

# ***FORGOTTEN VOICE***

Volume 1 No 1

GIVING A VOICE TO HOMELESS PEOPLE IN NEVADA

March 2007



## **Inside This Edition:**

**Metro Issues Wake Up Calls For The Homeless**

## **Also:**

**Ending Homelessness in Las Vegas, Nevada:**

**A Common Sense Approach**

**THIS PAPER IS FREE**

but donations are gladly accepted

**PLEASE RECYCLE ME!!**

Do not throw away.  
Please pass on to someone else.

**OUR MISSION IS TO BE A VOICE FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE.**

**OUR GOALS ARE:**

- 1) TO PUBLISH A STREET NEWSPAPER WRITTEN MAINLY BY HOMELESS PEOPLE, FORMERLY HOMELESS PEOPLE, AND HOMELESS ADVOCATES IN ORDER TO EMPOWER THEM AND GIVE THEM A VOICE;**
- 2) TO BUILD AND ENHANCE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND FACILITATE POSITIVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HOMELESS PEOPLE, HOMELESS ADVOCATES, SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC;**
- 3) TO BUILD AWARENESS OF SOCIAL SERVICES THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO POOR AND HOMELESS PEOPLE, AND OTHER SUCH INFORMATION THAT WOULD BE EDUCATIONAL TO THE HOMELESS POPULATION; AND**
- 4) TO EXPAND AND REDEFINE OUR CHARITABLE, EDUCATIONAL, AND LITERARY PROGRAM FROM TIME TO TIME AS NECESSARY TO MEET THE CONTINUING NEED TO EMPOWER HOMELESS PEOPLE.**

**EVERY WORK BY HOMELESS PEOPLE PUBLISHED IN THIS PAPER IS PROTECTED BY COMMON LAW COPYRIGHT.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT FORGOTTEN VOICE, INCLUDING INFORMATION ABOUT GIVING DONATIONS, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:**

[www.forgottenvoice.org](http://www.forgottenvoice.org)

**OUR WEB HOSTING IS DONATED BY:**

★ Phone Systems ★ Networking  
★ Web Design & Hosting ★ Print Media  
★ Computer Hardware & Maintenance

**Absolute**  
INTERNET MARKETING, INC.



702.914.3431 . info@aimlv.com . www.aimlv.com

Forgotten Voice welcomes all submissions in the form of fiction, journalism, artwork, photography, and poetry. We especially encourage those living on the streets to use this space to debate and discuss issues of poverty, housing, and homelessness. Forgotten Voice does not support censorship, and the selection of submissions for print will be made based on the quality of a piece, not its viewpoint. However, Forgotten Voice discourages pieces intended to harass, incite bigotry, or advertise for profit. Forgotten Voice will not print shortened or edited versions of written submissions without the author's prior consent.

SUBMISSIONS CAN BE EMAILED TO:  
[amanda@forgottenvoice.org](mailto:amanda@forgottenvoice.org)

**THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THE ARTICLES AND ADVERTISEMENTS DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE VIEWS OF FORGOTTEN VOICE.**

*Cover photo taken by  
Roussan Joshua Collins*

WE WELCOME FEEDBACK AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR. PLEASE KEEP YOUR LETTER BRIEF, AND EMAIL IT TO:  
[amanda@forgottenvoice.org](mailto:amanda@forgottenvoice.org)

## ***Forgotten Voice***

### **Editor-in-Chief**

Amanda Haymond

### **Editor/Typist**

Meredith Stewart

### **Layout**

Mike Lee, Amanda Haymond

### **Board of Directors**

Amanda Haymond

Simone Simpson

Lee Rowland

Jim Crelia

William Cole, Sr.

Dr. Leroy Pelton

Paula Cremeens-Rudeen

Linda Lera-Randle El

Mike Lee

### **Advertising**

If you are interested in placing an ad in Forgotten Voice, please email Amanda Haymond at:  
[amanda@forgottenvoice.org](mailto:amanda@forgottenvoice.org) or call (702)301-8774.

