

JULY 1ST - JULY 14TH, 2011

STREET SPEECH

THE VOICE FROM THE STREETS OF COLUMBUS

\$1

ALL PROCEEDS GO TO THE AUTHORIZED STREET SPEECH VENDORS



HOMELESS USA
HOMELESS IN ALASKA

Alaska. By Steve Lyon from Los Angeles, CA, USA.



Head Injuries May Lead to
Homeless

Traumatic brain injuries often go undiagnosed, especially on the streets. Photo illustration by Street Roots.



Protecting Forests
to Prevent Warming

Family making their way along the San Juan River in the jungles of southeast Nicaragua. Photo: Germán Miranda/IPS

COLUMBUS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

STREET SPEECH

WHO WE ARE

The purpose of Street Speech is to empower low-income individuals through skill development, social interaction, and economic opportunity. The goals of Street Speech are:

1. To act as a voice for the most vulnerable of the community while advocating for issues of social and economic justice.
2. To foster self-sufficiency by providing a source of income to people living in poverty.
3. To create awareness of the issues of poverty and homelessness through newspaper content and positive interaction between vendors and community members.

Street Speech provides a tool for advocacy and education on a bimonthly basis for the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless. The paper offers a unique perspective on the issues of homelessness and poverty at a local, state, and national level. Currently and formerly homeless individuals in the central Ohio community are directly involved in creating the content of the paper as well as its distribution.

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Editorials and features in *Street Speech* are the perspectives of the authors. We welcome submissions of news, opinion, fiction, art, poetry, and letters to the editor. Letters to the editor should be kept to 300 words or less. *Street Speech* reserves the right to edit any submissions.

VENDOR SPOTLIGHT

Lester Finney is Vendor of the Month

Lester Finney was selected to be vendor of the month because he is professional and courteous, and works diligently selling the newspaper. With an easy-going nature, he gets along well with everyone, showing respect, acceptance and patience in his interactions with others. We interviewed Lester to find out what's beneath his calm exterior.

Street Speech: Where did you grow up?

Lester Finney: I'm from Columbus. I grew up right downtown.

SS: What was it like growing up here? How was it different then than it is now?

Lester: Well, I went to Mohawk High School. I graduated in 1973. There wasn't as much crime back then as there is now. There were things to do – we'd play football and basketball, go to sock hops, go fishing, and have cookouts. Every summer I got a job through CETA. I mostly did cleanup work at parks. One winter the sewer holes were frozen over after a big storm, and we had to go around and unclog them so it wouldn't flood.

SS: What was your family like?

Lester: We had a good family, my dad, my mother, and my grandmother. I have 2 sisters and 1 brother, he's passed now. We weren't rich, but we didn't go to school with holey clothes or anything like that. My dad worked at Buckeye Steel for 17 years, and my mom worked at Western Electric manufacturing electric panels for 30-some years. My parents were strict at times; we were expected to maintain a certain grade point average or get grounded until the next grading period. My grandmother cooked at the restaurant that used to be at State and 4th for 20 years. She played a big role in my life.

SS: What kinds of jobs have you worked in your life?

Lester: My dad got me a job at Buckeye Steel 3 days after I graduated from high school. I worked there for 4 years as a set-line inspector, then I got a job at GM, and I worked there for 2 years.

I drove taxis for 10 years, and I worked at North American Asbestos Removal for about 8 years. I sorted mail for the Department of Taxation, and I worked at the State School for mentally ill children as a hospital aid. That's when I tore my knee up. I was walking up a hill to the administration building – it was frozen over – and I slipped. It was about 8 months before I could really walk again.

After that I worked different jobs; I worked at McDonalds, temp jobs, and I did building maintenance for Rally's. I worked down at the Holiday Inn on Lane Ave for about 4 years, first as a housekeeper and then as a houseman on 2nd shift. I basically ran the hotel by myself at night.

SS: What do you like to do for fun?

Lester: I like to go see movies, and go out to eat. I visit my family a lot. My nieces and nephews always want me to come over and play sports with them. I tell them, "I can't move around like I used to," but I'll go over there, play a little basketball, throw the football around, and go visit my mother. I also have a son and two grandchildren.

SS: How did you become homeless?

Lester: I've been homeless twice. The last time I was working at Rally's and I had to have surgery. I had a note from the doctor saying that I couldn't come to work for two weeks. When I came back, I wasn't on the schedule, and when I asked about it, the manager said that she forgot, and to come back next week. I came back and I would be scheduled for 2 hours per day. They kept telling me I would get more hours, and I kept coming back. What they basically had done was replace me. They had hired someone else while I was gone. I finally filed for unemployment, and Rally's denied my claim 3 times. By the time my unemployment claim went through I hadn't worked full time in a few months. I was so behind on rent that I was evicted. I went to the shelter in July of last year, and that's when I started working for Street Speech, which helped me to get back on my feet. Now they put my unemployment on hold,

because I worked through Columbus Staffing for one day and didn't report it. I'm trying to appeal that.

SS: What are your plans now?

Lester: I'd like to get my health taken care of first. I need to have another surgery done. After that, well, I don't want to do nothing too physical anymore – I went through so much pain with this knee. I could do janitorial work, warehouse work, building maintenance, anything like that would be fine. I've been thinking about going to Columbus State to work in mental health or counseling.

SS: What makes you interested in counseling?

Lester: Well - and I'm probably a little crazy myself – but I see a lot of people out here a lot worse off than me. I see a lot of people on the street, riding the bus, who aren't well. When I was at the shelter there were a lot of people there who were not in their right state of mind, and I'd like to educate myself to help these people.

SS: Why do you think people are mentally ill?

Lester: I don't know, a lot of them were probably born that way, maybe their parents used drugs, or maybe they had something tragic happen to them in their lives.

When my brother passed, I didn't want to see him in that casket. When I saw him in that casket, I snapped. Maybe something like that would make a person crazy.

SS: Were you and your brother very close?

Lester: He was my baby brother; I basically raised him, because my dad was off at work. I would drive him around in my taxi, and I used to bring him with me when I would go down to the racetrack. I was highly upset for about a year after he died. We did a lot of things together, I miss him so much.

SS: What do you believe in? What's your personal philosophy?

Lester: I believe in God. Besides that, I don't really think about it that much. I think about my brother, and my mom and dad a lot. They're getting older. They're in their 80s now.

SS: What do you think should be done to end homelessness?

Lester: I don't know what they can do to end homelessness. Some of these people would rather be homeless than work at McDonalds. I'll work for minimum wage in a heartbeat! A lot of people won't. All the good jobs now, you have to go to college, learn to use a computer.

SS: What do you think could be done to improve our country?

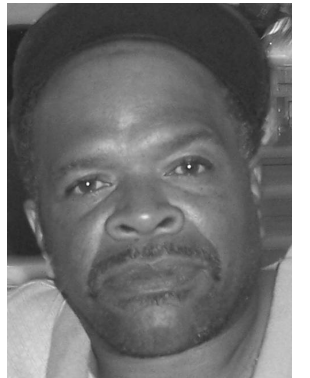
Lester: If we don't get some more places for people to work, it's just gonna keep goin' down. There used to be a lot of factories down there on Parsons Ave, but Buckeye Steel is the only one left. I used to work at a K-Mart through a staffing agency, and not one box in there was made in the US! I think it all started after they passed NAFTA.

