlanta's "Quality of Life" ordinances

(Editor's note: The following is an excerpt of remarks made by Atlanta City Council member Gloria Tinubu at a rally to protest Atlanta's "Quality of Life" ordinances on Tuesday, December 17, 1996. As we go to press, Councilmember Gloria Tinubu is introducing legislation to repeal the anti-camping ordinances. Please support this move to repeal this cruel legislation with letters to Council President, Marvin Arrington, and your City Councilmember. Write to City Hall, 55 Trinity Avenue, SW, Atlanta, GA 30355.)

We all know that a street or a park is not a home. None of us would wish for people to live in either place, but we know also that the only thing criminal about homelessness is that we live in a society of plenty that stands silently by and refuses to address the issue in a way that gives dignity to people who have lost hope. Instead, the plight of the homeless is referred to, euphemistically and mockingly, as "urban camping," suggesting a recreational choice. And their condition or state of impoverishment is labeled as unacceptable behavior.

This Olympic city of plenty still has the dubious distinction of being the second poorest major city in the country. In spite of the growth we have seen in certain sectors of this city, the poorest of the poor still live in grave deprivation. They are still with us, and will always be with us, according to the Messiah. That we have an obligation to assist them is indisputable.

If we are Judeo-Christians, our faith demands that we help the poor. According to the Bible,

"If there is among you a poor person, one of your kin in any of the towns of your land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your hearts or close your hands to your poor sisters and brothers; but you shall open your hands wide to them and shall surely lend them sufficient for their needs in whatever they lack." (Deuteronomy 15:7-8)

"Those who oppress the poor reproach, mock, and insult the Maker; but those who are kind and merciful to the needy honor God." (Proverbs 14:31)

Jesus, the Messiah, is a model of a life and ministry that showed unequalled compassion for the poor: he lived among them, ate with them, and restored their health. He himself summarized his life's purpose by saying in Luke 4:18,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; God hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."

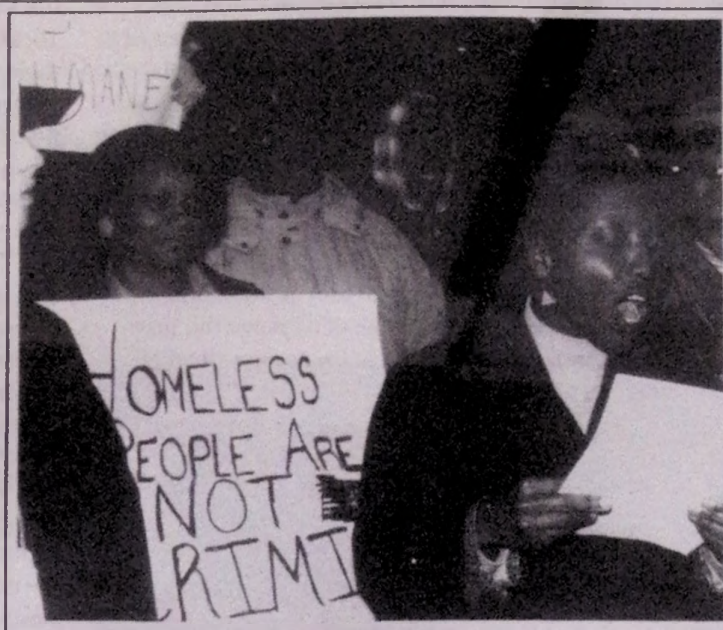
Other religions speak of the same responsibility to the poor:

The Koran states, "Spend your substance out of love for Allah, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; be steadfast in prayer and practice regular charity."

Buddha states, "Whatsoever, after due examination and analysis, you find to be kind, conducive to the good, the benefit, the welfare of all beings, that doctrine believe and cling to, and take it as your guide."

The Dalai Lama says, "We live very close together. So, our prime purpose in this life is to help others. And if you can't help them, at least don't hurt them."

Aristotle says, "The unfortunate need people who will be kind to them; the prosperous need people to be kind to."



Councilmember Gloria Tinubu at the Concerned Black Clergy action in December to protest the anti-camping ordinances. Dr. Tinubu is also Professor of Economics at Spelman College. Pictured to her left is Dr. Earl Moore, Vice-President of Concerned Black Clergy.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt said, "Human kindness has never weakened the stamina or softened the fiber of a free people. A nation does not have to be cruel to be tough."

I say to you that the so-called urban camping ordinance is cruel and unusual punishment, and its enactment places the city of Atlanta on a list of cities with the meanest streets—a stark contrast to its once-held motto, "The City too Busy to Hate." Equally as troubling is the fact that this is the home of a great world leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who said,

"As long as there is poverty in the world I can never be rich, even if I have a billion dollars. As long as diseases are rampant and millions of people in this world cannot expect to live more than 28 or 30 years, I can never be totally healthy even if I just got a good checkup at the Mayo Clinic. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be." King also said,

"I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education

and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits. I believe what self-centered people have torn down, other-centered people can build up."

I believe that Atlanta can provide safe, affordable housing for all its citizens. I believe that we should demand good food, education, and health care for everyone. Please work with me to repeal this ordinance.

Dr. Richard Shaull

Please join us for a seminar on Liberation Theology led by Dr. Richard Shaull, theologian, writer, and teacher.

Sunday, March 9, 1997

5:00 p.m.: Worship at the Open Door Community with Dr. Shaull

Tuesday, March 11, 1997

7:30 p.m.: Bible Study at the Open Door community led by Dr. Shaull

Wednesday, March 12, 1997

4:15 p.m.: Discussion of Dr. Shaull's writings: "The Third Conversion" and Naming the Idols



Dr. Richard Shaull received his Doctor of Theology degree from Princeton Theological Seminary and has been a preacher, missionary, and teacher since the 1940's. He has taught at numerous theological institutions throughout Latin America and has published widely (Encounter with Revolution, Liberation and Change, Heralds of a New Reformation, Naming the Idols: Biblical Alternatives for U.S. Foreign Policy, The Reformation and Liberation Theology, and four volumes in Portuguese on Christian faith and social problems).

Currently he teaches at the Instituto Pastoral Hispano in New York and has been spending several months each year as a visiting professor at various theological seminaries in Latin America, including the Latin American Biblical Seminary in San Jose, Costa Rica, and the Program of Post-Graduate Studies in Religion in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Scapegoating the Homeless

by Chuck Campbell

On Wednesday, October 2nd, at 11:52 p.m. I was placed under arrest, along with Ed Loring and Ron Jackson from the Open Door and seven students from Columbia Seminary. Our crime: sitting and talking in Woodruff Park after 11:00 p.m. (at tables and chairs provided for such conversation).

As part of a seminary course entitled "Good News to the Poor," our group was spending 24 hours on the streets among the homeless. Our evening began at 5:00 p.m., and by 10:30 we were at Woodruff Park with many experiences to share and discuss. At 10:40 a police officer announced that the park would close in twenty minutes. However, we became involved in our conversation and neglected to leave the park by closing time. At 11:52 we were told that we had broken a city ordinance by remaining in the park past 11:00, and we were placed under arrest without any further warning. We offered to leave the park immediately, which should have accomplished the purpose of the ordinance—keeping the park empty overnight. We were told, however, that we had to be arrested. That was the new policy regarding after-hours visitors to the park: immediate arrest. "If we're going to arrest them," one officer said, pointing to several homeless people, "we have to arrest you as well."

