A Right Delayed
Is a Right Denied
The Struggle for the Right to Rest

“We raise our voices to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and continue to work in fighting for the civil rights of the most marginalized of our society.”

— Ibrahim Mubara, Portland’s Right to Survive, WRAP

by Janny Castillo

With microphone in hand, Bilal Ali, human rights organizer for the Right to Rest campaign, was standing in front of two large banners, one saying, “Black Lives Matter,” and the other “A Right Delayed is a Right Denied.”

At a direct action for the Homeless Bill of Rights held in San Francisco on Sunday, January 18, he described the draconian laws that the Right to Rest bill will help eliminate. “The laws today that criminalize homelessness and poverty are an extension of those laws,” Ali said, calling out the names of the cruelly repressive Jim Crow, Sundown Towns, and anti-Okie laws that have snaked their way across America for over 40 years.

“We are here to let San Francisco know that we will resist these laws. We will resist any law that criminalizes the bare necessities of life activities and the basic existence of our people!”

The Right to Rest Bill, also known as the Homeless Bill of Rights, is making its way to legislators in three states: California, Oregon and Colorado. Advocates for the bills are fired-up grassroots organizers led by Western Regional Advocacy Project.

“Our campaign is now active in four states and acting in partnership with 135 organizations and thousands of individuals,” says WRAP Executive Director Paul Boden. The multi-state actions in several cities included sleep-outs, marches, a “poor people’s palooza” and a film festival.

The San Francisco action, held at the Powell Street BART station, was in collaboration with Black Lives Matter and the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. Advocates and speakers from various parts of the homeless community spoke about the need to pass the Right to Rest bill now.

Laura Slattery from the Gubbio Project, a sanctuary for homeless people at St. Boniface Church in the Tenderloin, described how the Right to Rest bill is connected to the work of Martin Luther King and the Poor People’s Campaign.

She said, “After the death of King, 3,000 people set up tents in Washington, D.C., for the Poor People’s Campaign. For six weeks it was one fifth its size, unpainted for months and left.”

My Journey from San Francisco to Selma

Bishop James Pike of Grace Cathedral thundered from the steps of City Hall: “I’ve been there, and friends, we need more bodies down there, more bodies, and especially more white bodies.” In that instant, I knew I would go to Selma.

by Claire Isaacs Warhaftig

In just one instant in 1965, I decided to travel to Selma, Alabama, and March for Voting Rights for African Americans who had been disenfranchised for decades in the South.

As I plan my return to Selma this year on March 3 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of this historic event, I ask myself: When did I start this journey, and why? And I recall the discrimination in society that was obvious even to a teenage girl.

I was a senior in high school in 1949. Dad said that since he had business in various places that summer, why not all travel together and cross the country? First stop: Tulsa, Oklahoma. Riding the bus, I noticed black people were gathered in the rear. This naïve California girl thought they preferred to sit together. Then I noticed they weren’t even talking with one another. That evening, I learned that Tulsa had curfew laws. Blacks were prohibited from leaving their homes after 8 p.m. The exception was to work serving a white family, and required a permit.

My next encounter with segregation’s ugly visage was in Nashville, Tennessee’s train station, with its two sitting rooms. The “whites only” space was reasonably clean, regularly painted and offered comfortable chairs. The “colored only” waiting room was one fifth its size, unpainted for decades, and featured splintered benches. I tried not to imagine the restrooms.

We journeyed on to visit our cousins, Julius and Mervin Blach of Birmingham, Alabama, for our first visit ever. Brothers Julius and Mervin owned department stores in various Southern cities, specializing in men’s wear. The downtown store was later to be seen as an unfortunate backdrop to notorious Sheriff Bull Connor’s water-hosing of civil rights marchers there.

Our cousins’ wives, Patsy and Lillian, served up hospitality Southern style, day
I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic, destructive suction tube.

We must rapidly begin the shift from this thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, sexism and militarism cannot be kept at bay.

A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa, and South America, only to take the profits out of our wounds of a frail world.

When the slaves get together, that’s the beginning of getting out of slavery.

We mean business now and we are determined to gain our rightful place in God’s world. And that’s all this whole thing about. We aren’t engaged in any negative protest and in any negative arguments with anybody. We are saying that we are determined to be free. We are determined to be people. We are saying that we are God’s children. And if we are God’s children, we don’t have to live like we are forced to live.

When the slaves get together, that’s the beginning of getting out of slavery.

We say to you that our goal is freedom, and that this whole thing is a beginning of getting out of slavery. This is injustice. The issue is injustice. The issue in the Refusal of Memphis to be fair and honest, to make a decent improvement in the housing of its poor, is as much on the agenda today as it was when he spoke these words.

We have not come to stay. The people who set off in 1861 as a nation, out of the wounds of a frail world, the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression, and out of the wounds of a frail world, new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as never before. The people who sit in darkness and see a great light, and we in the West must support these revolutions.

I’m not going to study war no more. This is the only way that I believe today that there is a need for all people of goodwill to come with a massive act of conscience and say in the words of the old Negro spiritual, “We ain’t goin’ study war no more.” This is the challenge facing modern man.

I say to you that our goal is freedom, and I believe we are going to get there because however much she stays away from it, the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be as a people, our destiny is tied up in the destiny of America. Before the Pilgrim fathers landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before Jefferson etched across the pages of history the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence, we were here. Before the beautiful words of the “Star Spangled Banner” were written, we were here.

For more than two centuries our forebears labored here without wages. They made cotton king, and they built the homes of their masters in the midst of the most humiliating and oppressive conditions. And yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to grow and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery couldn’t stop us, the opposition that we now face will surely fail.
Martin believed that the founding principles of the United States required the creation of what he called “the beloved community” — a society that is not driven by making profits, but one that was built by developing relationships of mutual concern and care.
by day. Their country club offered this California girl the chance to show off my Pacific Ocean-laced swimming style. As I climbed out of the pool drip-fro-zen, I collapsed on my beach chair, her dry, sun-baking friends cooed, “Woo, Cuzin Cleah, yooow sweeeetumm!”