**Forgotten Voice would like to thank everyone who made this first issue possible. Thank you all for your support, patience, time, contributions, and dedication. Your generosity will not be Forgotten. Thank you.**

**UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, THE ARTICLES IN FORGOTTEN VOICE ARE WRITTEN BY HOMELESS OR FORMERLY HOMELESS PEOPLE, AS ARE ANY PHOTOGRAPHS OR ARTWORK.**

# METRO ISSUES WAKE-UP CALLS FOR THE HOMELESS

By David M.

Every morning at 4:30 A.M., officers of the Las Vegas Metro Police Dept. arrive with sirens blasting and lights flashing, all with the sole purpose of waking up the homeless people who sleep along the sidewalks surrounding the St. Vincents and Salvation Army shelters. In keeping with the war on the homeless, police officers have participated in harassing the homeless by forcing them off the sidewalks and out of the blankets that provide the only source of warmth for those without homes. This is a form of harassment against a sector of society (YES, the homeless are a part of today's society regardless of City Hall's beliefs and denials). Such harassment against a predetermined sector or group of people is not only illegal and unconstitutional, but it is also sadistic! Given the fact that this practice of 4:30 A.M. wake-ups did not begin until temperatures dropped to freezing levels. I'd like to take this opportunity to point out that at 4:30 A.M., there is no place a homeless person can go to get off the sidewalks that they have just been evicted from. Strangely enough, the police allow them to cross the street and stand on another corner in the cold for two and one half hours until the sun comes up. This perverted practice being implemented by City Hall and the Police Dept. does in fact place persons at risk without regard to one's safety or well-being.

As an American citizen, I find this type of fascism very UN-American and I question why our country feels it's OK To dispose dictators from other lands yet turns a blind eye to growing injustices right within our own borders. Many people feel and are being led to believe that those who sleep

outside and do not have homes of their own are somehow removed from society. Many feel that you are homeless because of drinking or drugs. In some cases that may be true, BUT! it's important to look at homelessness as an American Problem—with an estimated 657 million hungry people in America today.

The Las Vegas Review-Journal does its part to convince Las Vegans that there is more than enough help and shelters for those down on their luck, and I truly think that City Hall wants to portray that as well. Let's look at a few options for the needy:

- 1) If you find yourself with nowhere to sleep, you can go to one of three shelters. St. Vincents was just given over a quarter million dollar grant for their winter shelter, which according to the Review-Journal this is to offer food, clothing, and a bed to those in need. In reality, the only thing offered under the winter program is the bed and in order to insure one gets a bed, homeless begin lining up at 12:30 P.M. and wait in line until after 4 P.M. to gain admittance, SO HERE YOU MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN A BED OR SOMETHING TO EAT.
- 2) Salvation Army: Free beds! 1st come 1st served!! I have two words for this place: HEALTH DEPARTMENT.
- 3) Las Vegas Rescue Mission, best of the three. Very small and only offers a seven day stay to the homeless. Nice break, no solution however. Each place I have mentioned are there to serve themselves financially first.

The point I'm trying to make is that there are many reasons as to how a person becomes homeless, and there is a certain prejudice against homelessness that must first be overcome before any real

solutions can be found. In America today you will find an ever-growing number of people who are only one payday away from being homeless themselves, with millions of jobs being outsourced and millions of workers being imported. The only possible conclusion is what cities more and more are seeing, and that's the rise in homelessness. It's not a pretty sight for elected officials and so-called policy makers who can only come up with misinformation and finger-pointing back toward the very same victims of their loyalty to special interest groups. The Mayor once made a reference that homeless persons needed to be transitioned back into society. With that said, I, for one, would like to invite the Mayor down to Foremaster and Main St. for a 4:30 A.M. wake-up call. After all, the city's paying for it and it appears he could really use one.

This is an American city still in the United States of America. Last time I looked, and homeless or not, I am still an American citizen born with the right to life, liberty, and

the freedom to pursue happiness. So to Officer Terry and all others of Metro's homeless task force, let me offer you a wake-up! The majority of homeless people are not sleeping on the sidewalk because they like it, and most are trying to work themselves back up.