Another thing is they need to end all these wars. They're spending \$11 billion every month now in Afghanistan. But then you bring all of these people home, and where are they gonna work? I see a lot of these veterans now, they can't find jobs either.

What they really need to do is tell these companies, "Y'all gotta move back!" But they're not gonna do that, they ain't payin those people over there - they're makin' money.

SS: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Lester: I just want to say thank you to all of the people who have supported me at the North Market.

Contribute to
STREET SPEECH

Through Donation

My donation of \$_____ is enclosed

Mail to: STREET SPEECH
132 S. 3rd St.
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Make checks payable to the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless.

The Columbus Coalition for the Homeless is a 501(c)(3), nonprofit organization. All donations are tax deductible.

Specific donations for Street Speech needs:

\$10 for vendor training supplies

\$20 for free newspapers for new vendors

\$65 for a vendor to print a job advertisement

\$540 for the printing of one issue

Street Speech is a member of the North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA) and the International Network of Street Papers (INSP).



Enabling?

By Eddie Young

I’m thinking about this word, “enabling” that I hear occasionally in the context of how we in the mainstream interact with those of the homeless community, and I can’t help but believe that some of our preconceived notions about the homeless help to fuel the ease with which we use the word. That, and perhaps the license it gives us to do the bare minimum, or nothing at all – under the guise of being responsible.

I think some of us must start with the notion that most of the homeless in our community have chosen this lifestyle, and therefore we have an obligation to help make their lives so miserable, that we literally drive them off the streets. In other words, to do something for a homeless person that would give them some degree of pleasure or comfort, only “enables” their choosing to continue in this lifestyle. Without hesitation, I can say that I have never known a single one out of the many, who would not have traded places with me in an instant. There are certainly those who struggle to function well in our society (there are days that I could number myself among them), and choose to live in some sense outside it. But to suggest that this characterizes the homeless community as a whole is just simply not true. It is also a fact that there are some among the homeless community who have all but given up on reintegration and find it pointless and demoralizing to summon the energy to try and work something that seems to be systematically set against them. But again, this doesn’t mean that they have chosen this lifestyle – more accurately, they have surrendered to it.

When it comes to providing meals, for example, there is often the idea that we promote homelessness by offering anything more than what is required to keep one from starving. There are actually movements among a number of U.S. cities that are indirectly aimed at outlawing providing the homeless with food at all. According to a report released by The National Coalition for the Homeless and The National Law Center on Homelessness, from Myrtle Beach to San Diego, cities both large and small are pursuing restrictions on who can feed, how many can you feed and at what times, and how often can the homeless be fed. Cities are attempting to prohibit “unauthorized” people – uncertified food, prepared by uncertified chefs, and given out by the uncertified public, to feed the homeless. Proponents of the ordinances claim that they will, among other things, ensure the safety of the food given to the homeless. Thankfully, these cities are the exception rather than the rule. However, it is a very common assumption that providing the homeless with good food and on a regular basis is irresponsible and will only lead them to the conclusion that living on the streets is great.

I sometimes think that, operating under our preconceived notions – that the homeless have chosen this lifestyle because they’re lazy drunks and drug addicts – we feel guilty if we do something that brings a smile to their faces. That they have no business being happy, they have no business enjoying a meal, they have no business being excused from reflecting on the shame they should feel for choosing such a lifestyle through our extravagant offerings. It’s easy to perpetuate these feelings when we see the homeless as no more than the objects of our charity. And often times, a charity that addresses our needs to be charitable more than the needs of those we intend to help.

In addition to providing volume to the voice of the homeless, a driving force behind street newspapers is to give insight into their lives. We believe that by our extravagant offerings we may be enabling you, our readers, the opportunity to personally engage in redefining understandings and conceptions that will eventually bring us back together as one community. In the times of our sharing these rich gifts, the longed-for community breaks forth and gains hope in its realization.

Originally published in *The Amplifier*, Knoxville, TN.

By The Numbers

Amount ExxonMobil, General Electric, Bank of America & Citigroup paid to the U.S. in federal income taxes in 2009 : \$0

Estimated amount by which the U.S. GDP increases for each additional dollar of tax cuts: \$1.03

Amount for each additional dollar of infrastructure spending and food stamps, respectively: \$1.59, \$1.73

Percent of all U.S. income gains during the Bush Administration that went to the top 1% of earners : 75

Amount that Obama’s budget seeks to trim the deficit by over the next 10 years, with much coming from social services & education: \$1.1 trillion

Minimum amount offshore tax havens will cost the U.S. over the next 10 years in tax dollars going uncollected : \$1 trillion

Amount these havens cost each U.S. taxpayer each year: \$500

Factor by which Joe DiMaggio’s 1950 salary exceeded the mean U.S. family income : 26

Factor by which Derek Jeter’s 2010 salary did : 288

Percent of 1,000 millionaires surveyed by Fidelity Investments who say they do not feel wealthy : 42

Percent of total wealth that Americans estimated the top 20% of Americans to hold, according to a Norton-Ariely Psychological Science survey : 59

Ideal percent that the top 20% of Americans would hold, according to respondents : 32

Percent of wealth that the top 20% of Americans actually hold : 84

Number of convictions of elites involved in our current financial crisis : 0

Minimum number convictions of elites involved in the Savings & Loan crisis of the 80s & 90s : 1,000

Percent above the designed capacity of prisons that Ohio’s 51,000 state prisoners represent : 33

Chance that an adult Ohioan was under correctional control (prison, jail, probation, or parole) in 1982 : 1 in 116

Chance that an adult Ohioan was in 2007 : 1 in 25

Newark Cop Kills Family Cat

By Robin L. Hinch, *Street Speech* vendor

The following story came to my attention recently and happened on April 15th of this year. Although I try to write nice, uplifting stories, my readers have a right to be informed of this horrid occurrence.

Jeffrey Pisula’s cat, “Ralphie” was hit by a car on the road that ran in front of their house.

The story is that Mrs. Pisula and her husband were aroused from sleep early on that morning. Mrs. Pisula heard a disturbance, looked out, and then exclaimed, “They just shot our cat!” As the couple raced down the stairs, they heard one more gunshot.

Mr. Pisula has explained that they just put a towel over him and shot him not even 20 feet from his front door. The officer that found Ralphie and took his life has not been identified. However, the police chief recently stated that the officer’s actions were “okay”. Apparently their policy is to contact their supervisor, look for the owners, and contact animal control. For some reason it didn’t occur to the officer to knock on the front door.

Mr. Pisula questions why it was such an inconvenience to walk 20 feet. He also ponders why the officer had taken this decision into his own hands being that he is not a veterinarian. Ralphie’s owners deeply miss the beloved animal. They informed the press that they would have treated him or had him

humanely put down. Unfortunately that choice was stolen from them.

There are two wise sayings that relate to this article.



“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” – Mohatma Gandhi

“Any society, any nation, is judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members: the last, the least, the lit-tlest.” – Cardinal Roger Mahony.

Ralphie had a happy home he loved that was taken from him. So many people, especially in this wretched economy, are in the same situation. The homeless now come in young, middle-aged, and old. As of recently it’s not just single people but whole fami-lies. Suddenly not only are the shelters that are for people full, but the ones for animals also. Unfortunately when this sad thing occurs the “family pets” often become homeless as well.