But serious menace lurked behind this placid scene. A black family had moved in too close to the white enclave, and their new home was bombarded. Julius, head of his local American Legion chapter, spoke out against the bombing. He had not suggested that the neighborhoods integrate. No. He had simply stated that such violence was wrong. For this stance, he was receiving daily death threats. My father kept this from me until we had left Birmingham.

I did my best to offer companionship to Lowell High School’s single black student. Daughter of the distinguished, Harvard-educated min-ister of the Unitarian church, Dr. Howard Thurman, she was determined to benefit from San Francisco’s outstanding public college-prep school. The Thurman’s tiny home in the Fillmore district revealed a beautiful, tasteful living style within a shabby Victorian in one of the few neighborhoods where African Americans could rent.

Miss Thurman didn’t make it to my graduation tea; that 1950’s traditional party hoovered over by doting aunts and grannies who poured the liquids and served tiny treats. But another black friend, Sherry Brown, who attended the University of Washington High, accepted. The very next day I was “disin- vited” from other Lowell girls teas.

Relationships between black and white people in those days were tentative, hes-itant. But my mother managed to form social relations at work in the civil service — the non-discriminatory welfare depart- ment — with the brilliant and handsome Elzie Wright. Elzie provided my first exposure to a black adult woman with wit, wisdom, and a joke and enjoy ineluc-tional disagreements.

At Pomona College, the only excep-tion to the segregation in the student body in the 1950s were the occasional foreign stu-dents, such as ‘Nai G’muk, a girl from Turkey. As a remedy, the college arranged a student exchange with Fisk University in Tennessee. The two black students from Fisk attempted to shrink quietly into the body of the college masses.

Graduate school in Columbus, Ohio, provided an entirely different social matrix. Before I had even left San Francisco, the Dean of Women of the Ohio State University office sent me a brochure listing sororities as specifically “Gentle,” “Jewish” and “Negro,” illus-trated in photographs.

Even the local off-campus coffee shop reflected this tripartite divide, catering to each one of these groups, and woe to anyone in the wrong area. Many black students originated from border states like Kentucky to the south. The color line was drawn to mix with white people. My only black pal was a UCLA student from Los Angeles.

During World War II, thousands of African Americans from many southern states settled in the Bay Area. Many occupied homes in San Francisco’s Fillmore District. These African-Americans were sent under guard to “relocation camps” for the duration of the war. The Fillmore neighborhood became a mecca for black culture and entertainment, yet was considered too inappropriate for white girls like myself to get off the B and street running through it.

I noticed that one never saw people of color in clothing advertisements. I rea-soned that if black models were seen in ads, their presence might become normal and comfortable in daily life. Thus, news-paper columnist Herb Caen made much of the appearance one day in Liebes Department Store of pretty young Chinese girls, traditionally garbed, operating ele-vators. Before this startling development, it was usual for all non-white people to remain unseen in the back of a shop.

In the spring of 1965, news of civil rights struggles erupted in the press and media. The nation roared with anger as they watched people in Alabama brutally attacked by policemen mounted on horses charging with billy sticks and tear gas. The police used this violence against unarmed, peaceful citizens to prevent them from marching from Selma to the state capital in Montgomery to demon-strate for voting rights. The film “Selma” accurately portrays the struggle.

Public reaction was not unlike that after 9/11 in New York, with saturated coverage of the outrage on every channel. In San Francisco, I joined the protest march from the Embarcadero to Civic Center. It was led by the great orator and liberal Bishop James Pike of Grace Cathedral. From the steps of City Hall, Bishop Pike thundered forth: “I’ve been there, and friends, we need more bodies down there — more bodies, and especial-ly more white bodies.”

So, in that instant, I knew I would go to Selma, Alabama.

My journey began in the Macedonian Baptist Church on Sutter Street in San Francisco. Leaders from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) preached the philosophy of non-violence and taught us physical self-pro-tection moves. I felt a tap on my shoulder. Seated behind me sat the minister of the Pentecostal church directly across the street. He handed me a small, red, velvet bag, and asked me to present this to some one in Selma, “because none of us can go. Please go there for us.” Filled with nickels and dimes earned by San Francisco’s juni-tors and chamber maids, this token was a sacred trust I acquired due simply to my place among the jews.

Our group was led by Bill Bradley, a former army sergeant and local activist. He organized our trip, preparing us to deal with both disapproval and danger. The southern-est treated streetwise and non-civilians scowled at us. Entering the old Atlantic air-terminal, we were greeted by the whisper, “Selma, Selma, Selma,” echoing menacing-ly around the circular structure. Our can-teens, jeans and backpacks had evidently signaled our destination.

After staying overnight in a black church and engaging in more practice in nonviolence, we boarded our bus to Selma. Our five-hour drive led us along a very narrow, two-lane highway with red soil on the shoulders and an abundance of wet, green vegetation, bushes and trees. Passenger new to the South were startled by the reality of signs warning, “Whites only” and “Colored stay out.”

I recall one memorable mental snap-shot: Two farmers, a man and wife, dressed in overalls, holding a hoe and a shovel, standing side by side along the road’s edge. A living enactment of Grant Wood’s iconic painting, “American Gothic”? No, not those sour-faced Midwesterners, but a black couple wary of showing any expression, yet curious about these strangers passing by.

We arrived in Selma in the late after-noon, and were deposited directly in front of the famous Brown Chapel of media attention. We got off and heard a man out-side shout, “These people, they come all the way from San Francisco! Sa-a-an Fra- a-a-ncisco, folks. Let’s cheer them off the bus!” We hadn’t done anything, but clearly, just our arrival raised spirits in Selma.