We pleaded our case to no avail as the officer took down our names and addresses. Finally, upon our request, a supervisor was called and arrived at the scene. After a brief discussion, she discharged us, and we left the park. Our white, middle-class privilege had come to our aid and gotten us released. But we felt okay because the police said they would not arrest anyone else in the park that night. (There was no one remaining to arrest anyway because the homeless people had left the park while the police were dealing with us.) The homeless were thus spared a sweep for at least one night. And our group was able to continue with our plans. Everything turned out okay on October 2nd.

But everything is not okay in downtown Atlanta. As our group has since discovered, October 2nd marked the beginning of a concerted effort by city officials and business leaders to run the homeless out of downtown using legal means. Not only has the crackdown continued in Woodruff Park, but new city ordinances have been passed making many activities of homeless people a crime, including non-aggressive panhandling and "urban camping" (a rather chic euphemism for lying down to rest in a public place when you have nowhere else to sleep). The function of these ordinances, as I discovered in the park, is not to prevent crime, but rather to create criminals. Just as the police used a city ordinance to make criminals out of our group in Woodruff Park, so the new ordinances make criminals of many homeless people who are simply trying to survive on the streets. Homelessness itself is becoming a crime in Atlanta, and jail is becoming the public housing of first resort—a dramatic shift, as Ed Loring has noted, from the days when people viewed the homeless sympathetically and sought to bring an end to this social evil through constructive means.

What is going on downtown? This "solution" to the problem of homelessness is so short-sighted and inadequate, so bizarre and inhuman—how can people support it? What is at the root of our need to turn homeless people into criminals? I have thought about these questions often since that night in the park. No doubt, the answer to them involves complex social, psychological, political, and economic factors.

Without discounting these factors, however, I have come to believe that a profound and troubling theological reality lies at the root of these ordinances: Atlanta, in the name of its powerful, privileged citizens, is engaging in the ancient ritual of



scapegoating. Such a ritual has become necessary because those of us who are privileged simply are not willing to confront the evil of homelessness honestly. If we did, we would have to face the sins of capitalism as well as the incongruities in our own lifestyles. We would have to confront, as William Stringfellow puts it, the radical fallenness of America as well as our own active and passive roles in perpetuating evil. We would have to relinquish the illusion of our own righteousness and turn to confession and repentance. And that is just too much to bear for most Americans, as we consider ourselves to be "good people."

So the solution is scapegoating—transferring the guilt from ourselves to the most vulnerable people in our society and punishing them accordingly. If blame can be shifted from the society and the privileged to the homeless, then we upper-class and middle-class folks can once again feel good about ourselves, having exorcised our guilt by transferring it to someone else. Making criminals out of the homeless, it turns out, is a perfect way to accomplish this goal—a perfect means of scapegoating. If the activities of the homeless can be made into crimes, then the homeless can be "justly" condemned, and the rest of us are off the hook. If the homeless can be turned into criminals, then the sin and guilt of our social order can be heaped upon their shoulders. The rest of us can breathe easy, absolved of our own sin and guilt as

we drive the homeless from our midst (into jail), just as Israel sent a sin-laden goat into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16: 20-22). Unlike in Israel, however, in Atlanta there is no confession of sin by the people and no recognition of what we are doing. Rather, homeless people have become the scapegoat by means of which the rest of us seek to reassure ourselves of our own righteousness and our society's goodness.

In Atlanta today the ancient ritual of scapegoating is being enacted once again in ordinances designed not to prevent crime, but to create criminals. As Christians, therefore, we oppose these ordinances not simply for practical, political, or economic reasons, but rather, we oppose the ordinances for theological reasons. We know that the ultimate victim of scapegoating is the crucified Jesus, who stands in solidarity with all of society's scapegoats and challenges this entire social ritual at its roots. And we know that in Jesus Christ we have the resources of confession and repentance, imagination and hope, which enable us to say "No!" to scapegoating and free us to live out a different vision of God's city.

Chuck Campbell is Professor of Homiletics at Columbia Theological Seminary, and a volunteer at the Open Door Community.

DON'T BUY MUSHROOMS with the "Prime" Label

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was killed in 1968 while standing up for the rights of striking Memphis sanitation workers. He dedicated his last battle to the rights of poor and exploited working people.

Black and Latino Quincy Farms mushroom workers in Florida are fighting non-violently for the same rights Dr. King defended: a livable wage and dignified working conditions.

Won't You Stand With Them?

On March 14, 1996, during a peaceful demonstration to protest unsafe working conditions and abusive behavior from supervisors, Quincy Farms mushroom company in northern Florida fired 85 farm workers and jailed 25 of them.

Farm workers at the farm complain of frequent accidents and injuries, respiratory problems and generally unsafe working conditions. Most of the farm workers at the farm earn between \$9,000 and \$14,000 per year. Although full-time workers, in many cases their wages fall below the federal poverty line. A box of mushrooms bought at the grocery store costs you approximately \$1.89, the worker is paid 6 cents to harvest this box.

So Quincy Farms workers are asking you to boycott Quincy Farms' "Prime" label mushrooms. So far, 70 stores in Southern Georgia and Florida have removed these Prime mushrooms from their shelves.

Please tell your store owner or manager to stop carrying mushrooms with the "Prime" label.

For more information, contact the United Farm Workers in Atlanta at 404-766-5050.

Challenge from the Concerned Black Clergy to the City of Atlanta

December 21, 1996

Dear Honorable Mayor Campbell:

We feel that it is incumbent upon the Concerned Black Clergy, (CBC), to be on record strongly encouraging the City Council and your office to repeal the recently hastily passed anti-camping ordinance. We watched with intense interest as the discussions surrounding this issue were being bantered back and forth. We were quite candidly shocked, dismayed, and highly disappointed that a city "too busy to hate," and politically "controlled by" African Americans would pass an ordinance which places the city on the short list of cities "inhospitable to the poor."

The CBC is well aware and sensitive to the concerns about aggressive panhandling, sleeping in yards and vacant buildings, and even the accusations of "defecation and urination" by the homeless on city streets. We are not immune to the pressures which your office receives from the business community to rid the city of these "unsightly individuals" and their "unacceptable behavior." We are cognizant about tax revenues and the tourist dollars which possibly may be leaving Atlanta if certain perceived conditions are not changed.

Acknowledging our understanding of the city's posture toward the poor and homeless, we feel the ordinance is not in the best interest of the citizens of this great city. The ordinance will not meet its stated goals and objectives. It creates criminals out of those who are the victims of a system which has already given them a "life sentence" without bars. We feel the ordinance is also unconstitutional and in violation of the Eighth Amendment right (freedom from cruel and unusual punishment), and in violation of the right to freedom of travel.

We want to be sure that you understand how adamantly we oppose this ordinance. Our relatively modest protest at Woodruff Park is a precursor to what we are prepared to do unless a repeal process of this ordinance is introduced and passed as soon as possible.