Your harassments and incarcerations of persons for bogus offenses are not going to end the homeless crisis. Rather, you're helping to prolong one's misery.

And to those down at City Hall, wasting tax-payers money trying to pass ordinances designed to further harass the homeless in hopes that they will leave Las Vegas, wake up! A federal class-action suit on behalf of American citizens being harassed by government agencies such as Metro Police Dept. on Foremaster is not out of the question. On the upside, it would help end homelessness for those affected by your misguided prejudices.



**Salvation Army Mens Showers**  
**Photo by: Roussan Joshua Collins**

# **ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN LAS VEGAS, NEVADA: A COMMON SENSE APPROACH**

**By Mike Lee**

Las Vegas is known for its picture postcard skyline dominated by large splashes of neon and towering buildings. Monuments to the false hope of instant riches and a devil may care atmosphere. What happens in Vegas, Stays in Vegas. Smiling faces of the beautiful people stare back at you from slick magazine ads. Yes you can be just like them. Throwing away hundreds of dollars and engage in activity you wouldn't talk about in mixed company.

Under the surface though, lies a different picture. One which features hundreds of people sleeping on the sidewalks and children playing in the dirt. A woman, burns a bible in between bouts of screaming at imaginary monsters. All abandoned by society. Welcome to Las Vegas, Bombay of the Western United States. Like Rome its predecessor, Las Vegas is so civilized. Like Rome, Las Vegas is sliding towards the abyss of destruction firmly embracing an attitude of intolerance and indifference towards its less fortunate members.

A civilized society takes care of its weakest members. If we claim to be such a society then we must find it unacceptable to see others lacking in the basic necessities of life: food, shelter, clothing, and medical care. If we are a modern society, as a collective group we must insure that the individual member has the opportunity to acquire these basic necessities. Those who are unable to take advantage of these opportunities must be cared for. If that means placing some in institutionalized care then let it be so. This though creates a greater societal responsibility. That is to be ever vigilant in insuring the care provided is humane and just.

Now there may be those who

for whatever reason are content to remain in their present circumstance. Let it be so and provide a specific area for them to live which is completely supported with minimal basics of life. Those wishing to escape such a meager existence are encouraged to, and provided the means to do so. Those in the minority who despite this new social contract engage in anti-social behavior surrender all right to society's commitment to them and will be dealt with appropriately.

This article examines common sense solutions to the current crisis of an ever growing homeless army. The author does not claim it addresses each and every complex issue associated with poverty in Las Vegas. Instead, it will deal with what immediate action can be taken to put us on the path of ending homeless in Las Vegas specifically but the region as well. **Criminalization of the Homeless: You're A Bum! Go To Jail!**

The present social policy embraces as its linchpin a strategy to criminalize the homeless. Public dollars, resources and time are squandered by chasing homeless people from place to place as if by magic this is going to make them go away. This myopic policy and others must end. A moratorium must be immediately declared halting such practices as issuing tickets for misuse of a bus stop, sleeping on the sidewalk, trespassing in a public park. Recent laws prohibiting feeding groups of hungry people should be repealed. If someone wants to use their own money and time to feed the unfortunate then their efforts should be applauded not chastised. In fact avenues must be explored on how people like Gail Sacco can be provided assistance in their individual efforts.

Common sense dictates that if a large number of people are congregated in the park this provides a prime opportunity to provide direct service to this population in crises. A team of no less than two outreach workers should attend every gathering to provide assistance and share resource information.

## **No Room At The Inn**

It is a given fact that there is a lack of shelter space. The proof is that there are literally hundreds of people sleeping in front of service providers buildings every night. A common solution that is touted is to build more shelters. Those that postulate this as the end all overlook two main points.

- 1) Shelters are expensive and time consuming to build
- 2) There exists an immediate need to provide other options besides sleeping on the sidewalk or in a doorway. We needed a solution yesterday not a year from now.