4th of July

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AMERICAN
BARBECUES
BASEBALL
CELEBRATE
CONCERTS
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DECORATIONS

EVENTS
FAMILY
FIREWORKS
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HOLIDAY
INDEPENDENCE

JEFFERSON
PARADES
PARTY
PATRIOTS
PICNIC
SALUTE
STREAMERS

Homeless, USA: Homeless in Alaska, Part II

By A.K.A.

So its morning and I'm in Alaska, and I can't believe it. The last frontier and I have thoughts about all the pioneers that have been here before me. I'm standing outside on what they call the smokers lounge; it's just a couple of cement benches enclosed by a cement block wall. Everyone on the inside is getting their bed mats and blankets and putting them away.

At 7am they open the doors for everyone to leave and go next door to Beans for breakfast. Standing in line the door opens and the head chef calls for 3 volunteers. He gets 2 right away. He lets everyone know if he doesn't get the third the doors don't open. The third finally comes forth and we all move toward the front of the food line. It was a great breakfast of ham and eggs along with cereal and coffee. I didn't eat that well when I had an apartment. I talked with a few of the people around me and they filled me in on some of the things I needed to know.

Inside Brother Francis there were case workers that tried to help people get off the street. I went and talked to the case worker that worked with veterans, and found her to be the coldest person I had ever met in my life. And when I checked out the other case worker, I found them to be the same way. From what I could tell, they were there to get a paycheck, and the people that they were there to help didn't really matter that much. Such a shame that for people that could help someone out the most, they were just there to get a paycheck.

I figured to go and look around downtown Anchorage, a place of sheer beauty. Snow capped mountains surrounded the city. The leaves had already fallen of the trees and there was a slight breeze blowing. The smell of the leaves on the ground was awesome and these huge crowds were flying about. The natives believe that they are reincarnates of people; they did seem to talk when they flew on by. I was still trying to believe that I was in Alaska.

There is one thing about being homeless: you always have a lot of time to do something, anything you want to do, as long as it doesn't cost much.

My walker made it a lot easier to travel and I strolled or rolled down to the bay. There was a steep hill that led down to the water and it looked like low tide the way the mud was, it went out about 50 feet. Boats could not come to the shore. I talked with someone I recognized from the shelter, and he was telling me of the 1964 earthquake. It was 9.5 on the Richter scale, and 4th street dropped 15 feet and slid out into the bay. All the mud I was looking at was not low tide - it was always muddy, and you could not walk out on it because it was like quicksand and there was no way to pull you out. Wild, you could still see what happened during the earthquake 40 years later.

Time to go back to Beans for lunch, as it was the last meal they put out for the day. Standing around outside I started talking with a few people, and I was told if I didn't like staying at Brother Francis, there was a homeless camp down the road a ways. I would see the trail that led into the woods, and was to go about a half mile in.

I followed the directions I was given and was standing in the middle of the homeless camp. There must have been at least 25-30 tents, and people were going from tent to tent. It was a little crowded for me, so on the way back to BF's I started looking for my own camp site. I took a trail that led down to the river and it looked like the perfect place to set up a camp. The river was crystal clear and I could see the Salmon swimming upstream. I could



Turnagain Arm at low tide with mudflats exposed. Taken in Anchorage, Alaska, May 2007. By Frank K. from Anchorage, Alaska.

walk into the water and scoop a fish and throw it on shore if that was on the menu. Looking around I was in a large pine grove which made the ground nice and soft. It felt like home listening to the wind blow through the pine trees. It is an awesome sound.

I went to K-mart and bought myself a tent and decided that the next day I would set up my camp site there. I had met a few people that seemed to be really cool, so I asked them if they wanted to set up camp with me. There is safety in numbers and believe me, there are those questionable people out there that care nothing but for themselves, and you have to stay on guard at all times. I managed to find 3 others that wanted to set up camp with me, Dan who was from Washington State, Robert who was a native from Alaska, and Eddie from Montana. We made a list of what we needed to look for and set out to make camp.

Camping in Alaska can be dangerous if you're not careful. Robert knew what we had to be on guard for, and seeing as he was from here I trusted his advice. We all pitched in and found wooden pallets and cardboard boxes to put under the tents and keep us off the ground. Plus you put an extra tarp over the tent to keep the snow off so it didn't cave in from the weight.

I managed to find an extra tent and we all put food in it a ways away from our tents, and that's where we set up our campfire. It was our outdoor kitchen. We didn't need any wild critters invading our space and try to make a snack out of any of us. Believe me, the critters around here can and will eat you.

The first night we all sat around the campfire telling stories of our adventures. Believe me, being homeless is an adventure in itself. Dan from Washington State reminded me of that cartoon character Captain Caveman. I don't think he had shaved or had a haircut in years. He told us that he was camping in the woods about 35 miles from Mount St. Helens when she blew her top.. He talked about how there was ash raining from the sky, and he thought it was the end of the world or a nuclear bomb that had gone off. The way he described it, we all were rolling on the ground with laughter. It really scared him to death, but then he was talking about going to find a bank and getting the money. I don't know how it would do any good to get money from a bank if it was truly the end of the world! One thing, money would not have been on my mind. Who knows if there were others camping in the woods and no one knew that they were there; they were never thought of, they just disappeared.

Time just seemed to fly by when the company and stories are good. Robert seemed to know everyone or was their

cousin. I asked him why all the native Alaskans seemed to have black eyes. He told me it was all alcohol related – when they get a little buzzed from booze they tend to fight everyone. “That’s why I just smoke weed,” he said, “It’s better for you.” In Alaska it is legal to possess a certain amount of pot. I told him I knew what he was talking about, because alcohol just seems to crush me!

Robert was used to moving around and all over. Most of his family and other natives appeared to do the same; they weren't quite homeless because they had a shack somewhere, but they wandered around, living off the land.

I awoke the next day with the sun shining, and when I looked up I saw 3 eagles flying around the tree tops over the campsite. It was absolutely the most beautiful sight I had ever seen.

I climbed out of the tent and shook off the sleep. I hobbled on down to Beans Café, and had breakfast and I ran into mom, she was a 72-year-old lady that everyone called mom. It's hard to believe that a 72 year old woman was walking around homeless in Alaska. Like everyone in Beans she had her hard luck story. Her family wanted to put her in a nursing home and sold her home. She decided that she would rather be homeless then be in a nursing home. She stayed at BF's all the time since she needed the shelter from the weather, but she looked out after certain people by collecting things during the day like food and clothes and handing them out to people when they came in from the woods. Sometimes we would sit there at BF's after Beans had closed and have a buffet with what she collected and what we had in our back packs. We had a nice time just talking and feasting.

Winter was now closing in fast and snow was in the air. When the next day came I looked out of the tent to see 5 inches of white fluffy snow. There was total silence everywhere and I had to muster up some ambition to leave the nice warm sleeping bag that was so comfortable. I was glad I had built an outhouse last week with a toilet seat I had found in an abandon building. It was almost just like home, except the furnace was missing. I could see I was the first one up in camp as there were no tracks in the snow. I went over to the outdoor kitchen and started the fire. I got some nice white snow and in seconds I had water boiling for coffee.

I still prefer living in a nice warm apartment, but with what my SSDI check amounts to I cannot afford to live in the slums. I have been on the Section 8 waiting list for 4 years and haven't moved down on the list but up.