As initially outlined in this communique we are fully aware of the extreme political and economic complexities surrounding this very sensitive issue, but the poor, homeless victims should not, MUST NOT, bear the burden of the "societal sins" which create their circumstances.

We are prepared to work with you and the city council to repeal this ordinance and implement a course of action which can achieve successfully our mutual goal. We want Atlanta to be seen as not only an international city, but a caring, compassionate business mecca that is genuinely "Too Busy to Hate."

Respectfully,

The Reverend Gerald L. Durley
President
Concerned Black Clergy

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Frances Pauley pictured here on her 90th birthday with attorney Donald Hollowell and Mrs. Louise Hollowell.

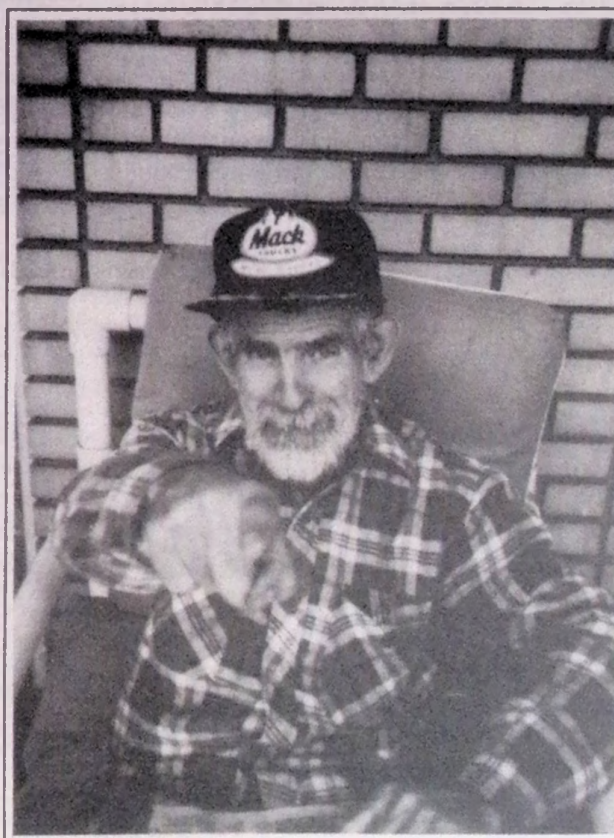
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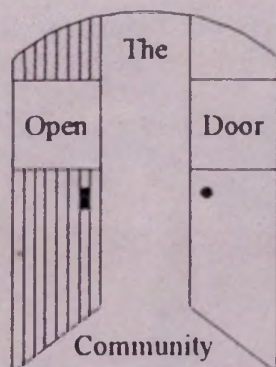
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MURPHY DAVIS

THE DOOR



by Ed Loring

"Come unto me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

"Enter through the narrow door; for the door is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the door is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:13-14)

The Open Door Community is not always open, but prays daily for room and broad places, for land and homes flowing with milk and honey for everyone. The Open Door Community, continuing in the struggle for civil and human rights, is a residential Christian Community which shares life with the homeless and hungry, with those in jail and prison. Particular to our vocation is visitation and anti-death penalty advocacy. Our purpose is to respond with the works of mercy (Matthew 25:31-46) to the immediate needs of those who suffer because of sin and injustice. At the same time, we struggle for the establishment of the Beloved Community on earth as it is in heaven. Hallelujah! For this is the coming of justice and mercy for all people (Isaiah 65:17-25)! (adapted from writing by Murphy Davis with permission)

We believe that God's message is a revolutionary Word that calls for a reordering of human community rooted in the nonviolent love of Jesus Christ and his cross. Thirty of us live together, building a community of diversity in love and servanthood. Our aims and purposes are to practice and live out the Gospel as we are given the gift of new and abundant life. Therefore we struggle against the idols of money, power, violence, sexism, racism, death, war, and the self. Our common life is expressed in shared work, worship, parenting, visiting, advocacy, playing, eating together, friendship, and study. Won't you join us?

The Door: Closed and Reopened

Mark was my enemy, and I was his foe. Mark hated me, and I was afraid of him. His eyes glared fury, and his mouth screamed obscenities that pierced my skin. I felt rubbed and raw. I tried to move toward him with words of explanation. "M—r F—er," he snarled. "I'm gonna hurt you bad if you take another f—ing step into this street." Chuck was beside me. We turned and walked away.

"Thou preparest a table

In the presence of mine enemies.

Thou annointest my head with oil.

My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of my God

my whole life long."

What's going on here?

On a cold and harsh Thursday morning not too long ago, we loaded the van with eggs and grits, coffee and oranges and headed toward the cross and empty tomb of our lives: the Butler Street CME Church Basement. This morning we met the cross. Maybe tomorrow it will be the empty tomb.

When we arrived the line along Coca Cola Street was in disarray. People were pulling and pushing. People were afraid and hungry. Men and women were cold and exhausted. They were homeless, despised and abandoned. Ten of us came bearing wonderful gifts, and we came in the name of "Good news to the poor." Our call and obedience is hospitality and solidarity. We came in Advent, expectant, hopeful, energized and alive.

Leo and I, working together, yoked side-by-side, sharing the weight of the burden, tried to bring stability and order to the chaotic crowd. We could not. The biting hunger and the fear imposed by scarcity were too much. No one would move back and the press tightened toward us like unfettered children at the seat of Santa Claus at the Phipps Plaza Shopping Mall. Leo and I conferred. I turned toward the mass of rejected and angry homeless sisters and brothers and announced: "No breakfast today. We are not serving. When we can't get a line, we won't serve breakfast."

Chuck and I remained in the crowd as the others in our group—the servers—headed for the van and the 10,000 miles back to 910 Ponce de Leon Ave. Unbeknownst to Chuck and me, Amy and Chris, who had come in a separate vehicle, drove to the front of Grady Hospital and sat and watched until Chuck and I were out of the crowd and safely on our way home.

Meanwhile, Chuck and I walked down Coca Cola Street, telling everyone there would be no breakfast. "We are sorry," I said, "But we are not serving today. We will be back tomorrow." Some were stunned and simply stood and waited. Others cursed and yelled at us. Several said that we were stealing Federal Funds that the government paid us to feed them and we had no right to call off the breakfast. Not a few gave us the right hand of fellowship, said they understood, forgave us, and promised to share the meal with us tomorrow. What a light unto our feet! As we turned back toward Butler Street, we ran into a group of five to ten wrathful men. Mark was their spokesman.

The following Monday morning (I go to Butler Street on Mondays and Thursdays), Mark came bounding down the steps and through the door. He showed Jennifer his ticket and walked on. Mark refused my hand, my eye, my greeting, and moved swiftly toward the serving table. "Jennifer, do you know that guy's name?" I inquired. She shook her head, so I asked her to find out as he departed.

Thirty minutes later, he passed me with a haughty shoulder pushed out toward me. "Mark," Jennifer reported. Ched Myers would like this, I thought.

