

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

July 6-12, 2018

### HUMPTY DUMPTY HOUSING – Part 20



### **BORDER CROSSING LABELS: POOR WHITE TRASH VERSUS BROWN PRIVILEGE**

**by Wanda Sue Parrott**

**CROSSING** the border into Tijuana for my first time happened in 1939 when I was four.

If the Golden Gate Exposition of 1939-1940 (aka the San Francisco World's Fair) hadn't lured my Missouri Aunt Peggy and her friend Verlee Houck to California, my Mexico trips might never have begun.

An old sepia-toned souvenir postcard rekindled memory of a mantra Mother chanted: "We're poor white trash."

Sitting in the rustic two-wheel cart drawn by a dusty donkey, nattily clad in a dress, silk stockings and high heels, Mother fit the image of a "rich gringa," not a poor person.

The other two "norteamericanas" in the "carte postale" preceded images of Women's Lib by thirty years.

Verlee, saucily astride the donkey, wore a flared white pantsuit and walking shoes, while Aunt Peggy wore straight-legged trousers with flats. Mother never donned slacks until after Dad died in 1989!

We posed in woven straw Mexican hats with labels. Verlee's said Mexico; Peggy's, Adios; Mother's, Tijuana. Mine was blank.

The first non-white man I'd ever seen took our photo.

He wore a huge sombrero and bent over a camera on wooden legs, draping his hat and face with a black cloth.

Off to the side stood my tall father in his black accountant's suit; beside Dad was Uncle Archie in wool tweed golfing attire. The men counted out greenbacks with which to pay the photographer who lived off "turistas" like us.

This week, seventy-nine years since the photo was made, I discovered a hidden clue that rebutted my mother's mantra about her perceived version of our less-than-rich socio-economic class.

I was wearing hightop white kid shoes that laced halfway up my leg and realized I didn't need a message on my hat to broadcast the fact my expensive footwear served as a badge that screamed silently: White Privilege.

Wow!

I wondered: What about the thousands of men, women and children now homeless captives, mostly with brown skin, who are detained at our southern border?

I have never had a problem crossing the border going south. Will they make it to the north?

I've never been homeless. Will they ever have homes again?

Is there such a label as "poor brown trash?"

How about Brown Privilege?

### **Preamble To The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, guarantees the rights of all people and encompasses a broad spectrum of economic, social, cultural, political, and civil rights.

Here is the Preamble:

*Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world,*

*Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,*

*Whereas it is essential, if a man is not compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,*

*Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,*

*Whereas the people of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women, and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,*

*Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,*

*Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge*

*Now, Therefore, The General Assembly proclaims This Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

*As a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective*

*recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.*

Next week's column will cover more of my own border crossings, homelessness and human rights.

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**Photo: Verlee Houck, Peggy Hardy, Wanda Sue Childress-Parrott and Lois Marie Childress in Tijuana, Mexico in summer 1939. From the collection of Wanda Sue Parrott**

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