Inside the chapel, the organizers assigned our sleeping quarters. The young men would sleep on the chapel’s pews. Older people and women were assigned to vari-ous local homes. Our hostess, Mrs. Lee, endured a week of nearly 20 folks sleeping on every available horizontal surface in her tidy one-bedroom house. However, this good-natured woman revealed in the excite-ment of meeting people from everywhere — Chicago, Los Angeles, Cleveland, St. Louis, Denver, Boston, New York.

To obtain food at her home, she, like others in Selma, relied on volunteers who traveled miles away to purchase and deliver it. Activists were boycotting local business-es, including groceries. We scraped up all the money we were carrying to give her. But she was most amused at the packs of trail mix our group carried. She then pre-prepared delicious southern-style food for us.

Each day began with gatherings in a packed Brown Chapel, with hundreds outside on the sidewalk. Speakers from our groups addressed us, leading us in short prayers, welcoming newcomers and thank-ing all those present. Then, they summed up news of the town’s reactions to recent activities, explained the strategies for new actions, and shared the progress on obtain-ing permission to march.

We were holding our collective breaths, awaiting the word to march. But the leaders surprised us with a new tactic. Instead of massed short marches into town, we would spread out all over town, and “drive the cops crazy” by picking up folks from all over Selma.

I partnered with Barbara. We were dropped off in a quiet, white residential neighborhood. As directed, we strolled quickly up and down that block, always remaining on the sidewalk. Soon we heard from inside those houses, the sound of pounding footsteps, slamming doors, ring-ing phones, and voices raised. “They’re coming, they’re here!” No one came out to talk with us. The good white folk were afraid of a couple of young women just walking on the sidewalk.

Next, we could hear sirens screaming from every direction throughout town. Eventually, a police car screeched to a halt in front of us. The police ordered us to stop walking. Then they rounded up some black clergymen in their black suits and white collars, who were walking on the next block.

We were asked, “Are we being arrested?” The police answered by ordering us to get into the car. We had to sit on one another’s laps, a ploy designed to embar-rass all of us.

Deposited at the county jail courtyard, we joined about 60 others who had already been picked up. We linked arms and started singing, “We shall overcome.” “Shut up or I’ll bash your heads in!” came the instant reaction. The uniformed officer holding at us was swinging a fists that reached below his knees. He was the notorious Sheriff Jim Clark of Dallas County.

We were surprised not to be booked, but were instead loaded into a bus and trans-ported to the black recreation center build-ing. It was in poor condition. Soon the sin-gle toilet was overflows. The drinking water was questionable, the furniture and equipment broken or very outvantage. I rec-
The Road to Selma

from page 4

tioned a family friend from New Haven, who worked at Yale. A courteous gentle- 
man, he spread his jacket on the cement 
floor outside the train station—inviting — a share of his single roll of Lifesavers.

Time passed. It grew dark outside. We learned that we had given the police a lot of 
rest, but not by bugging us into the already crowded 
place. To pass the time, we sang and danced 
and sang some more. The onlookers and 
crowd behind us heard our songs.

Performers from the San Francisco com- 
Rumors spread that the Klan might bomb 
us or that we’d be shot coming out. We 
decided to stay the night.

Some people felt that the men and 
women should separate. They had heard 
that rumors were circulating of sexual mis- 
conduct among us, and wished to avoid 
contributing to the so-called "nonsensical notions.

So, while the men were suffering on the 
dustier, cement floor, I luxuriated on the 
green grass of the main room, 
upstairs, wearing my jacket as a pillow.

The next morning, a messenger delivered the 
“all clear,” and we marched triumphantly through the town.

But there were lighter moments, too. 
Barbara and I accepted the invitation of some Southern ladies to dine at the 
outskirts of town and a huge barn, with 
dirt floors, great live music, and beer. 
Foils seemed delighted to see us. And being the first white citizens to enter, we 
could honestly say we had truly integrated 
the Selma Sugar Shack!

And then came the announcement: 
We were to leave Selma today.

Violence from the police had sabo- 
taged the first march. On March 7, 1965, 
more than 100 violent marchers were 
beaten to near death by clubs and whips by 
Alabama state and local police on the 
Edmund Pettus Bridge, during the first attempt to march from Selma to Montgomery. 
This police assault became 
known as “Bloody Sunday.”

After the nationwide outrage over 
whether to allow this to happen, 
violence on Bloody Sunday, the State of 
Alabama finally had been forced to allow 
the march to continue. The march from Selma to Montgomery began. 
The police marched the leaders after the first 
day to about 300. The reason given was 
the potential violence from those along the very 
small, 50-mile highway.

As we marched over the Edmund 
Pettus Bridge and out into the country- 
side, we let out a shout. It was 
laughed, linked arms, sang, jogged, and 
shared food. We were so alive.

Yet, there was menace in the atmos- 
phere. The helicopters whirring and 
buzzing above us caused a breakdown in 
one manner, a Vietnam vet. On the side 
we saw a mound of old washing. We had 
agreed with our efforts, and were just star- 
ing at us. State troopers bearing rifles and 
boasting Confederate flags sewn onto 
their uniforms stood guard along the high- 
way in a decidedly unfriendly stance.

At the end of this long day, we assem- 
bled in a large field, but I was unable to 
spot the train carrying transportation 
back to Selma. Desperate and grubby, I 
approached a fine lineuseen with 
three gentlemen. One of them gave me 
some change, I announced, “I’m Claire Isacs 
from San Francisco.” To which the gentleman in the front seat replied, “I’m in 
New York.”

Oops! I had just hitched a ride from a 
Nobel Peace Prize laureate. Ralph Bunche had won the Nobel Prize in 1950, and had 
been named as Under Secretary of State 
and had joined Dr. King in leading 
the day’s march out of Selma.