On the next Thursday, I greeted Mark by name and stuck out my hand. He looked at me in a way that reflected my status: white man, gate keeper, rent man, and grits bearer. But we looked each other in the eye. He said, "Hello."

Then came another Monday. When Mark came down the steps I yelled his name and opened my arms. He stepped toward me. We hugged, joked, and laughed. I felt restored. Again I had encountered Christ in a stranger's guise.

"All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into God's friends and gave us the task of making others God's friends also. Our message is that God was making all human beings God's friends through Christ." (II Corinthians 5:18-19a)

An Open Door Behind Locked Doors

On an unseasonably warm but Januarily grey and cloudy Saturday, Elizabeth and I hopped in the car and drove up I-75 North. We were on our way to a paradoxically beautiful hell. Nestled in a lovely valley is a Georgia State Prison. Beyond the bellow of calf and the keen eye of trout fisherwomen, those with ears to hear are disturbed by the muffled moanings of prisoners herded and huddled into steel stalls to wait until their next work shift occurs at no pay. Even those without gospel-trained hearing cover their ears when the one o'clock siren screams through the valley, reminding farmer and fisherwoman who is in control.

Elizabeth is a beautiful friend of mine who shares with me a deep love of mountains, valleys, and prisoners. So we enjoyed our journey and thanked God for such a glorious creation to behold.

Elijah has been in prison for 10 years. He killed a friend of mine who came to the Open Door for food, clothes and showers. Elijah was a friend before going to prison; he, too, came to the Open Door for food, clothes and showers. We are friends today. We have corresponded regularly over the years, and Elizabeth, also his good friend and letter-writer, and I have visited him several times.

Elijah welcomed us into a crowded room filled with children, mothers, friends, lovers, and laughter, tears, fear, joy, and eucharistic cheese crackers and sodas. A prison visit is always strange. How great to be together and share this time! How painful to see and know of prison life and human loss behind this concrete and iron that hides and reveals the frustration and anger that is devouring our nation.

Elijah told us of the new and mean-spirited policies that Wayne Garner, the head of the Department of Corrections, has instituted. For instance, Mr. Garner has attempted to take Christ out of Christmas! This year the men at this prison were allowed no Christmas packages. They were allowed to purchase extra stuff at the "prison store," but the prices were raised for the holidays. (Who can imagine someone making profit off the birth of a baby in a barn?) Elijah, like others who are practicing the Christian life behind bars, resisted. He did not spend a penny during Christmas. He had nothing with which to celebrate. "I will not let them have my money," he said "when they are refusing packages for us just to make money off us." A few others joined him. What a loving and sustaining way to put Christ back into Christmas. Elijah and I ate three bags of M & M's. Elizabeth is allergic to chocolate, so she wolfed down peanuts, crackers and chips.

In the midst of our eating and drinking and hearing of this resistance to the loss of Christ in the midst of Christmas, I told Elijah and Elizabeth a story of my resistance. Thirty six and a half years ago, in the summer of 1960, a group of us from Presbyterian College and UNC, (KA's all), piled into a Buick convertible and headed north to Illinois to pick peas. The driver and organizer of the crew was from UNC, and this was his third summer of pea-picking. We lived in a bunk house in the middle of a pea field fifteen miles from the nearest habitation: Rochelle, Illinois. We often worked twenty hours a day, and

the pay was time and a half over forty hours. On the night before we were to leave the fields and return to North Carolina, the car owner informed us we would have to pay double for the return trip. Three of us said, "No way! We will not ride back with you." We thought we could bargain, and we believed our friends would come to our aid, but the car was too full anyway with nine folk, so the movement and labor organizing was shortlived.

At 9:30 the next morning we started walking to Rochelle. A pick up truck picked us up, and within thirty minutes we were on pavement. Coming out of Chicago a semi truck stopped and offered us a ride but said we had too many suitcases. We threw three away! When we got to Lexington, Kentucky three days later we were exhausted. We took a cab to the airport, called my mom to meet us, and flew to Charlotte, spending four times more money for the ticket than the ride would have been from the pea field. That was my first flight.

Elijah, Elizabeth, and I shared a hearty laugh. Just then the visiting room guard gently announced the end of visitation. He let lovers linger for a moment by the drink machine. Children began to cry, "I want my daddy." One father wept openly. We all ached inwardly. We embraced Elijah and left him at the window waving. Beyond Elizabeth and me he could see the beautiful valley, a church and an antebellum home that invited love, laughter, and a family feeling.

Elizabeth and I plan to return in spring time when flowers blossom and calves kick and rollick in the pastures. Elijah will be there; he has a long time set to serve. And Mark will be in the line tomorrow, most probably, when we unload the grits and eggs. And Jesus will be there, too, waiting for a fire to burn within us, waiting for us to cry out: "Hell no!" to this damnable hunger and homelessness. "We won't abide the abuse and misuse of prisoners. We will resist this death. We will be the people of God here and now." How long. Oh Lord, how long?

"The kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives." (Isaiah 58:6-7)

Ed Loring is a partner at the Open Door Community.

Our Congratulations to Nibs STROUPE AND INEZ FLEMING

on their book, *While We Run This Race*

named *Outstanding Book on the
subject of human rights
in North America*

by The Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of
Human Rights in North America.

available from Orbis Books

for further reading, request a copy of Nibs' latest publication:

A Twice Told Tale: Race in America

This booklet contains additional analysis by Nibs on the history of racism in this country from the beginning of Reconstruction to the present. The material is a compilation of articles previously presented here in *Hospitality*, and includes footnotes, an index, and a reading list for further study. (68 pages)

For your copy, please send a \$5 donation the Open Door Community.



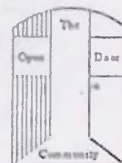
Holy Week with the *Homeless*

We invite you to join us for
worship and/or a 24-hour
period of solidarity with our
friends on the street during
Holy Week.

Services of Worship,
(Mar. 23 - 30):

PALM SUNDAY	Open Door Community, 5pm
MONDAY	Grady Hospital, Butler St., 5pm
TUESDAY	City Jail, Peachtree St., SW, 5pm
WEDNESDAY	Woodruff Park, 5pm
MAUNDY THURSDAY	(with celebration of the Eucharist) City Hall, Trinity Ave., 5pm
GOOD FRIDAY	State Capitol, Washington St., 5pm
HOLY SATURDAY	City Shelter, Jefferson St., 5pm
EASTER MORNING	23 Butler St., 6:30am

Worship of the Resurrected Lord
Followed by a ham and eggs breakfast



Slavery Revisited

(Editor's note: This article was written by a prisoner friend of ours in the Georgia prison system. We run this piece anonymously to protect his identity.)

The issue of slavery has been very divisive in the United States. It is a topic that elicits deep emotional feelings from most people. Slavery is a condition that, when imposed, robs one of dignity and basic humanity. It divides families and separates people from those whom they know and love. However, as indignant as we may feel about the concept of slavery, it is still *legal* in the United States today. Does this surprise you?