In speaking directly with homeless people, their advocates, and other concerned people, a common sense approach emerges. This approach demands that an urban campground be established. A place where people can primarily find a safe, clean place to sleep without fear of being run off by the police.

A main feature of this campground is a community center which houses showers and a day shelter, and provides office space to existing services. This center becomes a one-stop-shop where a person can find a variety of resources for employment, benefits, housing, etc. Residents of this camp are not only encouraged, but also provided the means to participate in the day to day administration of the camp. Traditional shelter administration where clients are dictated to is

counter productive for two reasons:

- 1) It does not expect or demand client responsibility for taking control of their own lives. Simply learn the shelter rules, don't get caught breaking them and you will be fine.
- 2) It fosters a climate of dependency and kills any opportunity to either learn or practice life skills directly related to self-sufficiency.

This type of administration should not be applied to the campground. Administration of the camp should be a partnership of all concerned; committed to making sure there is an opportunity for residents to actively participate in decisions which affect their lives.

The philosophical basis of the camp must be radically different than that of a traditional shelter. Instead of "We're going to do it for you" the campground shall embrace a "Do it yourself" outlook. The resources are there to solve any problem. An individual only needs to have the initiative to use that resource.

An example of this philosophy in a practical real world sense is lockers. Homeless people need lockers to store personal property. After all you can't show up at a job interview with your bedroll. Very tacky.

A traditional approach would be just provide lockers either on a nominal or no-fee basis. The approach I speak of would first build a partnership. Local business providing material. Unions providing skill sets necessary of overseeing proper construction. Residents providing physical labor. The end result is not only the lockers, but also individual sense of pride and accomplishment.

In short, responsibility is not only encouraged but demanded of the individual. Doesn't this make

more sense than the traditional model?

Do not be misled into believing that an Urban Campground will abolish the plague of homelessness. Neither believe that what is being said is that it should replace existing services. Oh no! The campground should be looked at as a starting point for an individual to recover from homelessness. The next step could be a traditional shelter. Then transitional housing. Then self-sufficiency.

Homeless people don't want to sleep on the sidewalk. Business owners don't want people there either and neither do the police or individual citizens. As long as emergency shelter is lacking we must at least consider the possibility that an urban campground might provide an immediate solution to a crisis faced by not only by the City but the Region as well.

### **Accountability and Communication**

An overwhelming problem with the present delivery of services is gaging how effective they are. Oh yes, we can toss around all kinds of numbers. Create nifty 3D, color pie charts, etc. The question remains, how effective is the delivery of service? We certainly can't ask the homeless themselves because there is no process to do so or for them to come to the bill payers and explain what is going on. Neither can they question whether the service being provided is the one they actually receive. For instance, if the public is providing \$6/person for a provider to serve meals, the question arises, is this being done? A 3D pie chart can't tell you that. Only common sense and speaking with homeless people can. My common sense tells me a frozen donut and a cup of coffee doesn't cost \$6.00. Additionally, we must ask, is the process being abused? If the public is funding a program, is that what the money is being used for? Or if donations are being

provided to feed or clothe homeless people, is that really the end result? From personal observation and the observation of others, we notice trunks of cars being loaded with piles of blankets and clothing. We also see cases of meat being loaded into trucks along with deli platters. We aren't talking about small amounts but enough to feed and clothes at least a hundred people!

The present system does not provide oversight of service providers and neither does it allow or encourage feedback from homeless people. They are expected to take what ever is given to them and shuffle on down the street. In this instance we are talking about food and clothing. Lets turn our attention to shelter and other miscellaneous services. We see the same situation exists and even worse. A complaint process is non-existent! So if a shelter guard beats on you (and yes it does happen) you're expected to lick your wound and be silent.

Taxpayers, you pay the bills but I dare anyone of you to call City Hall right now and ask how much they spent today on emergency shelter. They can't and won't tell you. From the top to the bottom the present system is not accountable to anyone except in a limited way to their funders. Common sense tells us that the possibility for abuse exists and if you ask the homeless they know it happens everyday.