We were at the very nice home of a 
Doctor and Mrs. Jackson. My presence 
seemed to be causing a problem. It was 
too dangerous for me to walk or to 
talk about the movement. Gently, 
Dr. Jackson convinced Dr. Bunche that he 
and his chauffeur must drive me to where I 
was staying. Reluctantly he agreed. 
I could see Dr. Bunche’s mood turn 
dark as we drove through the poorest 
section of Selma. Asphalt streets were 
replaced by dirt roads, while street lights 
and greenery had disappeared from the 
landscape. At the railroad crossing, 
we were trapped by the rapid approach of an 
incoming train. There was neither 
way to get nor lighting there. I hunkered 
down into the car’s floor. As two black men 
and I tried to get to the same car, we could 
have been attacked.

When we arrived and I dismounted, 
I screwed up my nerve to ask Dr. Bunche, “Is there a way we can talk about 
brotherhood between black and white in 
America?” His lips tight, he answered,

“I'm not interested in brotherhood. 
I'm interested in respect,” and drove off.

Because “brotherhood” had been the 
constant theme of the Selma gathering, I 
was quite hurt. Over the years, I came to 
understand the deep meaning of his words. 
Would there be so many beatings and 
killings of young black men by white police 
if respect between races was universal?

Well, it was time to go. I could not wait for the Montgomery demonstration. 
I'd had a job and a family at home. 
Our farewell was a wonderful banquet of 
Southern cooking held by local residents 
for us. With an appropriate speech I 
presented that little bag of coins to the lady 
of the house, a community leader. 
Upon my return home to San Francisco, 
I was invited by that Pentecostal church to 
share my Selma experiences. Garbed in 
spangled, gold-trimmed, blue satin, the pas- 
tor introduced me as “that lady who went to 
Selma for us.” The congregation, ladies 
in immense, flowered hats and gentlemen 
in fine black suits, sat expectantly. 
Interrupted by intermittent shouts of 
“Praise the Lord,” “Say it, Sister,” and 
“Thank you Jesus,” I managed to get 
my little talk. I said, “I have an expe- 
rience for a nice Jewish girl like me. Amen.

I am returning to Selma this year in 
May. This amazing coincidence is that a 
contact at the Selma Chamber of 
Commerce put me in touch with a 
Jawanda Jackson. During our first phone 
conversation, I realized that this Jawanda 
Jackson is the daughter of the Jacksons 
who had been kind to me so long ago.

What a revelation! We became immediate 
friends. She has invited me to stay with 
her and to share in the special events 
planned for this 50-year anniversary.

These include a kick-off dinner by the 
mayor of Selma.

As we talked, I finally understood why 
Dr. Bunche hesitated to leave the house and 
give me that ride. Dr. Martin Luther 
King was expected at any moment. 
Together they were to dine, plan the next day’s 
and sleep over at the Jacksons. It 
was indeed moments. Now, Jawanda is turn- 
ing the home into an historic house. I have 
museum experience, and I am already shar- 
ing my advice with her.

After marching in Selma, I felt I had 
changed. It was not that I became more 
politically or socially active. I had changed 
inside. Despite a moral upbringing and 
good liberal education, I believe it is almost impossible to completely escape the poison 
of prejudice. It permeates our society.

But gradually I realized I was less likely 
fee new arms at the approach on the street 
behind me of a young black male. I found 
I could exchange serious thoughts and mem- 
ories, rather than platitudes, with black 
women my age. The search for struggling 
to connect, I was connected.

No decision is truly instant. For me, 
Selma March was not only to change and 
repair our democracy, but to 
and change to grow myself.

How pleased I would be to hear from 
any of the people who made the trip to 
Selma in 1965. Contact Claire Isacs 
Wahrhaftig at cniw@comcast.net

Why Selma Was a Crucial Turning Point for Democracy

by Claire Isacs Wahrhaftig

W

y was the 1965 march for vot- 
ing rights in Selma, Alabama, 
so important?

We Americans take voting for granted. 
Yet look at every decision we make in 
our lives. Who is allowed to attend our 
schools? Which high school we will 
attend? Do we have the right to choose 
where we live? Can we choose to marry 
or die? These are some of the basic 
concerns of our lives.

On March 15, 1965, just a week following 
the Selma March. The amazing coincidence is that a 
contact at the Selma Chamber of 
Commerce put me in touch with a 
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Poor Economy Leaves One in Five Children Needing Food Stamps

by Lynda Carson

Oakland — On January 20, President Barack Obama gave the State of the Union address and focused mainly on the middle class, while apparently abandoning the needs of the poor. With one in five children currently needing food stamps to survive in America, the great recession in 2007 is far from over, and the federal minimum wage needs to increase to become a living-wage all across the nation.

In early February, the Obama administration is expected to submit in 2016 federal budget to Congress and the stage is being set for the Democrats and Republicans to join together again for another attack on the safety net and Social Security, in the name of sequestration and austerity. This ongoing attack on the poor is happening when millions of children in our country are going hungry.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s annual Families and Living Arrangements report released on January 28, 2015, the number of children receiving food stamps remains higher than it was before the so-called great recession in 2007. The rate of children living with married parents who need food stamps remains higher than it was before the so-called great recession of 2007.

Over in the west side of town, gleaners hustle toward the recycling center on Peralta which will pay them cash for their collected goods. They push and pull their rusty supermarket carts filled with bottles, cans and odd goods toward the building before the steel roller door rumbles down and ends that day’s possibility of cash transactions.

Harry is a skinny man in his early 50s who has lung problems. “I have to move faster cause they close earlier on Saturday.” Harry said to me on a Friday morning. “I know me and leave their stuff out for me, half cents a pound for glass.”

One of his best “clients” is a bar that leaves empty beer bottles out in the back alley. Harry is tightly used to work the Oakland hills but they’ve disappeared. During the night before garbage collection day, the middle-aged husband-and-wife team wakes up and down the steep streets, picking into the recycling bins on the sidewalks mainly for aluminum cans.