Let's take a look at slavery. Ever since humans have inhabited this frail planet, one group of people has always sought to subjugate another. Here within the United States, slavery was used as a matter of economics. Wealthy landowners could, and often did, buy slaves in order to profit from their labor. These people were captured from their villages on the western coast of Africa, placed in chains and transported to the Americas in the crowded holds of slaveships. Upon arrival in the new land, these people were auctioned off to the highest bidder.

During the late 1700's, prominent political thinkers of the time began to question the morality of slavery. Thomas Jefferson felt that slavery was wrong, and yet at the same time held slaves. This is an example of the hypocrisy that has plagued our government. Oftentimes actions are veiled behind elegant arguments.

When the framers of the Constitution discussed the issue of slavery, one issue was insurmountable: the economic impact that the abolition of slavery would have on the wealthy landowners. You see, many had gained considerable wealth due to the labor of the slaves. The thought of losing this source of free labor and thus the source of their wealth was paralyzing. As a result, African-Americans held as slaves were denied the protections guaranteed by the Bill of Rights to the U.S. Constitution.

In the mid-1800s, the southern states took issue with the Federal government over the issue of states' rights. The consequence of this debate was, of course, the forming of the Confederacy. The southern states rebelled against Federal authority and withdrew from the Union. President Lincoln was faced with an ominous decision. If he permitted the southern states to secede, then the very premise of a "United" States of America would be torn asunder.

Our young nation was put to a perilous and costly test. The Civil War plummeted the United States into a very bloody and destructive conflict. The issue of slavery did not come up until toward the end of the Civil War. Northern generals were feeling pressure to end the war. Every family, both from the North and the South, had lost members to this conflict. To help subdue the South, a course of

action was proposed to President Lincoln. That action was to free the slaves in the southern states.

It was believed that if a formal declaration was made freeing those slaves in the South that this would precipitate a mass insurrection among the slaves. It was hoped that this would cause the southern military to be divided to put down this slave rebellion. It was believed by northern Generals Grant, Sherman, and Hooker that this division of southern troops would create a reduction of southern strength. This would enable the North to overwhelm the South.

President Lincoln, heeding the advice of his generals, issued the Emancipation Proclamation. However, please understand that, although President Lincoln was opposed to slavery, his Emancipation Proclamation did not free all of the slaves in the U.S. Quite the contrary, the only slaves freed were those slaves held in Confederate states.

After the Civil War was over, a new bridge

not, no. Upon entering the state prison system, prisoners are classified. A part of this classification process is to determine what, if any, job skills a prisoner possesses. Based upon these determinations, prisoners are assigned to jobs or details. If a prisoner refuses to work, the punishment is severe. It is policy that if any prisoner participates in a work stoppage, he or she will be compelled to "max out" their prison sentences with no chance or hope of parole. Furthermore, if prisoners refuse to work, they will be transferred to a state prison that is as far away as possible from their home and family members.

Within the state Bureau of Prisons is a department known as Mobile Construction. This department uses prison labor to build a number of projects. Everything from new prisons and jails to privately owned cabins on a lake in northeastern Georgia. Private businesses are deprived of the opportunity for work projects. The states'

use of prisoner (slave) labor deprives contractors and their employees of an opportunity to earn a living.

It may be argued that it is justifiable to use prisoner labor to build state projects. But what of the loss of business to contractors who cannot compete with the free labor of state prison-



had to be crossed. This dealt exclusively with the issue of slavery. A few politicians argued vociferously to end slavery for all people in the U.S. Others argued for the continuation of the practice of slavery. The end result was, as is often the case in political arenas, a compromise.

The 13th Amendment was written and ratified. A section of the 13th Amendment states:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction (Section 1).

What transpired was not the end to slavery but a modification of it. Notice the conditional clause that permits slavery: "except as a punishment of crime." In other words, slavery is legal within the U.S. as specified by the Constitution. All that is required is for the individual to first be convicted of a crime.

Do you think slave labor exists today? Let's look at our current prison system. Many countries contract to the state for prison labor. This labor is used to clean roads, parks and other city and county facilities. A prison industry has arisen. Prison facilities using prison labor make license plates, brooms, mops, mattresses and clothes. In addition, a printing plant is operated that uses prison labor to print state documents, forms and stationery.

Do the men and women in our states' prisons "volunteer" for these jobs? More often than

crs? As a matter of economics, construction companies and their workers are deprived of business that would help to feed their families.

Let's take a brief look at some of the projects completed by the state prisoners. Jails were built in Gilmer, Ware, Douglas and Wayne counties. A State Patrol barracks was constructed at the airport in McCullum, and D.O.T. weigh stations in Forsyth were constructed. To add to this, fire stations in Macon County and in Coweta County were built. In Person, the City Hall and police department were constructed using prisoner labor. In Hartwell, prisoners built the Bobby K. Whitworth Probation and Detention Center.

In addition, ball fields in Emmanuel County as well as a concession stand for the city ball field in Claxton were built with prisoner labor. Prisoners built schools for the Board of Education in Hazlehurst, Lafayette and Statesboro. Also in Statesboro, an academic building was built for the local college. In Alma, an old theater was turned into a performing arts studio. Among these and other projects, prisoners were used to work on the Wachovia Building in downtown Atlanta.

Some may say that there is a difference between slavery as imposed in the previous centuries and as it is currently imposed. I agree, there is a big difference. However, I am saying that a *form* of slavery exists today, and it is hidden from the public eye.

Who benefits from the dehumanizing aspects of this involuntary servitude? Money and favors change hands just as swiftly today for

Derek's Story: A Combination of Two Poisons

by Jennifer Lee

Poverty is a poison. Poverty can leave a person malnourished. Poverty can leave a person homeless. Poverty can leave a person cold and frozen, starved and dehydrated. Poverty can lead a person to insanity. Poverty can lead to death.

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a poison. HIV can lead a person to pure torture and suffering. HIV can lead to AIDS, to pneumonia, to cancer, to open sores, to weight loss, to insanity. HIV can lead to death.

Slavery

(continued from page 8)

"free" labor as they did in the slave markets. But today our slave drivers sanitize their actions by hiding behind a wall of silence and good public relations.

All that is required to make someone a slave in the U.S. is to have that person convicted of a crime. And, my friends, in the South that is very easy to accomplish, especially if you are black and/or poor. After conviction, one is placed in chains and hauled away. Ties with family and friends are broken with no regard to the psychological harm being done.

Prisons have established rules that make contact with anyone in the "free" world difficult. Because of the ever-changing rules that make visiting someone in prison so difficult, people eventually quit going to prison to visit loved ones. The prisoner, being further alienated and dehumanized, soon slips into a mindless state that accepts the yoke of oppression. To make themselves forget about their troubles, prisoners throw themselves completely into their slave labor. This creates an attitude that is precisely what prison officials desire.

I don't think prisoners should be coddled. But they should not be dehumanized either. Currently, political acclaim is gained by being "tough on criminals." As morally responsible human beings, do we want to be responsible for state sanctioned slavery? What is the end product? What happens when, after years of brutalization in a prison slave environment, a person is released back into society? Aren't we creating the nightmares that will haunt us in the future?

How would you feel if, for whatever reason, you were forced to live for years, if not decades, enslaved in the Georgia prison system? Would you be a peace-loving, productive citizen or something else?