I always wondered how we can afford to bring into the country the tired, poor and whatever else it says on the Statue of Liberty. We're bringing people here from other countries when I, a disabled veteran can't afford to live in my own country. I just believe God will provide what I need and not what I want. I'm really not asking for much Lord!!

All donations can be made to P.O. box 15383 Columbus, 43215.

End of Part II

Signed A. K. A.

Your Father, Mother, Brother, Sister
-- The Homeless --
Peace and Long Life

Using forests to bridge the carbon gap

By Stephen Leahy

As global greenhouse gas emissions rise instead of decreasing, forests play an even more crucial role in fighting global warming, since experts believe it will be impossible to prevent a disastrous increase in global temperature without drastically curbing deforestation.

Despite the vital importance of forests, 13 million hectares are destroyed every year, leading the United Nations to make forests the focus of this year's World Environment Day, Jun. 5.

Global carbon emissions in 2010 were five percent higher than in 2008, the International Energy Agency (IEA) reported in late May, making the international target of limiting the rise in global temperature to two degrees Celsius increasingly impossible to achieve.

Through photosynthesis, trees capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and then store it for as long as they remain alive, a process referred to as carbon “sequestration”.

“We need forests to bridge the carbon gap,” said Stewart Maginnis, head of the Forest Conservation Programme of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Carbon emission reduction commitments made by countries in the 2009 Copenhagen Accord will not be enough to keep global temperatures near two degrees of additional warming. Scientists believe that an increase of more than two degrees would lead to climate change impacts of disastrous proportions.

Deforestation accounts for roughly 17 percent of total annual emissions. “There is no ‘Plan B’. We desperately need

forests and reforestation to sequester carbon,” Maginnis told Tierramérica from Kigali, Tanzania.

Forests are the focus of this year's World Environment Day not only for their role in storing climate-altering carbon, but also because they generate oxygen and supply water to 50 percent of world's largest cities.

Forests are home to more than half of land-based animals, plants and insects. Moreover, some 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their livelihoods, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Yet global deforestation continues at an alarming rate: every year, 13 million hectares of forests - an area the size of Nicaragua - are destroyed for wood products and by conversions to cash crops and cattle ranching.

UNEP, IUCN and many other organisations believe the best chance, and maybe the only chance, to change this is through Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) programmes that are a key part of the new green economy.

Countries and industries looking to reduce their emissions of carbon can either reduce their physical carbon emissions or purchase carbon credits to offset those emissions under REDD or REDD+ programmes.

REDD+ refers to REDD programmes that go beyond maximising carbon storage to ensuring protection of biodiversity and livelihoods of local people and communities. “REDD+ strategies of various types are the only way to mobilise enough funds to deal with the drivers of deforestation,” said Maginnis.



Family making their way along the San Juan River in the jungles of southeast Nicaragua. Photo: Germán Miranda/IPS

tion,” said Maginnis.

However, according to Bram Büscher of the International Institute of Social Studies at Erasmus University in the Netherlands, REDD and other market-based mechanisms to protect forests simply will not work.

“Making money will always trump the ecological benefits of forests in a capitalistic economic system,” Büscher said in an interview. “It’s simplistic to say everyone wins with REDD. There is nothing win-win under capitalism. It’s all about winners and losers,” he added.

“Capitalism is inherently unecological. We’re trying to rig the system to make it work for the green economy. It’s a sham,” he maintained.

Continued on Page 7...

Brain injuries may push victims into homelessness

By Kate Cox

Often undiagnosed, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) can explain many of the problems experienced by homeless people. In Canada, half of the homeless community has suffered at least one head injury in their lifetime, frequently before living on the streets. Unable to work as they did before and incapable of juggling social relationships, TBI victims quickly slip into homelessness.

You might say Nick Patton was born to fish. Literally born on a boat, Nick spent his earliest years living in orphanages along the Alaskan coastline. He ran away at the age of eight and quickly learned how to take care of himself and to rely on others - traveling in groups around the Pacific Northwest, picking apples and doing day labor.

He was only 11 years old when he started working on the boats and canneries of the Alaskan fishing industry. With a community of other fisherman, Nick followed the seasonal work, living on boats and in tents, even during the cold Anchorage winters. It all ended with the smack of a crowbar.

Nick was 32 and alone on the night he was attacked, and there were no witnesses. With no memory of the assault, he has few clues to the story except for the scar on his forehead where the crowbar cracked his skull.

“First it hurt the front of my brain, because that’s where they hit me. Then, the force caused my brain to hit the back of my skull, back here. Then, there was also some swelling, so that caused more damage - way down here in my brain stem.”

Nick woke up in an Anchorage hospital, but nothing was ever the same. His gregarious nature was now drowned out by voices and hallucinations, and reality was lost in the din.

“I couldn’t deal with society anymore. I didn’t know what was real or who to trust. I ended up cutting all ties to the world.”

Alcohol and drugs became his only way of coping. “If I stayed high I could deal with it.” For the first time in his life, Nick found himself unable to work and spent the next several years selling heroin, panhandling, and living on the streets.

Unfortunately, Nick’s story isn’t unique.

News about traumatic brain injury, or TBI, has increasingly come to light in recent months, from a spate of sports-related injuries particularly among football players, to the blast injuries of veterans return-

ing from Afghanistan and Iraq. Although, homelessness can be the ultimate tragic consequence of a brain injury, the medical world is only beginning to connect the dots between TBI and homelessness.

Head injury hits half of the homeless

According to the National Healthcare for the Homeless Council, at least half of all homeless individuals have experienced at least one head injury in their lifetime.

“Brain injury in the homeless community is a very common thing that we’re just starting to learn about,” says Dr. Barb Wismer, a practicing physician who serves on the board of the Council. Few formal studies have been done, but those few are sobering.

In one recent study of 904 homeless men and women in Toronto, Ontario, 53 percent reported some type of traumatic brain injury. Studies in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Boston, Massachusetts offer similar statistics of 48 and 67 percent. The Toronto study found that for those who had experienced a head injury, 70 percent had suffered the injury prior to becoming homeless.

That shouldn’t be so surprising, as the long-term effects of a brain injury can be debilitating. Symptoms vary widely. Some are as dramatic as Nick’s hallucinations. Others are much more subtle. Sometimes described as an “invisible disability,” brain injury often causes problems with memory, concentration and thinking, as well as the ability to regulate emotion and behavior.

As a result, brain injury survivors often have a hard time doing the work they did before their injuries. Family and social relationships suffer, straining the most immediate safety net before homelessness.

The same symptoms can also create barriers for those individuals once they are on

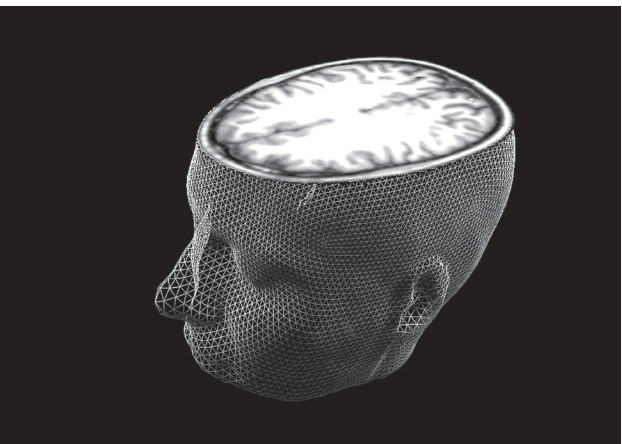


Illustration of the human brain. Image: Reuters/Ho New

the streets. Navigating shelter systems, attending to basic health and hygiene, and accessing services can be overwhelming and difficult. Controlling anger can be a daily struggle.