By dawn they carried full garbage bags of cans suspended over their shoulders on bamboo poles down to Broadway. Upon finding a level concrete area, they separate the glass from the cans with their feet and walked the more manageable burden to a buyer five miles away. Apparently the gentry in the hills became overheated about the threat of ID theft, so private patrols and idle cops ran the Minhs and others like them out of those neighborhoods. Throughout the history of agriculture, gleaners were allowed to pick up the leftovers in a field that had already been harvested. In many cases, the gleaners were women, scrambling to keep their families fed in societies where the balance of power and land ownership was held by a small privileged few.

One of the shortest books in what Christians refer to as the Old Testament is a story of Ruth, a gleaner. Ruth is an impoverished widow who became a gleaner to survive, “so she gleaned in the field even unto beat that she had gathered ... and she took it up and went into the city.”

In the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth and his followers also practiced gleaning in their travels. Mark the evangelist wrote that Jesus “went through the corn fields on Sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.” When accused by the Pharisees of violating the law, Jesus replied, “have ye never read what David did when he was hungry, and they that were with him were hungry?”

Li-Hua is an ancient little woman who works the parking lots of the fast food restaurants and grocery stores around Lake Merritt. Her oversize gloves almost reach to her elbows, and she pulls behind her one of those folding shopping carts that other people take to the market. She wears a miner’s light on her headdress which provides her an advantage in discovering aluminum treasures before day light and other gleaners arrive.

Robert is a Gulf War veteran who gets around on an old one-speed bike. Robert has a sense of style and design. He built a trailer onto the bike to carry the goods he collects around the Kaiser Hospital neighborhood and gas stations within a one-mile radius. Robert was able to score a few cans of spray paint so he could paint his rig black and gold. It looks good. “I worry about that judge, man,” Gregory told me, “You tell him I’m staying clean.”

I read somewhere that Jamie Dimond, the head man of JPMorganChase, made over $9,000 an hour during the time his company committed numerous financial crimes, including stealing people’s homes and breaching the economy. On a good day, Robert the gleaner makes about eight dollars.

During 2013, the average monthly food stamp benefit for one individual in California was $151.44. And during 2011, in California’s 13th Congressional District, Congresswoman Barbara Lee’s district, 11,899 households received food stamps, including 16 percent of households with one or more people 60 years or older, and 76.8 percent of households with children under 18. Around 46.6 percent of the households income was below the poverty level, with the median income around $27,441.

The latest report also reveals that of the 73.7 million children in the United States, 10 percent live with a grandparent (7.4 million), 79 percent live with at least one sibling (58.5 million), 15 percent have a stay-at-home mother (10.8 million), and 0.6 percent have a stay-at-home father (420,000). At least 38 percent of the children under 18 have at least one foreign-born parent (28.3 million). Additionally, the share of children who live with a single mother has tripled since 1960, from 9 percent to 27 percent. Less than half (48 percent) of households today are married couples, compared to 76 percent that were married in 1947, and 47 percent that were married who same year. Records also reveal that presently 36 percent of men age 30 to 34 have never been married, and that, on average, married couples have more children than either single mothers or fathers.

Lynda Carson may be reached at tenantsrule@yahoo.com

Art by Kaethe Kollwitz

Lithograph, 1924
A Right Delayed Is a Right Denied: The Right to Rest

"You can't criminalize people for being people. It's a human dignity thing!" — Gwen Austin, BOSS

from page 1

they were there." Kang felt that we needed to focus more on addressing the needs of the poor. She added, “And that’s what we are doing today.

“You can’t criminalize people for being people. It’s a human dignity thing!”

Security case. Can’t go anywhere without

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toll on her. She slowly walks down a

Story by Janny Castillo

Struggling on the Streets

A Right Delayed Is a Right Denied:

February 2015 STREET SPIRIT 7

A Right Delayed Is a Right Denied.

"A right delayed is a right denied." — Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

WRAP’S Right to Rest Days of Action have taken place in San Francisco, Oakland, Portland, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Chico and other cities. WRAP stands in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and all groups fighting unjust, violent law enforcement. The movement has just begun.

Janny Castillo is the Hope and Justice Coordinator at St. Mary’s Center in Oakland. Contact: jcastillo@stmaryscenter.org. Visit the website at www.stmaryscenter.org

Right to Rest Campaign

Engage, Volunteer, Donate.

See www.wraphome.org

To get involved in the Movement to pass the California Right to Rest Bill, contact Jonathan Lopez of the Western Regional Advocacy Project. Phone: 415-621-2533. Email: wrap@wraphome.org

A Right Delayed Is a Right Denied: The Right to Rest

Speakers at the Right to Rest rally called for an end to police harass-

ment of homeless people and youth forced to live on the streets.

Janny Castillo photo

Struggling on the Streets Without the Right to Rest

Story by Janny Castillo

Lucy has a large, stained, duffel bag

dufl bag over her shoulder and contin-

he had set up services on the sidewalk

cialized on the streets. It was a space for

Kids by the kids,” she explained. But this

needed refuge for low-income youth met an ill-fated end.

"After 12 years, in 2013,” Noel said,

"closed the doors of our drop-in cen-
ter, not because we had no money, but

Youth are often harassed and trauma-
tized on the streets. Shira Noel, an organ-

ty delayed is a right denied." — Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Janny Castillo photo

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Paul Boden called on city officials to stop criminalizing poor and homeless people for sitting, standing, eating and sleeping.

"Sorry, sorry," she says. Fighting the unjust, violent law enforcement. The movement has just begun.

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Struggling on the Streets Without the Right to Rest

Story by Janny Castillo

Lucy is 76 years old, and she is way past tired. Years of living on the streets have taken an irreparable toll on her. She slowly walks down a busy downtown street in San Francisco.

With three plastic bags in one hand, two in the other, she wobbles as she walks, concentrating on shifting her weight to lessen the pain in her arthritic knees.

