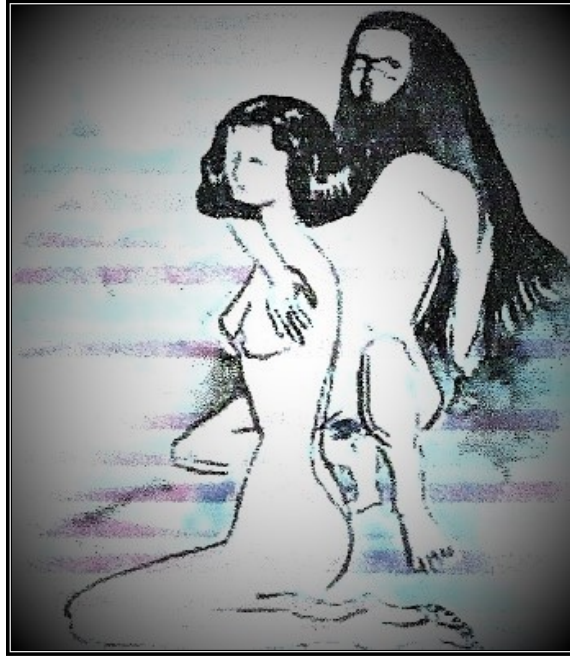


HOMELESS IN PARADISE

September 6-12, 2019

PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE--Part 1



WERE THE OKIES CALIFORNIA'S FIRST HOMELESS FAMILIES?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

*who's this helpless pair
homeless point-in-time portraits
new America*

“**GIVING** life the shape of justice” from the Unitarian Universalist hymn raises questions: *If it were easy to sing society back to health, would vocal music lose its appeal? Its power?*

More important than *where* you're moved to sing spontaneously is *when* you sing?

Do you trill when happiness makes you feel like singing joy to the world?

When you're so low-level lonely you could cry?

Or when you're a-flutter—fluxing, flying and flowing—to survive daily life?

Whether we have perfect pitch, or we're downright flat, we're all part of the Vox Populi, Latin for “Voice of the People.”

It's humanity's collective subtle whispers, thoughts, emotions and words in wide ranging tonalities and notes from basso profundo (deep and low) to baritone and alto (middle) to tenor and soprano (high).

Above and beyond all sensorily provoked responses to mobile devices, there prevails an unbroken one-note melody you can hear if you listen. It's like an electronic mist.

William Shakespeare called it the quality of mercy that drops “like the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath.”

The collective choir of the Vox Populi is an empathic vibratory energy wave that connects us all, from post-nascent neonate to elder in exodus to re-entry into Vast Ubiquity (The Silence).

The Voice That Cannot Lie

Vox Populi always sings the truth because it cannot lie. Hearing it daily will let you know the true state of humanity.

Listen to the Silence. Remove your ear buds. Hear it as the subtle ringing sound within the depth of your inner range of hearing.

Many people confuse it with tinnitus, a treatable condition in most cases.

The Vox Populi, aka Sound of Silence, is the sssssigh of our living universe. It may be accompanied by the throbbing pulsebeat of your own heart thumping in 4/4 rhythm. The time you may be most prone to hearing it is just before sleep.

With meditative exercise and deliberation, you can focus on Silence everywhere and at all times.

Close your eyes and visualize any images that come to mind. What is this great sound wave telling you about the true state of humanity?

To me, it says “Homelessness is Public Enemy Number One” at this time in history, a topic this new series will explore.

At its worst, homelessness leaves people feeling blinded, helpless and without legs to stand on, as symbolized by my old painting from 1958 when the Vox Populi was still singing fearful postwar reaction to atomic power that could wipe us all out overnight. Original title was “Danger after the Bomb.”

We survived, as humanity will, following this current burgeoning homeless crisis.

Here’s a testimonial reflection from Carmel artist, Roy Church, a child of survivors of the last great wave of homelessness to sweep across America during the Dust Bowl of the Great Depression. Roy’s response came after he read the August 9, 2019, edition of this column about the poorly attended 2019 Steinbeck “In Search of America Festival” in Salinas.

The Okies - California’s First Homeless Families By Roy Church, Carmel

Being part of the Okie diaspora and growing up in Kern County, I read your article with great interest.

In 1962, I was a sophomore at Arvin High School, not far from the Weedpatch Camp made famous by Steinbeck. I attended middle school at Sunset School which is adjacent to the camp.

I left the area for college in the Bay Area 52 years ago, but I do visit my sisters there from time to time. . . during my latest visit, I was told that this October will mark the last Dust Bowl Days Festival at Sunset School.

The reason given is that the organizers have grown old or passed and younger people cannot identify with this era. It may also be that the local residents who are mostly Hispanic cannot identify with it either.

I believe the event highlighted an important part of California history and its passing is a sad event.

The Okies could possibly be considered California's first homeless families.

My family was about as near being homeless as one can get without being completely outdoors. Our first home was a one room, single walled shack with a wood stove, no plumbing and lit by a single light bulb. We had an outhouse out back.

Due to great public education during my childhood, I am fortunate to be writing you from my home in Carmel.

It seems that we are witnessing growing homelessness everywhere.

It could be my imagination, but it seems to me that the current situation may be worse or will be worse than what was experienced during the great depression.

Certainly, there are differences. We had charity county hospitals, mental health institutions, and numerous labor jobs that didn't pay well but were available to the low skilled.

Today technology has moved the first step of the job and income ladder far above the reach of many.

Add that to rampant drug addiction and you have a possible intractable situation.

Today homelessness is as much of a disease as it is a position. People with any disease are not likely to find employment. So, I lament the loss of Dust Bowl Days.

According to Wikipedia, units in which Dust Bowl families like Roy's lived now house migrant workers in Kern County. See https://en.weedpatch.org/wiki/weedpatch_camp/.

I believe the Okies were the second wave of homeless people in California, the first being Native Americans whose lands we Monterey Peninsulans now call home.

As to music at its best, the fabulous I-HELP Chorus's rendition of "When the Saints Come Marching In" had the audience dancing in the aisles at last week's Pasta with the Pastors fundraiser.

That's the right kind of power! Join the chorus!

For details about the 2019 Point in Time Homeless Census & Survey, visit the Coalition of Homeless Service Providers website at

<https://www.chspmontereycounty.org/monterey-and-san-benito-county-homeless-census-reports/>

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