

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

July 16-22, 2021

LET THE BOONDOGGLE BUSTING BEGIN - Part 9



“What will happen to someone who’s mentally ill, who’s never lived on their own, who suddenly loses their home, safety, advocacy, and community? Someone with no money, mailing address, job, or experience...?”

*--Susan B. Light’s
psychology professor*

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF THIS HAPPENED TO YOU?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

FOLLOWING publication of the edition headlined, “What does Governor Gavin Newsom mean: ‘Once the Mind is Stretched...?’” a reader responded on June 27, 2021.

Wow!

“If she agrees,” I thought, “her essay should be in this column!” So, I contacted her.

Good news! As Governor Newsom faces recall in the election of September 14, 2021, getting the \$600 stimulus checks to people like me who are still waiting, and choices of how to curb the exploding homelessness that could turn our state from gold to metaphoric gray, I’m delighted to introduce Susan B., who shares her neighborly Light on the kind of baddoggling that must be reversed so it’s boondoggle-bust worthy. Take it away, with thanks, Susan!

A Longitudinal Reflection On Homelessness*

By Susan B. Light,
Carmel Valley, California

I remember being a psychology undergrad in the early eighties. I was an innocent kid from upstate New York, in school “downstate” on scholarship, outside of “the city” in a well-to-do area called “The Hamptons,” not unlike Carmel by the Sea. I worked three jobs to stay housed and in school.

Ronald Reagan had just culled the funding for public assistance, the nation’s mentally ill, kids in school, deemed ketchup to be a “vegetable,” and announced everyone receiving public assistance were lazy freeloaders.

I didn't even know "homelessness" existed then. My psychology professor framed it as:

*"What will happen to someone who's never lived on their own,
who suddenly loses their home, safety, advocacy, and community?
Someone with no money, mailing address, job, or experience,
who won't know what to do or be able to fit in,
who isn't getting their meds or meals, much less on time?"*

I then discerned what homelessness could be, how easily that could happen to any of us, how lost those I cared about enough to educate myself for four years would be, and my heart broke.

Who Are The Homeless?

*Most people think the homeless are just "bums" or addicts.
At least now, more understand many are also marginalized war veterans,
and more recently, those who have lost their homes due to corporate downsizing,
underhanded foreclosures, Wall Street criminals...
And more...
Anyone who's "homeless" is marginalized...
out of sight, out of mind...*

Prophecy Becomes Reality

*The fastest growing population of homeless people are women and children
fleeing domestic violence in a system that didn't support them even though laws
and courts were supposed to (and it's still happening... everywhere).*

Fifteen years ago, I lived in another well-to-do area of California Paradise and witnessed a trend that broke my heart again: There was one shelter with four bedrooms... for the whole county. Those lucky enough to get in would be assigned a bedroom; there was a shared kitchen, living room, and a small office for the admins. Everyone was expected to take care of their own and clean up after themselves. One mom and her six kids were taken in and shared one of those bedrooms. It was equipped with two bunk beds, so she and the oldest slept on the floor.

The demand so exceeded availability, you could only stay fourteen days.

*Lucky enough to escape to a shelter, traumatized and overwhelmed,
they just needed a place to rest and regroup long enough to pull themselves together,
for Mom to find work and safe housing, and the kids to be reintegrated into school,
but two weeks living like a sardine with little or no mental health support,
and the most minimal public financial assistance when your whole life just exploded
was not enough...*

Most abusers isolate victims, alienating from family and friends, often controlling all the money, so, if they did leave, they'd be helpless. *Many who made it to shelter had only the clothes they wore, and what change was in their pockets was not enough to move into their own safe places.*

So, no money for rent and deposits, no credit history to get a place, nowhere to go, and just meager food stamps and "welfare" funds that would barely rent a single room from government programs previously trimmed to the bone by a California actor couple who made it to the White House just as I became old enough to vote...

...equals homeless moms with kids and more tragedy. Our undergraduate predictions became real, and this new angle expanded the marginalized homeless population of this (and the next) generations.

Domestic abuse happens in wealthy families, too; doctors, lawyers, politicians who enact the same controlling patterns, as people lucky enough not to know ask “If it was so bad, why did she stay?”

Think about it...

The statistics are staggering. One in four women with children are dealing with this in your neighborhood right now.

Homelessness Isn't A New Phenomenon, It's A Historic Pattern

Many kids (and adults) don't know about the Great American “dust bowl,” “Great Depression,” “Okies,” the politics that led up to it, or the irony that, here we are in “Steinbeck Country,” and history is repeating itself... again.

Step back and take the long view, and you'll see the repeating political, economic, and social patterns.

We live in one of the most affluent cultures in the world. Most of us have enough, and many more than enough to share.

The funds that were cut forty years ago were diverted into other “priorities” that are in our collective national face right now as one percent of the population owns almost forty percent of the total wealth.

We are human... but are we humane?

It doesn't have to be this way.

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Susan B. Light is a local resident who's appreciated living in more than one U.S. Paradise and enjoyed traveling to others. She's worked in the trenches, writes grants and advocates for humanitarian non-profits, leads healing efforts, and is currently collaborating on a book about those who are falling through our cultural cracks and how we can help them. She has previously shared her writing, poetry, photography, and editing skills in community, travel, editorial, creative, and professional venues. She can be reached at wisdomworkshealing@gmail.com.

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Can today's homelessness be solved? Think about this aphorism: A Baddoggle is simply a Boondoggle gone backward. And remember this one, too:

Simplicity is the key to success!

A BADDOGGLE IS SIMPLY A BOONDOGGLE GONE BACKWARD.

From The Boondogger's Bible, Page 21

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The Boondogglers' Bible—How to Fight Like City Hall to Win!! (\$17 from Wanda Sue Parrott, P. O. Box 1821, Monterey, CA 93942-1821) or from amazon.com.

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