Let's say instead of us discussing homeless services here in Las Vegas we were talking about Christian Children's fund. Wouldn't you want to know what they spend their money on? Wouldn't you want to know how they spent your donation? Wouldn't you want to know if financial abuse is occurring? Wouldn't you want to know that people are being in a fair and dignified fashion? Of course you would! So why should it be any different when it comes to your

money being spent on the poor right here in Las Vegas? It shouldn't. Common sense should tell you that if these services exist and are effective, then why are there hundreds of people sleeping in front of service provider buildings every night?

From the top to the bottom, the present system is not only corrupt but also rife with abuse and inhumane treatment. It does not allow for any check and balances. The service providers simply stand in front of the taxpayer with their hands out and our elected representatives write them what amounts to a blank check.

At the earliest possible moment an Ombudsman position must be created that is attached to and reports directly to the Mayor's office. In general, the main responsibility of this position is direct oversight of service providers. It is the Ombudsman's responsibility to insure if there exists a question of whether services are being provided that it is brought to the attention of the Mayor for further investigation. The Ombudsman shall also be responsible for overseeing an outreach team of no less than two persons, and receiving, investigating and processing complaints received by homeless people. The creation of this position and the outreach team will start a process to insure that the proper checks and balances are in place which will in turn guarantee that taxpayers get what they pay in an effective and cost efficient manner.

### **Conclusion**

There are a myriad of other problems that this article does not address. These topics will be commented upon at a later date. What is written here is a starting point for how we can begin a process of actually proving we are a civilized society by taking care of our weakest members. It is crystal that the current solutions do not work and a new direction must be

developed. That new direction begins with all concerned with the solving the current crisis shouldering a part of the burden and creating a partnership that has its sole agenda of sweeping the scourge of homelessness into the dustbin of history where it belongs.

Any solution that is proposed must have practical and immediate impact on the problem. Spending thousands of dollars to count the homeless is counterproductive to solving the problem. Spending thousands to research homeless panhandlers violates any and all aspects of common sense. Homelessness will only end when the media starts to demand it end, when the unions actively recruit unemployed, homeless workers into their ranks, when the business community reaches into its wallet and provides much needed resources and when you the taxpayer say, "Enough is enough! Solve the problem now!"

In conclusion, the three most basic steps which should be implemented immediately are:  
1) Halting the criminalization of the homeless by declaring a moratorium on laws such as misuse of a bus stop. Repealing the laws which forbid feeding of the homeless in City Parks and elsewhere.  
2) Establishing an urban campground.  
3) Establishing an Ombudsman position attached to and accountable only to the Mayor's Office for the homeless. Establishing as part of the Ombudsman position an outreach team of no less than two persons.

With the publication and circulation of this article, we have the unique opportunity to begin a new direction. Failing to embrace new thinking means we will never achieve a solution which is beneficial to all. For as long as one person sleeps on the streets of Las Vegas we can not dare to call ourselves a civilized society.

# Hoping in JESUS

by Roussan Joshua Collins

Last night in the cold, I began to write down issues that needed to be dealt with. I am praying GOD gives us all better wisdom and understanding on how to fight against the segregation of the poor, and the discrimination against them, as well as how to fight for freedom for those jailed due to such discrimination.

I know prayer and fasting is our number one weapon in this spiritual battle, so please pray we all stay faithful in this area! Police and government are getting WAY OUT OF LINE, and are able to take away a man or woman's liberty and freedom so easily. Please pray GOD has mercy on these people and shows them the truth and sets them free! Surely we must pray for and press those in authority to, "LET GOD'S PEOPLE GO!", warning them of the judgment to come if they do not.

Will the hate crimes against the poor ever cease?

Will the poor hostages that are in jail now for wrongful

causes (jailed by their own countrymen) be released by those in power? Just as the Native-Americans were chased off their land, the poor are continually harassed by those who have the bigger guns. It's sad to know that those with the most guns, not those with righteous ways, seem to be in control of the world, but surely the meek shall inherit the earth!