Lucy has a large, stained, duffel bag slung over her shoulder filled with, among other precious things, her medications and her paperwork on her Social Security case. Can’t go anywhere without that, no way.

Head bent and shoulders hunched, she tries to stay out of the way of people walking around her. With no money, she walks where she needs to go. Today she walks 15 long blocks from the alley where she felt safe enough to sleep in last night.

Lucy was making her way to St. Anthony’s to eat and to ask a staff person to call Social Security again. The pain in her back and legs is excruciating. She needs to sit down on a bench and take a break soon.

She walks by several blocks of people-filled benches and bus shelters. She can’t go any further, so she lowers herself to sit down on the sidewalk in front of a coffee shop. She whispers softly to herself, "Just for a minute … just for a minute."

After two minutes, her head slaps down onto her shoulder as she falls into an exhausted sleep.

Lucy is abruptly awakened by a young man in a police uniform, poking at her and telling her she can’t sit here, telling her to move on.

Frightened, she struggles to apologize. "Sorry, sorry," she says. Fighting the pain in her knees and a sense of deep shame, she pulls herself up to her feet.

She picks up her bags, slings the heavy duffel bag over her shoulder and continues to walk down the street of a city that pays attention to her only when they do not want to see her.
Science fiction by Jack Bragen

Experts have invented yet another new medication, and they predicted that this could be "the medication of a lifetime"—something that you might make psychiatric patients 100 percent manageable. They dubbed it the U Drug.

In chemical name was so long as to be nearly unpronounceable, and they had not yet arrived at a good commercial name suitable for such a spectacular drug.

The U Drug still needed to be tested. Yet it proved to be next to impossible to find volunteers who would willingly allow themselves to be tested on this drug. It had a particularly sad effect: the patients unable to work in a period of years or even decades will never arrive at a good commercial name suitable for such a spectacular drug.

The U Drug. When the company knew about this side-effect, they simply threatened Jonathan with the U Drug. They saw on a business website that ADA cases days would be worse in the future than it had been in the past. The company had seen a troubling pattern of the mental health treatment system.

One morning, as Jonathan was eating breakfast, his mother Dorothy sat across from him, and she saw the look on her face. "Johnny!" cried his mother. "Oh, no! Oh God, no! Something is wrong!" Jonathan replied, "Don't worry about it, mom, everything's fine." He was unphased.

"Don't worry about it, mom," he said through the open door of the bathroom. He wasn't upset at all, even though he obviously something horrible was happening to him. "Son, why aren't you upset?" he wondered.

In the three weeks prior to this incident, Jonathan's argumentativeness had evaporated, and his mother as well as his counselors were impressed by the progress he was making.

Jonathan's mother said, "No! Something is very wrong with you. Go in the bathroom and look at yourself in the mirror!"

At that point, Baxter obediently stood up from his chair and walked into the bathroom. He looked at himself in the mirror and realized that he was badly disfigured. His facial disfigurement was nearly indescribable, and it was clear why his mother had become so distressed.

"Don't worry about it, mom," he said through the open door of the bathroom. He wasn't upset at all, even though he obviously something horrible was happening to him. "Son, why aren't you upset?" he wondered.

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Jonathan, a 25-year-old man who was assigned to the study. Baxter had gone off his medications several times and had been written up in his medical records as being uncooperative, "intolerable" and argumentative.

Mental health workers had grown tired of trying to work with him. So they put Baxter on the U Drug. And they somehow failed to inform Baxter of this fact.

I have seen my mentally ill peers deteriorate over time. In some instances, they seem to disappear and never return. This is analogous to becoming an "unperson" in George Orwell's 1984.

An example includes the commonly held expectation that we remain poor. A counselor once commented on my nice shirt, implicitly questioning where I got the money for it. Another person in a position of authority asked me how I was able to afford cigs. In reality, my parents and my wife's parents help us with some of our expenses which are not related to food and shelter. In addition, I am responsible with the meager amount of money I have.

I had to ask myself what other group of people in our society would be questioned so closely about possessing a shirt or cigarettes. For instance, I have been in that position many times, even the simplest of tasks due to their impairments. People with mental illness, even though I continue to ground both physically and mentally. I have developed severe agoraphobia, I have gained an unhealthy amount of weight, and I am oversensitive to the effects of stress. Still, in my case, I am better off than a number of people with mental illness, even though I continue to have a lot of problems.

PREDICTING POOR HEALTH AND POOR HEALTH

Due to cuts in benefits, mentally ill people must often live under somewhat harsh conditions in our older age. We may only be able to afford the most undesirable of housing situations. We are likely to have to get by without a car. Since we are forced to rely on the bus system for our daily transportation, we must be prepared to withstand the effects of the weather because, at least in Contra Costa County, wait times for buses are frequently an hour or longer.

I have seen the effects on people of drug-induced diabetes over time. Frequently, such a person must wear a dressing on their feet and cannot wear regular shoes. They may appear obviously unhealthy, may have lost a number of teeth, and may have trouble performing even the simplest of tasks due to their physical impairment.

Many people with mental illness who may have once had a normal or even above-average IQ. have lost a lot of ground mentally. Mental health treatment practitioners with their condescension tend to automatically assume that are mentally superior to those they treat. This perception becomes prophetic when, due to the effects of the illness and the medication, a mentally ill person may eventually become as mentally impaired as treatment practitioners assume we are. Plus, if practitioners are able to convince us that we are unintelligent, the mind tends to follow this rule and mental impairment is induced by power of suggestion.

The mental health treatment system has a long history of subjecting mental health consumers to hazardous treatments such as electroshock therapy and antipsychotic drugs that have extremely damaging long-term effects on the mind and body. Every few years, powerful new neurolipotropic drugs are prescribed before the full range of their mind-damaging side effects are fully known.