And once on the streets, the risk of brain injury continues. Steve Hill suffered head injuries throughout his adolescence and adulthood, from sports injuries to snowboarding to fight clubs. He describes each one as taking him down another notch. Even small injuries caused intense reactions including vomiting and confusion. “You’re more edgy when you’re homeless,” Hill said. “And you’re closer to violence when you’re on the streets.”

One of TBI’s biggest dangers is that it often goes unrecognized. People with TBI often don’t connect their symptoms with previous head injuries, and many health care providers, mental health workers, and case managers don’t either.

Some brain injury survivors have a hard time remembering appointments, following instructions or taking medications. They may have a hard time organizing their thoughts, finding the right words, or picking up on social cues. As a consequence, these clients might be labeled as disinterested, rude, or non-compliant.

Or they may be misdiagnosed. Symptoms of TBI can also look a lot like major mental illness, emotional trauma, or drug and alcohol abuse. And these conditions often co-exist and exacerbate one another. Distinguishing between them can be difficult. This was the case for Nick Patton.

“They thought I had schizophrenia, even though the symptoms didn’t start till after the injury. And that was when I was 32.” (Much later than the typical onset of schizophrenia.)

His doctors prescribed heavy antipsychotic medications to control his hallucinations, but that left him so sedated he couldn’t function. And it didn’t get to the root of the Nick’s problem: small seizures

caused by the brain injury, left completely undiagnosed.

According to Dr. Wismer, Nick’s case is a prime example of why it’s important to identify TBI in an individual who is homeless. Treatment for TBI is often different from traditional mental illness, including differences in medications. Some psychiatric medications have little positive effect on an individual with TBI, yet can produce very harmful side effects.

A tank half full

George Dennison knows more about traumatic brain injury than most people I know. When I tell him I’m doing a story on TBI and homelessness, he says, “Oh good! Because it’s rampant out there!” He goes on to tell me about his own brain injury.

“See this water cooler? This is like brain reserve. If you’re way up here at the top, you’ve got a full tank. But I had the genetic predisposition for bipolar disorder, so that means I start off a little lower - about here. Then I go for years with it undiagnosed, so that brings me down some more. Then I smash my head into a car windshield. That one - that brings me down to here.” George’s hand is about halfway down the tank.

George wants to be clear. It’s not just the TBI. It has all taken a toll. “But TBI, mental illness, substance abuse, PTSD - they all go together like peanut butter and jelly.”

Because of its high prevalence, the National Healthcare for the Homeless Coalition recommends that homeless individuals be routinely screened for TBI during health appointments and in other service settings. For a comprehensive, standardized screen, the coalition recommends a web-based tool called the Brain Injury Screening Questionnaire. Although it only takes four minutes for the questionnaire to rule out brain injury, confirming a TBI takes about 20 minutes. This isn’t a standard practice in most places. Busy clinics are filled with patients at risk for a whole host of health problems, and physicians have a limited amount of time to address each client’s most pressing health issues. But given the high correlation between homelessness and brain injury, some advocates think it deserves more attention.

Continued on Page 6...

No help for single homeless women

By Lulu

The last thing I was doing was celebrating my birthday, and the election of my candidate on November 4th, 2008. I was so happy to see someone make it into office that I supported! However my joy did not last long.

By this time, a long and grueling eight years of administrative financial neglect was finally coming to a head, and with it the collapse of the American economy. Unfortunately, many families, couples, mentally ill individuals, veterans, husbands, wives, children, and single displaced working women who are currently unemployed are not able to receive unemployment or other benefits. There are certain qualifications one must meet in order to receive help from the majority of government programs here in Columbus, Ohio. These standards often create a vicious and unforgiving cycle for those experiencing homelessness, a catch-22 scenario for people in need of government assistance.

I never thought even one minute that I would experience homelessness, simply because I took precautions to avoid such a thing, or at least I thought I did. I attended and graduated from a great university, receiving a Bachelor’s degree with high marks. I went on to another outstanding university and received a graduate degree, again with high marks. Therefore, I planned to work in my areas of study to pay my student loans and other bills with ease.

Oh my! What wishful thinking to believe life after college would be filled with ease? After the onset of the economic recession and an unforeseen illness, I became homeless, and I have been seeking assistance from just about every program available, including employment in the public and private sector in the city of Columbus, Ohio.

In my opinion, the requirements for social assistance should be those who are poor, broke, lack shelter, or are unable to obtain consistent employment such as 40 hours a week. However, in order to receive help one must be

pregnant, physically abused, addicted to drugs or alcohol, or mentally challenged or deranged.

I fully support all these programs that exist for those who need them. However, I do have a problem when I cry out for help and I cannot receive assistance because I do not fall within any of these categories. I should not have to discuss the business underneath my dress, nor should I have to suffer some sort of domestic abuse, chemical problem, or mental illness just to receive help. Let us understand something, we are in a recession! Allow me to repeat that: RECESSION! This means that we are all struggling like hell, and to my knowledge there is no action being taken to address this.

I have had many negative experiences since I have been on this particular journey. I have been told that in order to receive help of any kind, I must have a physical address, however, I am unable to use a postal address. Well, originally I accepted this standard. But tell me, why is it when I go to my post office box I can be sought by a collection agency to appear in court, because they want to sue me for a bill with which I do not agree? And I am unable to pay even the portion of the bill I do agree with, because I do not have the money, nor full time employment to receive money. Something is wrong with this picture. Additionally, why is it that I seek housing, but I am told again and again: you are not eligible for this program. This program is for homeless women with children, or physically abused women needing shelter. “I am so sorry, but we do not have a program for single homeless women.” Yet, days later I receive a flyer in my post office box asking me to help the homeless. My God, I am the homeless!

Well, I must write that there are some single homeless women more fortunate than I am, and I am certainly more fortunate than other single homeless women out there. Nevertheless, I am a single homeless woman, who has slept in the streets of Columbus, been in the shelter,



Sleeping homeless woman. Photo by Edal Anton Lefterov

and somehow avoided prostitution, human trafficking, and other negative acts carried out against single homeless women.

In closing, I hope this article has stirred someone who is in power to do something positive about this situation for us single homeless women. Otherwise I have truly contemplated running for political office. I remember reading one president’s inaugural speech, and I often think of it – those famous words of John F. Kennedy, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what can you do for your country.” This is a speech that is truly encouraging to me, because something like this should not happen in this rich country. But, because it is happening, it motivates me to attempt to do something about it, so no other woman today or tomorrow has to face homelessness ever.

This day I state I have walked the walk in the world of homelessness, and God has blessed me with a good education. Now all I need is the open door opportunity to help myself and those who are in need of help from someone who can not only talk the talk, but who is walking the walk.