Slavery is alive and well in our society. The auction block is as near as your local courthouse. Our slave drivers have put on uniforms and become an agency within the government. The dehumanizing process of slavery continues. Fortunes continue to be made on the backs of humans forced into labor.

Derek is a homeless, 40-year-old Black man who lives in our front yard. Derek suffers from the poison of poverty. He experiences all the pain and suffering of poverty. He experiences all the hardships that come with the life of a homeless Black man. Along with the rest of our homeless sisters and brothers, he waits in many lines every day: a line for breakfast, a line for lunch, a line for a shower, a line for a blanket, a line at the Social Security office, a line at the Medicaid office--the lines never end. Along with the rest of our homeless sisters and brothers, he sleeps on the ground under mounds of blankets that still do not fend off

says, "My skin is beginning to resemble an 80-year-old's skin, with no elasticity and no moisture. Sores are beginning to spread over my skin, and the cold weather brings about headaches and migraines."

Additionally, Derek is having problems with his esophagus. When he tries to swallow, his food will almost choke him. He suffers from opportunistic infections in the gum areas. Therefore, when Derek eats, sharp, stabbing pain shoots throughout his mouth. Just two days ago, as I passed him on the front steps at 910, he handed me his health report from Grady. The report says that the doctors

might have found lymphoma (a cancer) in his lungs. I must again reiterate at this point that Derek is HOMELESS. When lying on the cold ground, Derek finds it hard to move because his shoulders are so painful. When the biting wind blows, Derek explains, "it feels like the cold is coming through the blankets and freezing me."

So why is he not living under a stable roof? Why is he not sleeping in the warmth of his own bed taking care of his sores, his



the cold. When it rains, Derek, along with all those without homes, seeks some sort of overhang as a refuge from the elements. And when the temperature drops below freezing, to keep from losing his limbs or his life, he rides in our blue van packed with our homeless sisters and brothers to a shelter overflowing with many other human beings who have no place to call home. Yes, so far, Derek's story is a story you have probably read many times in *Illospitality*. Every homeless human being's story contains similar details that I have heard repeated many times over; nevertheless the story remains as painful as ever.

In the month of February, 1995, the additional poison of HIV crept into Derek's life. Derek found after an appointment with the Mercy Mobile Clinic that he tested positive for HIV. At the time he was tested, his T-cell count (a measure of infection fighting in the blood) was 254 (the normal count is approximately 1,000). By 2 months after the test, his count was 127 T-cells, and by 4 months, it was down to only 18. Thus, Derek suffers from AIDS.

Living on the streets is hell. Living with AIDS is hell. Poverty is a poison. HIV is a poison. The two put together make a deadly combination. Derek's health is clearly deteriorating, and life on the streets certainly accelerates his deterioration. When I first met him this past summer, he was overcoming a battle with pneumonia. Due to the biting cold and rain of this winter, Derek suffers severe rheumatoid aches and pains. Pain shoots across his shoulder blades, and often he cannot lift his legs because of pain in his tendons and joints. Derek

aches and his pains?

Derek is honest about how he contracted HIV. Derek is a drug addict. For most of his life, he has been living in an environment in which many people used drugs. Derek said frankly, "I had an infatuation with the euphoria that I saw others have when I was not using. I was gullible, so I activated my own addictive behaviors. This is how I contracted HIV."

Growing up as a middle-class white woman, I have always heard it said that honesty is the best policy. However, because Derek is honest about his drug addiction, low-income housing programs, as well as programs intending to house people suffering from AIDS, continue to refuse him. In most low-income housing developments, the requirements are very strict. All places ask for the tenant's history and past drug use. Often, even if a person has been evicted once, he or she will surely be denied. In Derek's case, sometimes the denial is phrased, "You have not had enough clean time" or "There has been a conflict of interest based on inquiry," or "You're not ready." Another housing program claims that they cannot offer him housing because he has an outstanding balance. Yet, Derek tells me that they will not even discuss working with him to pay the balance in installments while allowing him to live in one of the apartments. As Derek points out, a person's welfare should come before financial concerns. Just think! If our society put a human being's life and welfare before profit, what kind of society would it be? Christian, maybe?

(continued on page 10)

(Derek' Story, continued from page 9)

"I explain my predicament, but all they want is the money," Derek says, "They are not concerned about my health. Even after I pay the balance, there is no guarantee that I will be given a place, because of my background as an addict."

In my conversations with him, Derek tries hard to describe his frustrations so that I can understand. "I have filled out form after form, gone through interview after interview, but nothing has come through. I could rent a hotel room for \$100 or more a week, but I only receive an SSI check of \$470 per month. This is not enough to live in a boxed room and buy all my personal care needs that I must have to survive. I have been trying to get back into low income housing for nearly two years. At the rate of my deteriorating health, if I continue to live on the streets, I have only six months to a year to live."

Additionally, Derek has sought help with funds from different AIDS organizations. They continue to tell him that they do not have the funds to help him. Although I have no proof, I cannot help but wonder to myself, "Is there a lack of funds because Derek is black?" or "Do the AIDS organizations attempt to ignore people with HIV who are homeless?" Knowing that the funds are in the hands of white, middle-class individuals and knowing the undeniable tendency the white middle class has to discriminate, I would be willing to bet that my questions are at least warranted.

In addition to housing concerns, Derek also has medical concerns that a housed, middle-class HIV patient does not have. As with any poor person seeking medical care, Derek has never received adequate medical attention. No doctors have tried to advise him to get on drugs that might boost his immune system. No medical advisors have placed a good diet as a priority in his life or have given him drugs to prevent pneumonia. Like many other homeless and poor individuals suffering with AIDS, Derek only gets what he calls "streamline" medical care. The Medicaid he receives does not provide the more effective medications for AIDS. To give Derek these medications would not be "cost efficient." So once again, the poison of poverty lessens Derek's ability to fight the poison of HIV.

An article in *Newsweek* alluded to the combination of poverty and HIV. In the article "The End of AIDS?" (Dec. 2, 1996, p. 65-73), John Leland writes about the new drugs on the horizon that might dramatically decrease the debilitating effects HIV has on a person. These drugs have offered some "hope for living with HIV" to many patients. However, Leland (p. 66) points out that "because the drugs are so expensive, costing up to \$25,000 a year, they won't help the developing world, which now accounts for more than 90 percent of all adult AIDS or HIV cases. Even in this country, the poor and uninsured are often left out, coldly splitting the AIDS population into haves and have-nots."

What is now widely known is that HIV can no longer be associated with only white gay men. The population which has lately been hardest hit by HIV consists primarily of poor and minority individuals. "The infection rate among African-Americans is five times higher than among whites. Conditions are even more acute in prisons" (Leland, p. 71). To predict the distribution of helpful drugs, one need only look as far as the recent past and present battles with diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria. There is a cure for

EC Says: No to Killing!

by Elizabeth Dede

I grew up in a home that practiced a calm and reasoned approach to life, and so I am often prone to debate in my conversation, and the rational is an easier mode for me than the emotional. Sometimes the clarity of reason is still helpful to me, although I am increasingly aware of the value of feelings.