POWERFUL DRUG LOBBIES

In many cases, the powerful corporate lobbying efforts of psychiatric drug companies have convinced the medical establishment and the FDA to look the other way while they essentially experiment on mentally disabled people without our knowledge or consent. This is the moral equivalent of what was done with the Tuskegee airmen.

When people are diagnosed with mental illness, whether it has some basis in fact or not, they are branded for a lifetime of misery — and sometimes it is a short lifetime. Despite mental health practitioners and others insisting that we can't do anything, it is important that we remain determined to do something in our lives that serves our own best interests, and gives us a better chance to survive.
Lost and Homeless Among the Stars

I looked up and saw the Milky Way. I wondered if there were homeless people on planets that circled those stars. I wished I could go to some other planet, one with kinder people living on it, where there was always enough to eat.

Short story by Jack Bragen

“When I die, or after I die, I want to look back at my life and see that I ate that cookie, I drank that vodka, I made love to that woman. I did not run away from living because of the petty fear that death might come soon. Yes. I get into a fist-fight with that bully, and it doesn’t matter, so much that I was knocked down — at least I took him on. I didn’t run like a coward. Yes. I did do things wrong, I did plenty wrong. But I lived, man, I lived.”

And at that, the aged man’s speaking quickly degenerated into drunken babble. In a little while, he was asleep in his bedroll. I zipped his sleeping bag a bit tighter, then, my family turned their backs on me. The town was convinced of my guilt. And my little run away was terrified into silence. In my trial, I was acquitted, but everyone in my small town was convinced of my guilt. And then, my family turned their backs on me. When I began to pack up and move, a number of things had gone wrong at once. A criminal had gotten my account numbers and had emptied all of my bank accounts. I tried to go to the police and they wouldn’t raise a finger to help. My bank did not acknowledge that it wasn’t who had taken the money.

With no money and no means of support, survival was suddenly something I couldn’t take for granted. I resolved to begging by the side of the road. The knot in my stomach and the consciousness of something I didn’t do. In my trial, I had been spared me. I broke into a run and located some shrubbery to hide behind. It was indeed for a moment to become home- less. I had come from a good family and hide” and do not object to being spied upon. I had taken the money.

I got back to the encampment and saw Sal had done certain things correctly, such as isolating the fire area with rocks. My prediction is that things will become gradually more oppressive. There is an overwhelming fear of death. An overwhelming fear of death. An overwhelming fear of death. An overwhelming fear of death.

The courts often have, in effect, given their seal of approval for police to kill citizens indiscriminately.

Commentary by Jack Bragen

The Nazis were loyal to their leader, and they adored him and his vision. Those who didn’t love Adolf Hitler and his cause were terrified into silence.

It was suicide to speak against the Nazi regime. Books were put into piles and set on fire. The government began to round up Jews, disabled people, gay people, people of different races and nationalities (non-Aryans in general), and any dis- senters who had spoken out against their cause. It was a reign of terror.

But everyone knows all of this, except perhaps the Holocaust deniers, who assert that it never happened and that it was a mass hallucination. Recently, the sign at the entrance gate of Dachau concentration camp, which translated said, “Work Will Set You Free,” was stolen. As more of the eyewitnesses of the Holocaust are dying from old age, the deniers apparently would like to eliminate the evidence.

Now, in the United States, we have police officers who have formed their own agreement as to how things will run. Police have killed law-abiding citi- zens who have given no provocation. The courts are participants in this slaughter by virtue of inaction. The courts often have, in effect, given their seal of approval for police to kill citizens indiscriminately.

I have met people who worship authori- ty. In their view, the police can do no wrong and those in authority can do no harm. They have “no fear of being ‘tried’” and do not object to being spied upon and controlled by this godly authority. A strategy employed by our govern- ment, in cahoots with the mass media, is to maintain focus on enemies external to the United States. This distracts many who might be actively opposing our Constitution.

Perhaps one reason the courts and juries refuse to convict officers and sentence them to prison is that they would be hard to pro- tect if they are jailed. Or, perhaps, the dis- trict attorneys and others in authority are wary of angering the police, since they rely so heavily on police to enact their orders and to keep them protected.

Yet, these explanations are not good enough, since the Constitution is sup- posed to ensure equal protection under the law. It seems that police and the courts no longer care about following the laws they are entrusted to enforce. Instead they are attempting to become a dictating force.

Too often, the police attempt to rule through fear. An overwhelming fear of crime and social disorder, and an unthink- ing desire for law and order, were exploited by the Nazis when they came into power. However, there are variations on the situa- tion in present-day America and Germany in the 1930s, especially since the American middle class is accustomed to liberty and to individual freedom. The Constitution is sup- posed to ensure equal protection under the law. It seems that police and the courts no longer care about following the laws they are entrusted to enforce. Instead they are attempting to become a dictating force.

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I have also seen the bad side of police. It can be terrifying to deal with an armed man or woman who has at his or her discretion the option of putting us in jail, and the courts and juries don’t help matters. This is why I make to go on a crusade, and police will become more extreme in their methodology. This in turn will only make more people angry at them.

When police stop obeying mayors, government officials, judges or even the president, then, at that point, we are look- ing at the end of democracy in its present form. The country could become a police state, or become degraded into chaos.

When citizens are fed up with errant police behavior to the extent that petitions are circulated for a new police reform act, we could see a change in how people are treated. We need to make the law enforce- ment branch of government accountable to the people and to the law. At present, there appears to be little or no accountability.