AMERICA’S PENAL PAST

By Anthony Chambers, *Street Speech* vendor

America has a long penal tradition. In fact, this country was originally a penal colony. Along with indentured servants, England emptied its jails of its convicts, placed them aboard ships and sent them here to conquer the native people and colonize this land. America was built on the British system of criminalization.

But perhaps the real criminals were not the ones sent to America from British jails. The colonists brought with them a host of deadly diseases that wreaked havoc upon the native people. They waged a type of germ warfare that exterminated untold thousands of the native population. Diseases such as small pox, syphilis, and the “common” cold systematically reduced their numbers. Add this to the host of tricks they brought from England with them, and you will see that the unsuspecting natives never really stood a chance.

After the period of colonization was completed in this country, it was found that a spirit of lawlessness continued to prevail. Even after accomplishing the task of gaining a foothold in this land, the colonists still continued to ply their illicit trades. Moral factions in the colonies decided that jails had to be built to punish offenders.

The first jail in America to house felons was the Walnut Street Jail in Philadelphia. It was built in 1790 by Quakers. During their imprisonment, prisoners received intensive religious instruction and endured harsh physical labor to build their work ethic. They also observed complete silence. There was no socializing between prisoners, and often brutal disciplinary measures were used to ensure their silence. Later prisons were founded at Auburn, New York, in the 1820’s and a reformatory at Elmira, New York in 1876. Like the Walnut Street Jail, these later prisons instituted religious instruction, rigorous labor, and absolute silence as part of their rehabilitative process. These early penal experiments failed, because of the high insanity rate resulting from the policy of enforced silence. Many of the prisoners went crazy from being given the “silent treatment”.

Penology in this country has reached its apex development in the past 100 years. It is now a science. There are actually people who attend universities to major in this field of study. They eventually earn the title of “Penologist”. We may logically conclude that penology has become very important. No major university would include useless courses of study in their curriculums. It has specific purpose. Penology is one of the basic Five P’s now used to systematically control the unconscious masses (Philosophy, Psychology, Politics and Propaganda being the others.) At this point,



Chain gang street sweepers, circa 1909.

let me emphasize that always been a connection between penology and labor. It is this connection that continues to affect Black people today.

Past Victims

The connection between penology and labor extends back to those early prisons in the colonies. Remember that labor was an integral part of the strict disciplinary regimen in those days. In those early prisons, the products that the prisoners made were later sold in the market place, and the prisoners received a small percentage of the profits as pay. The wardens were the ones who benefited from inmate labor.

After the Civil War, this country entered into what was known as the reconstruction period. The war had caused great property damage throughout the south. Large plantations houses had been destroyed during the fighting. Crops had died and there were no seasonal plantings. The northern forces had looted and pillaged as they swept their way to victory. All that had been damaged needed “reconstruction”. This reconstruction period lasted for nearly 15 years after the war.

It is well documented that the African slaves had built up the whole of the Western hemisphere. A society and

economy with free labor as its principle base could easily be developed and maintained. Slavery, indentured servitude, and--after the Civil War--“sharecropping” was a continuous system of penology that supported history’s first large scale capitalist venture. The African people had brought important skills with them from their lands. They weren’t just cotton and tobacco pickers, as white historians and television would have us believe. They were the needed brick masons, carpenters, farmers, weavers, doctors, and blacksmiths. If the Blacks were used to build up the south once, then they would surely be used again.

The newly freed slaves were as easily exploited by white southerners as the native people were by the early settlers. Free but uncertain, fearful of venturing out beyond the plantations of their births, they were easy targets for further exploitation. The plantation owners held out promises of better treatment, improved working conditions, and future pay as enticements for the freed Blacks to stay on and continue working. When these ploys failed, threats of lynching by groups such as the kkk held Blacks in check. After the period of reconstruction the south was thriving again.

We must keep in mind that this was a time of no industrialization. There were no machines to perform the work. Still the work had to be done. Cheap sources of labor were sorely needed to keep things running smoothly for the profiteers. Slavery took on another form; hence, we had its other version, the “chain gang”. The majority of prisoners in the south who were sentenced to spend time on its chain gangs were Black men. The symbolic connection between the chain and slavery is obvious. The particular stigma attached to the chain gang itself denoted that not only was a man guilty of some offense, but that he was deserving of his bondage and punishment, i.e., “hard labor”.

Herein, we can see the connection between penology, Black people, and labor exploitation. Across the south, those who benefited most from this updated form of forced labor were the states and local plantation owners. Forests were cleared, roads were built, levees were constructed, fields were plowed and cotton was picked by those early chain gangs. Many times these gangs were leased-out to work for farmers in nearby communities. The chain gang became an extension of slavery.

From *The Black People’s Prison Survival Guide*, by Anthony Chambers.

Traumatic brain injuries

From Page 5

“We have to find a way to identify brain injury on the streets,” says Pat Murray, the Executive Director of Portland’s Brain Injury Resource Community (BISC). “When we understand that this is a physical injury, we start to look at people differently. We might need to work with them a little differently. And there may be ways to help.” According to Murray, identifying brain injury could lead to more appropriate treatment, as well as better access to benefits and services.

Because the effects of brain injury can be disabling, some TBI survivors are eligible for Social Security disability benefits. For Nick Patton, it was a turning point in his recovery. But getting there wasn’t easy.

“Without help, I would’ve walked away. I had given up on it three times already. It would be hard for a normal person. But they make it so hard that a person who really, really needs SSI can’t do it unless they have an advocate.” Luckily, Nick found one: Central City Concern’s BEST program, a project that helps homeless men and women through the long and complicated disability claims process. The program provides assistance with every step and pays for the expensive testing that’s often required.

“I couldn’t think well enough, so they helped me fill out the paperwork,” Nick explains. “They knew what doctors to send me to and got my medical records sent from Alaska. I couldn’t remember the name of the hospital where I had my surgery, so they sent letters to every hospital in Anchorage.”

They also stuck with Nick through two denials and appeals. According to Mellani Calvin, Nick’s advocate at BEST, “the state’s disability reviewers were blaming his mental health disorder on his prior drug use. They saw him as just a drug addict who didn’t really need those (psychiatric) meds.” After four-and-a-half years, Nick finally won the claim.

The medical benefits started first, which gave Nick access to new doctors. And when the monthly cash benefits kicked in, he was able to afford the co-pay to see a new doctor - one who got to the root of Nick’s hallucinations. Measurements of electrical activity in his brain confirmed that Nick was having small seizures - a direct result of his brain injury. Now, finally, an anti-seizure medication is helping to control the voices and hallucinations. The medication has been a critical piece of Nick’s recovery.

The importance of a good night sleep

Brain injury comes in all shapes and sizes and so does

recovery. A lot depends on the location and extent of the damage. Mild TBIs may take just a short time to heal completely, while a severe injury may heal very slowly or cause permanent damage. In most cases, the underlying idea is the same - to rest the brain as much as possible while it takes time to heal.

If you suffer a brain injury, you’ll probably be advised to get plenty of sleep, limit sensory stimulation, and eliminate stressors. You’ll be encouraged to drink plenty of water, eat well, and avoid anything that might cause another injury - all relatively minor adjustments for most people. But for people without a home, they are virtually impossible.

“If you’re homeless you’re always living in this ultra-aware state. There’s no way to relax,” explains Brad Taylor, an outreach worker. In the world of homelessness there is no place to rest or to get a full night’s sleep. And waking time is taxing.