Please pray GOD helps us all to work well together to set the poor captives free. Pray GOD helps us speak boldly in the City Council

meeting this Wednesday if it be HIS will. Pray GOD gives us words, help and wisdom in order to teach the TV viewers what's really going on in Las Vegas and City Council that is not being exposed. I know we must fight for those locked up behind bars now while we are still able (Hebrews 13:3), and know right now someone is in jail who doesn't belong there. Please pray for such people to be let go soon, and please pray GOD helps us fight for those in such a terrible situation. Please pray GOD fully disarms and subdues our enemies under our feet. Please also pray all gain the right to eat, sleep, and live in freedom and Christian liberty in the U.S.A. Pray also that our hearts stay pure, courageous, meek, patient and humble always. (Thanks so much for your prayers!)

Please send any prayer requests you might have, and if you would like to join us around noon in

Frank Wright Plaza for food, prayer and fellowship, please do so! GOD bless you and I hope to hear from you soon!

*Josh is available to meet with people who need prayer, guidance, and/or encouragement. He would also like to help people get physically fit through recreational activities such as tennis. To contact Josh regarding this, or to be added to his ministry email list, email him at: [servingjesus99212@yahoo.com](mailto:servingjesus99212@yahoo.com)*

**>>Just as the Native-Americans were chased off their land, the poor are continually harassed by those who have the bigger guns.**

## IN LOVING MEMORY OF A.B. MOORE

By Amanda Haymond

--President/founder (article originally published in Coyote Press)

Allen Bruce Moore passed away on the morning of March 31, 2006. He was 70 years old. Toward the later years of his life, he was homeless. He was able to get back on his feet and rent an apartment for a few months before he had to check into UMC. The last few weeks of his life were spent in a hospital bed and he was diagnosed with a large variety of health problems, including lung cancer. Allen died the morning the hospital was planning on releasing him.

Allen was a sweet, caring person. His sense of humor never faded in any circumstances. Even while on his deathbed, he made sure there was always something to laugh about. Everyone who got to know him, including the nurses at UMC, loved his vivacious personality. He was kind and animated, and never failed to put a smile on every person's face.

Allen Moore's favorite saying was a quote from his previous friend, who said, "I don't know about tomorrow, but I know I can make tonight." Every time these words flowed out of Allen's mouth in the hospital, the tears flowed with them. Living each day one day at a time granted him 70 years of a life that will never be forgotten.

A.B. Moore's genuineness, benevolence, and strength have touched the lives of many. He was a wonderful friend, and his legacy will forever live on in my heart and the hearts of everyone who knew him.

## TRUE STORY

By Bob Christine

It was March of "06" in the city of Brotherly Love, Philadelphia, a cold month for that year. Pity the homeless. Then there was an old man of his late 50s standing on the corner of 4th and Market St.

Sometimes we all just have to have a hot beverage like coffee early morning, especially a cold early morning, and so it was that the old man needed one for himself.

Tourists were all along Market St. and so the poor homeless old man thought he'd try to sell his Super Bowl sweatshirt for what a cuppa strong perk coffee cost.

Everyday like clockwork the trusty vendor would offer a fine cup o' joe for only \$1.00. That day at 6AM the homeless old man was sure he'd get enough from doing a great job bringing attention to the public, then 7AM, then 8AM—no dollar and no hot cup to be had by him.

The homeless guy was used to the tough job of getting together some change or a dollar, for homelessness is so feared and misunderstood by so many.

Perhaps most people are afraid of the things that they have little or no understanding.

Then as God looks after his own, the 'ole man put the heavy shirt he was willing to sacrifice back on. A minute later a lady was at the corner waiting on the bus right there @ 4th and Market. Out came a dollar. Here, she said, you must need this very bad. And suddenly the poor man in need reached out his hand with a simple thank you.

The good in heart are sometimes far apart and seldom seen. But patience, perseverance has its rewards. I learned it that day because I was the one with the shirt to sell but didn't. Thank you to every Good Samaritan to come along at the right moment.

