

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Column #124

Hear Our Voice - Part 4



HUDDLING FOR MEN WHO HANG OUT ON PARK BENCHES

By Wanda Sue Parrott

CONTINUING our coverage of the Hear Our Voice movement that evolved from the Pink Pussyhat Women's March on Jan. 21, the third Action proposed for the first 100 days of the month-old Trump administration's "Honeymoon Period" is Protest.

If you recall, a follow-up 10-Actions series is captioned "First we march, then we huddle."

So, choose a protest about which to huddle? Or, "Think before you act!"

Every Protest Starts With A Huddle

Huddling means sharing ideas, so choose an aspect of social injustice that moves you to protest: racial and religious prejudice; gender discrimination; need for a minimum wage or affordable housing; unjust incarceration; universal healthcare; women's reproductive rights. How about homelessness?

Once you know your protest topic, join a pre-existent protest group of like-minded persons, start your own local protest movement, or simply express yourself through art, entertainment or literature as Sue Arlson of Monterey did.

Sue poeticized homelessness after spotting two elderly gents outside the classroom where she was line dancing.

Two Men In The Park

by Sue Arlson, Monterey

Looking out the window
while dancing in line,
I chanced to see two older men
seeming to be enjoying some time.

They sat together on a bench,
each bundled to beat the cold.
My curiosity was piqued
as to what stories they may have told.

The bench where they sat, at the edge of the park,
was a gathering place for them.
I surmised that fact as I continued to watch,
for they seemed to be such good friends.

Then one man stood up and strolled to the place
where the trash was collected all day.
He searched for a bit, but nothing found he,
with empty hands he walked away.

“Could they be homeless?” I thought to myself,
“or just two friends shooting the breeze?”
“What does homeless look like?” I queried,
then answered, “Just like you and me!”

Are we too quick to judge people
who don't follow our “status quo?”
These folks may not have asked to be homeless!
Their stories we do not know!

Homelessness is an epidemic
throughout many cities and states.
It could happen to any one of us,
yet we still sit with food on our plates.

If huddling for men doesn't move you, how about huddling for unsheltered women of Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program (I-HELP) for Women? Or, One Starfish women who sleep in their cars?

Prior huddlers helped convince City of Monterey to revise its Municipal Code Section 38-126(G). At the Feb. 21 city council meeting, Safe Parking Use Permits became a permanent program. This means women who have passed vetting for criminal backgrounds may sleep in their cars at freely permitted spots, such as St. John's Episcopal Church, in Monterey.

To research protests currently in progress, or to discuss one of your own, contact the Monterey Peace and Justice Center, 1364 Fremont Blvd., Seaside, 831-899-7322,

<https://sites.google.com/site/peaceresourcecenter/what-s-happening> .

So, looking at these two older men
sitting together on the bench in the park,
then realizing that both may be homeless
just tugs at the strings of my heart.

We live in America, the land of the free.
yet homelessness is rampant across the country!
If we were to walk one day in their shoes,
do you think we would understand, “It's not what
they choose?”

Freedom and homelessness?
It doesn't add up!
When will we take a stand
to say we've had enough!

The shelters do provide some relief,
but too often run out of room.
The food banks attempt to quench hunger,
Yet that hunger continues to bloom.

Isn't there something we can do
to make their lives a little better?
Like random acts of kindness
to these, our sisters and brothers?

I, for one, would love to see
homelessness start to decline,
then, one day, be a thing of the past,
a culture then left behind.

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Questions about Monterey Peace and Justice Center should go to monterypeaceandjustice@gmail.com.

For updates on the Hear Our Voice project, see www.womensmarch.com.

For details on How to Activate Your Inner Activist, contact CeliaSue Hecht at celiasue.hecht@gmail.com.

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