Which is why Dr. Wismer sees housing as the first real step in recovery for many who are homeless - specifically, permanent supportive housing with nurses, case managers, and social workers.

Although the model is controversial, it could offer vital support for those recovering from brain injury. It also indicates a growing awareness of cognitive functioning and the important role it plays in a person’s ability to care for him- or her-self - especially amid the chaotic, deficient, and often dangerous circumstances of the streets.

According to Pat Murray, we still have a lot of work to do, and it needs to start with information. “Awareness has to happen first. And that awareness needs to start with those who serve homeless individuals.”

And, she says, the time is right. “We have a real opportunity right now - brain injury is in the media and research is catching up with the reality. We’re just getting a lot smarter about brain injury.”

Nick Patton is living proof that with the right diagnosis, the right support, and a committed advocate, life can get better, even if it never goes back to normal.

Even 10 years on, Nick still feels the effects of his attack. Although the medications have helped dramatically, he still hears voices. But now he knows that they’re just voices and that they’re caused by the injury - he doesn’t have to listen to them. He can trust people again.

He also still struggles with some of the signature symptoms of brain injury - including memory and concentration. “It’s hard to keep my thoughts together. I can’t really read anymore - and if I do, I can’t remember it five minutes

later.”

He says he’d like to go to school to be a case worker, to offer the same kind of support he’s gotten from others. But he knows it’s not in the cards. He says it would just be too much; to do the coursework needed to get the certificate.

But he’s learned to be happy again and to work around his symptoms. He sets his phone to remind him of appointments and tries not to promise that he’ll be somewhere on time. Social security covers his basic expenses. “I actually like paying my bills now. It makes me feel normal.”

But most importantly, Nick goes fishing. As often as he can, he goes out with a group of guys from AA to hit the best fishing spots in the city. It’s something he knows by heart - something the brain injury can’t take away from him.

www.streetnewsservice.org / Street Roots (USA)

SUDOKU CHALLENGE

By William Crandell, *Street Speech* vendor

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Ups and Downs: What Working Ohioans Know Too Well

By Brett Pransky

There is no “up” without a “down.” In order for one thing to be up, another must be down, or else the whole idea of “upness” has no meaning. In order for someone to win, someone else must lose. For each trophy won in little league, there is “participant” ribbon given to the losing team, if anything is given at all. Our entire American culture is built on this concept, and as we get older and enter the workforce, the same kind of dynamic exists. Only now, the stakes are much higher; lives hang in the balance, and the winners are becoming fewer and fewer each year. More of us are down, and those of us who are up exist at such an altitude that the world below seems little more than a collection of ants.

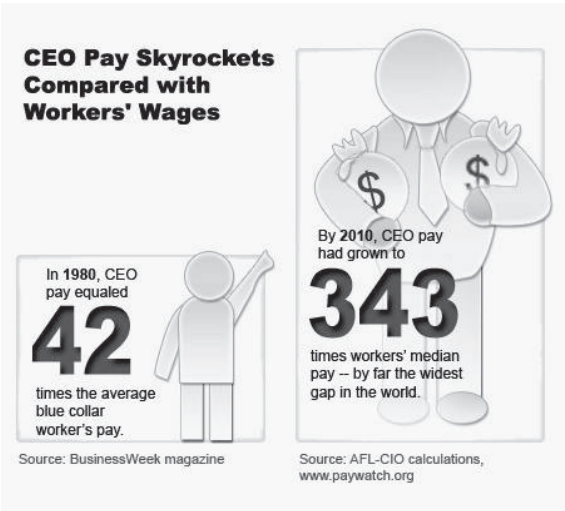
Most of us were told (at a very young age, in my case) that hard work is the thing that determines our place on the sliding scale of up and down. “Work hard, and you shall never want.” That’s what my grandmother used to say. It sounds almost biblical, doesn’t it?

Which brings us to the problem at hand. For Ohio’s working men and women, the promise of a better life through hard work is quickly becoming an empty one. Wages are down. Cost of housing is up. Wages are down. Cost of healthcare is up. Wages are down. Productivity is up. Wages are down. Profits are up.

The majority of working Ohioans are now a part of the first American generation expected to be worse off than the generation that came before them. The average American has a lower standard of living than his or her parents enjoyed, even though we are much more productive than we have ever been before. Executive pay is skyrocketing, while real wages for working people are in a state of decline. According to Lawrence Mishel, President of the Economic Policy Institute, in “1965, U.S. CEOs in major companies earned 24 times more than an average worker; this ratio grew to 35 in 1978 and to 71 in 1989.” By 2005, the divergence ballooned to 262 times the pay of the average worker, with CEO pay growing to a point that “a CEO earned more in one workday (there are 260 in a year) than an average worker earned in 52 weeks.”

Meanwhile, wages for working people are stagnant from year to year, almost always growing by less than the rise in the average cost of living, and in many years, including this one, actually falling. Profits and executive pay are climbing, and they are doing so because businesses are making more money by driving down wages for working people, who, in return, are working harder than they ever have before. This may be good for our mutual funds, but it’s destroying our neighborhoods, our schools, our sense of community, and worst of all, the American Dream.

Those of us who work hard so that our children can do better than we did can now be fairly certain that, if present conditions hold, they won’t have the opportunity to do so.



The competition between businesses and their employees is one that business is winning, and the result is inevitable – someone must be down. For many Ohioans, this means drastic changes in lifestyle, choices between food and medicine, gas or rent; and for some, it means a very real possibility of living on the streets.

While experts would likely argue endlessly about the up-ness and downness of this industry or that, none disagree with the simple fact that we don’t have enough jobs, and the jobs we do manage to create very often pay less than the jobs we lose, meaning the prospects for working people are getting worse. This much seems true beyond any reasonable doubt, and if we look a little closer, the numbers are staggering.

The number of people who experience homelessness every year in Ohio, when compared to population statistics, would rank them as Ohio’s seventh largest city, falling right between Dayton and Parma in the rankings. According to the Licking County Coalition for Housing, well over half of Ohio’s homeless became so as a result of job loss, illness, divorce, or domestic abuse. And just over one-quarter of Ohio’s homeless are currently employed; however they cannot afford adequate housing, nor do they qualify for government assistance.

These statistics simply don’t mesh with the perception of safety through hard work, nor do they allow us to simply cast off homeless people with labels like “lazy” and “addict.” True, there is addiction on the streets, and there are bad choices to be found, but they exist in much smaller numbers than the “up” crowd would have us believe. Too many, far too many of Ohio’s homeless were put on the streets by factors they simply do not have the power to control. Ohio’s seventh largest city, with a population of roughly 150,000, is inhabited entirely by those on the

downside of this new American Dream.

But the real problem here is not an issue of greed and economic servitude. Rather, it is a problem of perception and convenience. While it is incorrect and callous to see homeless people simply as victims of their own choices, it is, for many otherwise decent people, very convenient to do just that. In the hectic world we all now inhabit, many if not most of us are simply too busy, and if we are given an easy way out, we often take it. It is much easier to rationalize that someone doesn’t deserve my help than it is to say that they do, because the latter asks something of me, while the former requires nothing. This convenience gives rise to a perception that becomes a stereotype, and the result is a society that knows it should care, yet does little, for it has given itself an excuse to ignore the down, and not to exercise the enormous power that it has. The perception does not match the reality. It rarely does. For many of us, seeing the world around us in an honest way is an act of discipline, and we just don’t have time for it.