# TALKING WITH HOMELESS PEOPLE

A column by Kurt Borchard

--author and associate professor of sociology at the University of Nebraska-Kearney

I am excited to be part of the inaugural edition of *Forgotten Voice*. I'm excited because the paper could mark a turning point in the history of Las Vegas. For the first time, homeless people in this city will have a media outlet to regularly communicate with homeless and non-homeless people.

Why is this important? For several years, local media outlets (newspapers, television, and radio) have discussed the problem of homelessness. These discussions and stories have largely left out the voices, opinions, and experiences of homeless people. Social policies developed to help homeless people without requesting their input are less likely to be effective than those policies could have been, or to fail entirely.

A great example of a failed social policy that did not consider the voice of the homeless and destitute involved the creation of a centralized pick-up location for day laborers on Bonanza Road in the late 1990s. Businesses there did not like the (often poor) laborers trying to pick up day labor jobs from passing cars. A law was created criminalizing the practice of drivers that picked up the laborers, but day laborers continued to look for work there, and trucks still drove to Bonanza Road to hire them.

The city then spent money creating a centralized pick-up location for the laborers. The city did not ask the day laborers how to design the pick-up location, and many of the men subsequently refused to use it. Some men said that before the pick-up spot was developed, they could group together on Bonanza Road by race

or ethnic group, and could put some distance between their group and others. The new pick-up station, though, lumped the different groups together, which some men thought wasn't safe given the intense competition for the attention of whatever truck had pulled up. Not listening to the (often destitute) day laborers before creating a solution to "help" them proved to be an expensive lesson for the city.

In 2005, I wrote a book called *The Word on the Street: Homeless Men in Las Vegas*. I wanted to present the voices of homeless men to correct the view that homeless men's personal characteristics are the sole cause of their homelessness. The social environment and the community's reaction to homelessness, I argued, are also important in understanding why homelessness occurs and why it continues.

In 2005, I believed that Las Vegas was at a crossroads. The homeless corridor, where services for homeless people in Las Vegas are centralized, also serves to marginalize homeless people to a poor and crime-ridden area of town, segregating homeless people from the rest of the city. In the last few years, the city also developed and enforced laws criminalizing homeless people's survival practices. Ironically, the city's largely oppositional relationship with homeless people did not drive them away. Homeless people, I thought, would keep coming to the city. "The problem" would grow, and eventually the city's heavy-handed policies against homeless people would receive national media attention. I thought this might then negatively affect

tourism in the city.

Instead, tourism to Las Vegas has grown, and it seems the city's homeless population has also grown. The problem of visible homeless people is not going away. Today, homeless people now regularly live in groups outside of the homeless corridor. The police regularly "sweep" such encampments. Also, Mayor Oscar Goodman has criminalized charities providing food for homeless people in parks without a proper permit. By the summer of 2005, stories about this downright nasty response to homelessness in Las Vegas were being featured in *The New York Times* and international media outlets. The city's approach to homelessness has not resulted in improving its image or in ending homelessness.

It is high time for Las Vegas to stop criminalizing homelessness, ignoring homelessness, or just managing homelessness. From several years that I have spent talking to homeless people, I have found that those individuals have great insights into why they became homeless and what they would like to see changed in Las Vegas. Through *Forgotten Voice*, those insights can be regularly shared among homeless people, people with housing in Las Vegas, and tourists. Just because things have been a certain way in Las Vegas in the past does not mean that they have to stay that way.

One of the biggest fallacies about homelessness is that people choose it. Homelessness becomes an option for people who are out of other options. The city of Las Vegas needs to become more creative in its approach to homelessness. I am happy to see

that now, with *Forgotten Voice*, there is a forum for many different people to share their thoughts about, ideas concerning, and experiences of homelessness. In the future, I look forward to sharing some of the stories of homeless people I have met in Las Vegas in this column.

I believe that *Forgotten Voice* can help make Las Vegas a better place to live, for all its citizens.