In November I had just that sort of flash of the truth in our struggle to abolish the death penalty. Two of our long-time friends on Georgia's death row were executed within 24 hours of each other—Larry Lonchar and Wayne Felker. And what I learned is that our clamoring for death is not at all rational, if it were, we would have abolished the death penalty long ago. It just doesn't make any sense.

Before he finally was executed, Wayne was given a last-minute stay so that the U.S. Supreme Court could review some serious issues in his case—the State had hidden more than four boxes of evidence from the defense for more than ten years; it only turned up less than two months before Wayne's execution date, and the defense was requesting time to review all of this new material. The *Atlanta Constitution* quoted an "angry State Attorney General Mike Bowers." Bowers was tired of the delays and wanted Wayne Felker to be killed immediately.

TB; there is a cure for malaria. However, "millions die anyway because they cannot afford it" (Leland, p. 71). The same will be the case for poor individuals battling HIV. Drugs that could extend the lives of those living with HIV, drugs that could enhance the lives of those living with HIV, will not likely be seen by Derek or by any one else suffering from the combined poisons of poverty and HIV.

Derek is living proof of the phenomenon of inadequate medical care for an HIV patient who is poor and Black. Derek is living proof of the phenomenon of inadequate housing for an HIV patient who is poor and Black. Derek is living proof of the lack of care and compassion for an HIV patient who is poor and Black. The belief that U.S. society stands solid on Christian values is false. Even if we were to put Christian faith aside, the belief that U.S. society stands solid on humanitarian values is false. The U.S. stands on the shaky ground of capitalism and consumerism, where profit is given priority over the lives of many people, especially people suffering from the poison of poverty.

So when a homeless Black man stricken with AIDS cannot turn to his government for the care and housing he needs, where can he go? I keep hearing it said that the Church will have to respond to the crisis which seems to be coming along with the slashing of welfare funds. The Church will have to pick up where the government has failed in the areas of housing, medical care, and social services. Yet, Derek is still waiting, and he does not have long to wait. Derek still seeks a bed and adequate medical care. Will the Church answer his knock at the door? Yes, if it is the Church of Jesus Christ, the door will be opened. Answer the door, you disciples of Jesus. For Jesus waits outside, suffering from the poisons of poverty and HIV.

Jennifer Lee is a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door. She is a Presbyterian pastor and member of the Cherokee Presbytery.

It is clear to me that Bowers' angry cry for death certainly debunks his theory that the death penalty shows that killing people is wrong and that it discourages murderers. In his anger, Bowers demands that people be killed. His strong emotions blind him to the foolish inconsistency that is so aptly put in the question: "Why do we kill people who kill people to show that killing people is wrong?"

At the time that each of these friends were scheduled to be executed, nearly fifty death penalty abolitionists gathered on the steps of the State Capitol to hold a peaceful vigil of prayer, song, and silence. As always we were heckled with loud, angry shouts: "Fry the bastard!" I know the mothers of both of these men—loving, caring women who braved such ugliness to show their love for their children. "Fry him!" the crowd yelled. It sounded to me close to the cries from the people when Pilate asked, "What should I do with this man, Jesus?" "Crucify him!" they yelled. In their angry shouts for an execution, these hecklers are seeking death no less than the person who commits murder.

In order to get the latest news in these volatile executions, where amazing turns come minutes before the scheduled time of death, we are forced to tune in to AM radio talk shows. Executions are the only time that I can bear to listen to this hateful spew, and then only on the half-hour when "the news" is reported. There is so much ugliness, hate, bitterness, and degradation shown to the poor and to those who try to make our society more just. How can hate radio hosts and callers, with their shouts for death and their disrespect of human life, be seen as acceptable when we are trying to teach that killing people is wrong?

I think you get the picture: there is no rational explanation for the hatred in our country that leads us to kill and call for death as a punishment. The death penalty is a matter of our hearts. And we are heart-sick. Mrs. Lonchar and Mrs. Felker have broken hearts. Many of us have hard hearts. In the anti-death penalty movement, we must pray that our hearts of stone will be made flesh so that we can feel the pain, hurt, and anger all around us, and then be moved to enlarge our hearts so that we can show the same love, mercy, and forgiveness that God has shown us.

No to killing! Yes to life!

E. C. Dede is a partner at the Open Door Community.

Easter Needs

Each Easter, the Open Door Community gathers at sunrise with the homeless in our city, amidst flowers and balloons, to share in worship and a ham and eggs breakfast.

We need and appreciate your help in providing this Easter meal which is served to 500 folks. Our needs include:

Ham, Eggs, Grits, Sweet Rolls, Coffee, Money, Flowers, and Balloons.

Dear Mayor Campbell,

This year I have been on tour all over Europe. In light of the Olympics, the spotlights have been on Atlanta, and as a result, I have been interviewed by newspapers, radios, and television from around the world.

How do I explain to people curious about this great city that if you are downtown and you urgently need to use a restroom, you are out of luck? How do I explain that maybe if you are well dressed and white you may be able to use the facilities of a local business? But if you are not so fortunate, you may risk serious bladder problems and even arrest?

Public toilets seem such a simple and unquestionably necessary thing for any public space. Why don't we have them? It is not an issue of race, class, religion, or power. It is a simple health and hospitality measure.

Let's enter the global community and offer hospitality to all folk: visitors and Atlantans, rich and poor, African, Native American, European, Asian, or Hispanic. I thank you for your kind attention and hope this thirteen-year-old issue can be resolved immediately!

Sincerely,
Elise Witt
EM World Recording Artist
Decatur, GA

(Editor's note: Since 1977, Elise has been touring the world with her Global Local & Homemade Songs, doing her best to represent the U.S.A. well. Last year, she was chosen to represent the State of Georgia for the Kennedy Center's 25th Anniversary Celebration. She sings often with us at the Open Door, and is a member of our Advisory Board.)

Dear Ms. Dede,

Thank you for this month's edition of Hospitality (October 1996). I read Rev. Stroupe's piece on racism and the poor and I wrote him a letter. I'd like to share with you some of my thoughts from that letter.

I told him that the common thread running through his prose is his seeming puzzlement of why racism is still so pervasive in America. I went on to elucidate the reasons why I feel it still weighs so heavily upon our society.

I explained that when the Civil Rights Movement began in the late 1950's, there were two distinct facets to our system of racial inequality.

The first facet was the Jim Crow laws and the judicial decisions that legalized racism and made it a part of our culture. The second facet was the National and State systems of judges and lawyers that animated the culture of racism and gave it teeth. The Movement was quite successful in discarding the racial laws but it has done a dismal job of dealing with racist judges and lawyers who skirt the law to keep Blacks and poor people illegally imprisoned and infect cases with bias.

After the anti-racism laws were ushered in, the Movement took for granted that judges and lawyers would make the appropriate transition to a non-racist system. But the empirical evidence is clear that such a transition has not unfolded.

I don't think you can aptly begin to edify the public with racial healing until the Movement finishes its job of stripping away the second facet of the old racial system.