What we need is a proper understanding of up and down, and a realistic look at where we happen to be on the line between the two. “Up” consists of a very, very small number of people, and an even smaller number of this publication’s readers. Most of us are in the middle somewhere – some are safer than others, but almost all of us are a job loss or a serious illness away from the streets, or from dependence on others, whether we choose to believe it or not. In fact, the middle itself is sliding backwards under the weight of dropping wages and increasing costs, and it can hardly be called the middle at all anymore. The overwhelming majority of us have much more in common with the homeless than we do with the real “up” crowd, yet perception – that paper thin bit of nothingness – tells us different, and too many listen. If we are looking for common ground, for an economic commonality of interests, the overwhelming majority of us are more likely to find it in shelters than we are to find it in corporate boardrooms.

Whether the issue is one of relative terms or the gap between fiction and reality, the goal remains the same. By understanding why people become homeless, and by understanding what drives our own misperceptions, we can begin to recognize our sameness and come together. The solution lies in the simple understanding of what “up” and “down” really mean in today’s America.

Brett Pransky is a teacher, a husband, and a father of two small children. He enjoys writing fiction and poetry, publishing when and where he can. Brett holds undergraduate degrees in English and Philosophy, and an M.A. in Rhetoric from Ohio University, and now teaches rhetoric, composition, and literature at OU and other campuses. He hopes to do his part to end homelessness.

Forests

From Page 4

The United Nations and other institutions are pushing countries to “green their economies” through a shift to renewable energy and by dramatically reducing their resource use, wastes and pollution while meeting the needs of the poorest people.

Capitalism, and particularly the neoliberal version of capitalism, created the multiple crisis we now face, and it is unrealistic to believe it will also be the solution, said Büscher, who has spent more than a decade working in Africa.

“REDD is a new kind of colonialism. The real changes that urgently need to be made are in the rich countries,” he stressed.

Rich countries need to make major reductions in their energy and material consumption but “we’re not willing to do so,” Büscher noted.

Europeans have widely protested a proposal to build a road through Tanzania’s Serengeti National Park. China wants to build the road to mine rare earth metals for use in electronics like mobile phones.

“Who in Europe wants to give up buying the latest smart phone?” Büscher asked.

Maginnis insists that REDD is not an excuse for rich countries to do nothing, but just the opposite: rich countries need to make major emissions cuts and ante up a lot of cash to conserve forests and grow new ones.

“We have to get REDD right and that excludes unfettered, market-based versions. It also means ensuring proper land tenure and rights for local people,” he said.

Deforestation is usually the result of economic pressures imposed from outside the forests, so not dealing with those dooms efforts to conserve forests and slow climate change, concluded a study involving 60 of the world’s top experts on forest governance, “Embracing Complexity: Meeting the

Challenges of International Forest Governance. A global assessment report”, released in January.

REDD promises to mobilise a great deal of money for conservation to resist those outside economic pressures, but good governance is needed to make sure forests are actually protected on the ground, said Jeremy Rayner, chair of the International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO), which conducted the study.

Even REDD+ programmes continue to “explicitly value carbon storage above the improvement of forest conditions and livelihoods,” the report concluded.

There is urgency to protect forests, but REDD+ is not the one-size-fits-all solution, Rayner told Tierramérica.

“Governance in most regions is not strong enough to handle implementation of REDD,” he said.

Many approaches are needed and market-based systems could have a role in some places, whereas fund-based initiatives would work much better in other areas, he said.

Significant problems remain about how to value forests. Nor is there consensus on what a forest is. “Some argue that an oil palm plantation is a forest because it sequesters carbon,” he explained.

“Right now we must experiment and try different mechanisms in an open and transparent manner to learn what works and where,” Rayner concluded.

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www.streetnewsservice.org / IPS

VENDOR CLASSIFIEDS

Many of our vendors are seeking full-time and reliable employment. There’s more to many of our vendors than meets the eye. To help match vendors with potential employers, we’ll be featuring their skills here. Do you know of a job or gig that would help one of our vendors? Call our office to get in touch with a vendor if you see skills you could use, at (614) 228-1342 or email us at street.speech.columbus@gmail.com.

Vendor: Lester

Skills in hotel work such as housekeeping and houseman, warehouse work, factory work, grill cook, asbestos and paint removal, loading and unlaoding trucks, banquet set up, dishwashing, laundry work, taxi driving.

Vendor: Richard

Home-improvement work (both exterior and interior), landscaping and lawn care, demolition. References available upon request.

Vendor: Mark

Home repairs, no job too small. Drywall installations and repair, carpentry, plumbing, landscaping, painting. References available upon request. Contact the Coalition or call Mark at 614-625-7579.

Vendor: William

Good communication skills; able to analyze data and other information; problem solver able to envision alternative solutions; creative with a sense of design; technically inclined; able to design custom widgets, themes, plug-ins and applications for mobile and desktop systems.

Vendor: Victoria

Skilled at cleaning, cashiering, and data entry. Excellent people skills and positive attitude.

LOOSE ELEMENT LIVE @ SOUNDS OF DISTINCTION MUSIC & ARTS FESTIVAL



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6:00 P.M. TO 2:00 A.M.
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VENDOR CODE OF CONDUCT

The Columbus Coalition for the Homeless has a Charitable Solicitations permit. Street Speech vendors are trained and supervised by Coalition staff. Vendors agree to abide by the following Vendor Code of Conduct when selling the paper:

1. Street Speech will be distributed for a donation of \$1. I agree not to ask for more than \$1 or solicit donations for any other purposes while selling Street Speech. If a customer donates more than \$1, I am permitted to keep the donation. I will be clear that the donation goes to me and not CCH.
2. I will purchase papers only from the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless at \$0.25 per paper. I will not sell to or buy papers from other vendors.
3. I will present my badge when buying papers and display while selling papers. If I do not have my badge, I cannot buy or sell papers.
4. I understand that my badge is property of Street Speech and I will not deface it. If I lose my badge, I will purchase a new one for \$3. If my badge becomes ruined or weathered, I will purchase a new one for \$1.
5. I agree to treat others-customers, staff, and other vendors-with respect. I will not use abusive or forceful language when selling papers. I will not be aggressive, threatening, or continue to ask after a person has said no.
6. I agree to stay off of private property while selling Street Speech. I will not sell door to door.
7. I will not sell any additional goods or products while selling Street Speech.
8. I agree to respect the space of other vendors, particularly those who have been at a spot longer. If I encounter another vendor selling papers, I will move to another location before selling papers.
9. I will not sell or purchase Street Speech under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
10. I will attend monthly meetings at the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless the first Friday of every month. The next month's papers will be released at the meeting.
11. It is my responsibility to police fellow vendors. I will report violators of these rules to CCH. The value of the paper depends on keeping it credible.
12. I understand that any violation of these rules will result in suspension of my privilege to sell Street Speech and possible termination from the program. Badges and Street Speech papers are property of CCH and must be surrendered upon demand.

Please report any alleged violation of these rules to the Coalition by calling 228-1342 or emailing street.speech.columbus@gmail.com.



Only purchase Street Speech from vendors.

Vendors wear **yellow** badges when they sell papers.