## LAS VEGAS- CITY WITH NO HEART

By Steven Geary

I have heard and seen a lot in the last few years of living in Vegas. But lately this city has become heartless. These are a few examples of what I am talking about. In North Las Vegas the police have a habit of waking up homeless people who sleep outside at 4:00 in the morning. They also tell people they will be arrested if they don't get up and move. If you're going to do something like this why not do it at night before they are settled in?

The police also have been stopping people with shopping carts and not only taking their carts, but people's possessions. I find that cold hearted. For some people, that's all they have in this world.

Another incident was the arrest of a couple of people for sleeping close to feces. That is ridiculous. Come on Vegas, have a heart.

## **COME AND GET IT!**

In response to escalating criticism of the city's homeless policy, Mayor Goodman is offering direct assistance. For the past two months, Mayor Goodman has concluded the City Council meetings by asking if there are any homeless people present. Those that are get to speak directly with city representatives and receive assistance. As of this writing, it has not been determined what type of help is provided or how effective it is. What is interesting is that the Mayor has stated if you do not get the help you seek, he wants to hear about it.

The only catch is that you have to show up at City Council meetings about 3pm. They are held the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month. Can't wait that long? Go pay the Mayor a personal visit at City Hall, 10th floor.

announcement by Mike Lee

## **MISSING**

RONNY GONDA ADVENT

DOB: 10/25/51

APPROXIMATE HEIGHT: 5' 6"

APPROXIMATE WEIGHT: 130

HAIR: DARK BROWN

EYES: BROWN

LIVED IN HENDERSON ALONG BOULDER HIGHWAY FOR APPROXIMATELY 10 YEARS.

Ronny's family is searching for him and needs your help!

If you have any information about this person, please email Forgotten Voice at:  
[amanda@forgottenvoice.org](mailto:amanda@forgottenvoice.org)

## **KNOW THE CODE**

### ***Local Laws Criminalizing Homelessness\****

*\*This column is meant to inform you about local laws. It is not a substitute for legal advice, and if you feel your rights have been violated you should consult an attorney.*

#### **Shopping Carts (11.03.100)**

This code section makes it a misdemeanor to remove a shopping cart from its owner's property; to knowingly possess a stolen shopping cart; to possess a shopping cart whose serial number has been altered or erased to hide its ownership; or to alter or erase any existing serial number.

#### **Curfew (12.12.015)**

It is a misdemeanor for anyone under 18 to be present on the Strip between Sunset and Sahara, or on any East-West road intersecting this section of the Strip between I-15 and Koval lane at any time between 9p.m. and 5a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights.

#### **"Vagrancy" Code (12.32.020)**

This section involves fundamental aspects of homelessness, and to the degree that these laws punish behavior that cannot be helped or is protected by the First Amendment (such as sleeping outside when shelters are full, or asking non-abusively for charity). Parts of it may be unconstitutional.

Nonetheless, the following laws are on the books and at least occasionally enforced. It is a misdemeanor to accost someone in a public place for the purpose of begging; to go from "house to house" to beg for food; to maintain a place where stolen goods are kept; to refuse to identify oneself to a police officer; to be drunk in public to the extent that one is "unable to exercise care for his own safety or the safety of others" or obstructing a public road or sidewalk; and to "peek in the door or window" of a building while on the private property of another without lawful business with the owner or tenant.

The main misdemeanor affecting those without homes is a prohibition on lying down or sleeping on any sidewalk or alley, vacant lot, public ground, building or automobile without consent of the owner. Those sleeping on public ground have been arrested for violating this ordinance without 'consent' of the County to sleep there.

#### **Drinking in Public (12.35.010)**

It is a misdemeanor to drink alcohol or possess an open container in any parking lot, or within one thousand feet of any store that sells liquor.

#### **Public Parks (19.04.030)**

Clark County bans certain behavior in public parks, such as plant and property destruction, littering, indecent or abusive conduct, or selling merchandise. It is also important to respect hours of closure, as many homeless individuals are cited for being in parks outside of their posted hours.