If dealing with the first facet was difficult,

overcoming the remaining one will be many times more difficult because it entails the thankless job of overturning stones to search for those individual occurrences of injustice in the courts, and dealing with them case by case. And it involves devising a legal apparatus that holds judges and lawyers immediately accountable, (those who seek to maintain the status quo). This can be accomplished by bestowing citizen review panels with the power to discipline judges and lawyers.

In short, the new battleground has to be in the chambers and offices of noncompliant judges and lawyers. Otherwise there can never be a successful Civil Rights Movement.

If Michael J. Bowers fulfils his bid to become governor of Georgia and enacts his proposal to make prisoners serve 85% of their time. Those of us who are illegally incarcerated will suffer a double failure of the Civil Rights Movement, not to mention human rights.

The Movement should reconsider its strategies in this battle against evil.

Sincerely,

(Editor's note: we run this letter anonymously to protect our friend in prison.)

Dear Open Door Community,

I'm visiting home for Thanksgiving break after three months at college. During those months I've been thinking of you folks and wishing that I received Hospitality. My mom just gave me your publication of Nibs Stroupe's A Twice Told Tale: Race in America, and I look forward to reading it. I go to Earlham College, which is a small Quaker school in Indiana. At times I have felt very removed from the issue of racism and social justice, for it is very easy to get caught up in classes and friends and to forget that there's a world outside my little school. For exactly that reason, I would love to get Hospitality at school.

Also, I will be home in May, and I am interested in any volunteer opportunities you'll have at that time.

Thank you so much.

God's peace,

Abby Hickcox
Richmond, IN

Dear Ed,

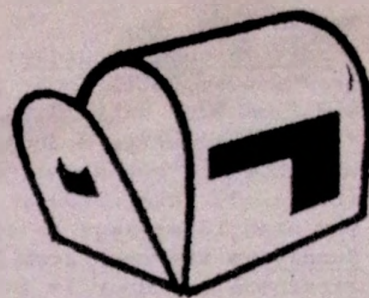
I received your letter December 4th and thanks for writing.

Your letter did find me in good spirits and doing okay. I hope that each of you are doing well and in good health and spirits also. Make sure you tell everyone hello for me and be strong.

Things are getting rough here as well as out there. We have to pay five dollars everytime we go to sick call, and this does not include the price of medication if we have to be issued some. They're charging inmates sometimes \$15 or more for treatment during sick call.

From what I've heard today, pretty soon there will be no more counseling staff for inmates, and no more school for the illiterates in the Georgia

Grace and Peaces of Mail



penal system. Such a cruel thing to do.

You asked, "How new are the uniforms you get in prison?" Truthfully speaking, and from the experience of working where prisoners' uniforms are made, I can tell you that we wear rejects, second-grade clothing. All of the number-one grade of material clothing is sold to county jails and prisons around the state. Regardless of what grade of material a prisoner's uniform is made of, society classifies us as they did Jesus at birth. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and no one gave him warm clothes to wear or a room for him and his parents to lay their heads. If I could wear any clothes in the whole world today, Ed, I would gladly wear the clothes that Jesus wore on the cross. Those clothes are holy, regardless of their condition today. I assume he wore sackcloth clothing, and because we wear uniforms with stripes, we're classified as cast-outs by society, as Jesus was.

All of you are continuously in my prayers.

With my best wishes,

(Editor's note: we run this letter anonymously to protect our friend in prison.)

Dear Open Door people,

I read with much interest and concern the account of your toilet demonstration (Hospitality, August 1996). Wish I could've been there. Some of you must really have muscles to lift those heavy things!

While visiting in England and Scotland I was impressed with the highly visible public toilets everywhere and wondered why my hometown (Atlanta) didn't provide this necessity.

I'm glad that you got some media coverage and do hope that your demonstration did some good. I may write Mayor Campbell, as an ex-Atlantan and frequent visitor to the city.

Sincerely,

Emily B. Calhoun
Alto, GA

Dear Open Door,

Your story of the homeless in Atlanta [during the Olympics] made the inside front page of the Minneapolis Star Tribune, including a picture.

Clinton's signing of the so-called Welfare Reform Bill will further devastate the poor and voiceless. It's time we were no longer voiceless.

Shalom,

Tom and Jeanne Buell
Brookings, OR

WE ARE OPEN. . .

Monday through Saturday: telephones are answered from 9:00am until noon, from 2:00 until 6:00pm, and from 7:00 until 8:30pm. The building is open from 9:00am until 8:30pm those days (Both phone and door are not answered during our lunch break from 12:30 until 2:00). 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 9:10, 7:15am
BUTLER ST. CME BREAKFAST: Monday-Friday, 7:15am
SHOWERS & CHANGE OF CLOTHES: Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 2-4pm (Be sure to call; schedule varies)

USE OF PHONE: Monday-Saturday, 9am-noon, 2:00pm-5pm

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

WEEKEND RETREATS: Four times each year (for our household and volunteers/supporters), next retreat is our Spring retreat, April 18 - 20.

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

Moving?

Bulk rate mail is not forwarded by the U.S. Postal Service. Send Hospitality, 910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE, Atlanta, GA, 30306-4212, your new mailing address as soon as you know it. Please enclose the mailing label from your most recent issue. Thank you!



Harriet Tubman

If you have found Hospitality helpful and would like to know more about the Open Door Community, please fill out, clip and send this coupon to The Open Door Community • 910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE • Atlanta, GA 30306-4212.

____ Please ADD to the Hospitality mailing list.

____ Please accept my tax deductible donation to the Open Door Community.

____ I'm interested in volunteering. Please give me more information.

____ I would like to explore a six to twelve-month commitment as a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door. Please send more information.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____, State _____ Zip _____ + _____

Phone _____

Open Door Community Worship

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

Please join us!

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| January 5 | 5 p.m. Worship at 910
5:45 Singing with Elise Witt |
| January 12 | Worship at 910
Dr. Noll Erskine, preaching |
| January 19 | Worship at 910
Celebration of Dr. King's Birthday |
| January 26 | Worship at 910
Murphy Davis, preaching |
| February Celebration of Black History | |
| February 2 | Worship at 910
Mark Lomax, preaching |
| February 9 | Worship at 910
Fred Taylor, preaching |
| February 16 | Worship at 910; Criminal Justice Sunday
John Cole Vodicka |
| February 23 | 5:00 Worship at 910
5:45 Stories from the Justice Journey
Attorney Donald Hollowell with
Martin Lehsfeldt |

Open Door Community Needs

JEANS
T-Shirts
Men's Work Shirts
Quick Grits
Carpeting
Cheese
Coffee
Multi-Vitamins
MARTA Tokens
Postage Stamps
Underwear for Men
Men's Shoes (all sizes)
Disposable Razors
Women's Underwear
Toothbrushes
Deodorant
Vaseline
Towels
Socks
Shampoo
Men's Belts
Washcloths
Sandwiches
Soup Kitchen Volunteers*
Butler St. Breakfast Volunteers*

* contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Brenda Smith at 404-874-9652

From 11am til 1:30pm, Monday through 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 or after 1:30, it would be helpful. THANK YOU!