

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Column #110



SELL THE SIZZLE, NOT THE STEAK!

Part 1: Singing hallelujah throughout the Monterey Peninsula

By Wanda Sue Parrott

STREAMING news almost obscured the world's loss of two shining lights in the wake of the Nov. 8 presidential hoopla.

If one term praises both exalted decedents (Jewish poet/singer/songwriter Leonard Cohen, 82, on Nov. 10, and black reporter/presidential-debate moderator Gwen Ifill, 61, on Nov. 13) it's the word "Hallelujah."

As to president-elect Donald J. Trump, who extolled "hyperbole" as a grand marketing strategy, let's pray his seemingly narcissistic bombast was as vapid as hot air.

Let's also hope Americans aren't the hate-filled racists, bigots and misogynists their votes intimated they still are.

What intangibles drove this election? Monterey storyteller Phil Hawthorne cites a marketing strategy I think Trump probably used for purveying political intangibles:

Sell The Sizzle, Not The Steak

As one who doesn't eat beef, I prefer lighter fare, so invite you to join in a banquet of spirit by sharing this reflection.

The day after the election, a haggard gray-faced President Barack Obama looked like the light had evaporated out of him. And, momentarily, it did. It's a phenomenon mystics call "wandering in the darkness of despair." Why? It seemed a despot would destroy Obamacare, his legacy of healthcare for America's workers, her poor, her homeless.

Despair can afflict anyone. When it affects a sitting President, visibly palpable dimness descends over the White House. I witnessed such despair in DC in 1992.



I was on a Greyhound Bus on Sun., Nov. 15, traveling from a convention in Virginia Beach, Va. to the bus terminal on Massachusetts Ave., Washington, DC.

President George H. W. Bush had lost his bid for reelection to Bill Clinton twelve days earlier. It was past dusk when the bus rolled around a corner and I glimpsed of the White House. Illuminated by external lighting, its inner glow was flat.

The White House felt like a candlelit coffin draped in gray scrim of disappointment, heartbreak and despair. Or a zombie, alive but spiritless with grief.

Within moments, the bus turned onto a side-street where a portable soup kitchen was serving a line of men and a few women who shuffled and huddled like silent shadow figures in the Founding Fathers' footsteps.

Hallelujah!

Presidents Bush and Obama revived as their inner lights rekindled. Can we say the same about the almost-invisible street people of the nation's capitol? Or here on our own beautiful Monterey Peninsula?

As President Bush Senior often said, "Make no mistake about it..." to which I add "there are homeless living like shadows from the untamed undergrowth of Carmel to the sandy strand of Lapis Road near Marina."

We the People have the power to do something about it, rather than cross our fingers and hope the new administration does it for us.

CeliaSue Hecht, homeless freelance writer/editor who has been quoted in this column before, says, "My slogan is, as it has always been: HOUSE PEOPLE NOW. She urges readers to join in her quest.

What can you do?

Light The Candle Of Hope Through City Hall

Remember the media's homeless-blitz that started last June? The long, contentious election upstaged it, but it didn't fizzle and die.

This column is rekindling the local blitz by inviting you to help do for the Monterey Peninsula what soup kitchen volunteers were doing near the White House, filling a void.

Learn how city government works by participating in the democratic process.

Start by urging your mayor and city council to join the 2017 Matching Funds Challenge grant program which benefits the peninsula's homeless population that's becoming more visible as its numbers increase.

This election was a turning point for America. Thus far in US history, the lights have always come back on. Will they stay on this time?

It's up to us, because we are those lights.

Next week we'll take a mini-tour of city hall. Join us if you don't favor elderly homeless women sipping soup on the streets of Paradise. If we don't act, such women could become tomorrow's tourist attractions.

For now, may Leonard Cohen's musical light rekindle your post-election hope, whether you prefer steak or veggies, or simply love the sizzle of intangible promise.

HALLELUJAH

You say I took the name in vain
I don't even know the name
But if I did, well really, what's it to you?

There's a blaze of light
In every word
It doesn't matter which you heard
The holy or the broken Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah. . .

~ Leonard Cohen (1934-2016)

You can read the whole song at <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/leonardcohen/hallelujah.html>

Or listen to K. D. Lang sing it at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_NpxTWbovE

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Contact Wanda Sue Parrott at amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com or leave a message with
The Yodel Poet at 831-899-5887.