This is a hole in our Constitution, and in our democracy, that must be patched.
Robert L. Terrell looked like the spitting image of the used to joke that people kept telling him he his life is changed forever. A dream of the white-haired, bearded prophet have a bullet explode in his head. Out of the blue come the thoughts return again and again to his friend and over. He’s tired from all the heavy pipes, and a broken beam and cracks in the quake of 1989, with a mouse or two (or three or four) for company. Titian to Pollack. The garage is equipped new, blue mattress, a stained pillow, two painter Francisco Goya. hits the ground and he falls asleep on his 70-year-old Zane, with a full head of hair style and drove a used candy-apple-leather jacket and a D.A. (Duck’s Ass) back to Milwaukee for the funeral. When his father had died of a coronary, he was unable to pay the rent and having to stay in his room, turned off the lights, threw himself on the bed and fell asleep till morning. Zane was depressed. He’d lost the swagger and self confidence he had as a teen. He used to be the life of the party, partying rock and roll standards on acoustic guitar. Now that he was back from the war, there were still days when he liked to talk sports with his father or tune into a ballgame. The Brewers were the new baseball team in Beer Town but Zane longed for the old hometown but they’d give you shock treatment. “That bullet had your name on it.” The image of his friend Xavier was in his mind always and forever.

After the battle, Zane recovered in an Army hospital, but the guilt never left him. In his dreams, a bearded prophet denounced him: “That bullet had your name on it.” The image of his friend Xavier was in his mind always and forever.

Many veterans return home and end up living on the streets. Semi-zonked on 700 mg of Thorazine. Zane slept a lot and watched the black patients shoot pool and the white inmates sing along to British rock groups. There were 30 rows of beds horizontally lined up, five rows deep on each side of the men’s hall, as well as the women’s hall. This is truly barracks living, thought Zane, except there were chairs on the door. Peaches and franknuts without buns for lunch and dinner, and cereal and milk and two pieces of bread for breakfast. One night, the attendants rolled out a dolly with a big, big tray of liver. Only one fel lowranked to the waist built like Hercules challenged Zane to the liver. On Monday, just before midnight, he was awakened by the screams of a woman, “Let me go. Give me gas! Go! She was being dragged through the men’s ward by two burly attendants. Startled, Zane barked, “What are you doing to her?”

Zane, so he cooked that dish several times. He remembered his platoon on the defensive. In the first minutes as they exchanged gunfire, Zane is shot in the chest. In a flash, Xavier shields Zane’s blood-streaked body with his own, only to have a bullet explode in his head. Zane recouupated in a hospital in the Philippines, but ever afterwards, the guilt never left him as well as the recurring dream of the white-haired, bearded prophet denouncing him: “That bullet had your name on it.” His life is changed forever.

In the Army, he and Xavier became the best of friends. Ironically, both men were working-class guys from Milwaukee who’d never known each other back home. Xavier used to joke that people kept telling him he looked like the spitting image of the renowned novelist James Baldwin. He recounted, “One day I was on a bus and it stopped in front of Marquette on Wisconsin Avenue and a student sat down next to me and asked me if I was James Baldwin. I said yes and he asked for my autograph. I signed ‘James Baldwin’ to his elation and firm handshake.” Xavier laughed at the memory, then he pulled out a newspaper photo of Baldwin and Zane was amazed at the resemblance.

When Zane returned stateside he had planned to visit Xavier’s family on the North Side and relate the circumstances of his son’s death, but he couldn’t get him self to face them. He was ashamed to be alive instead of their own.

STRUENG IN A STRANGE LAND

America was no home for Zane. He lived in the Vietnam of his mind where he occupied a space akin to the title of one of James Baldwin’s novels: Another Country. Everything had changed. He used to be close to his father, Peter, a printer. There were only two of them. His mother, Irene, had died of tuberculosis when Zane was three. He had only vague memories of her. But it was she, his father told him, who named him Zane because of his autograph. I signed ‘James Baldwin’ to his elation and firm handshake.” Xavier laughed at the memory, then he pulled out a newspaper photo of Baldwin and Zane was amazed at the resemblance.

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James Baldwin’s Double
from page 10

a week. Gladys was happy with Zane who did everything asked of him.
He set up his art materials, and a strange feeling of confidence settled over him. Something now gripped him to portray his friend Xavier on the canvas. Zane became possessed with the painting, was discovering the force of his passion and will.

One evening, Gladys invited him up to her small living room to share a box of See’s chocolates she had received as a gift. After they delighted in their shared chocolates, Gladys stood up in front of her mantelpiece and stared at a black-and-white photograph in a gold frame.
She had told Zane how her son, a Marine, had perished in the Dominican Republic in 1964 from sniper fire on a street in Santo Domingo. She touched the photograph lightly. She held it tightly in her hands. She looked at the photo, repressing a smile, and she knew she had never stopped thinking of her son for even a solitary day — much like Xavier was in his mind always and forever.
He didn’t know how to comfort her. All he could manage to say was, “Thank you for the chocolates. They were delicious.”

“You’re welcome, Zane.” A tear or two welled up in the corner of her eye.
Meanwhile, something mysterious had happened with his portrait of Xavier. The paint had disappeared into the uniqueness of Xavier’s face. It was done. Xavier’s eyes, his nose — it was really him. He’d gotten it right after many a sleepless night in the basement. He was satisfied.
Zane showed his painting to Gladys.

“It’s wonderful,” she said. “He must be a dear, dear friend.” Zane nodded. “He certainly, certainly was!”

That evening, Gladys gave him the money to buy a cake saying, “Let’s celebrate the finishing of your painting.” Zane smiled and said, “Sounds good.” He walked off briskly to a Stockton Street Italian bakery.
After they finished munching on cake and drinking the coffee Zane brewed, Gladys said, “I apologize for the nice downstairs.”

“No harm done,” said Zane. “I’ve had rats for company sleeping in more than one downtown alley.”
She gave a slight grin, “I bet you have.” It was to be one of their last happy moments. Gladys grew weaker and weaker as the months passed. Once she received the diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, the disease overwhelmed her frail body. She passed on soon afterwards.
Her relatives were greedy for her property and ice cold towards Zane, and he’d gotten it right after many a sleepless night in the basement. He was satisfied.

In Spite of the Differences
by George Wynn

A blue mood consumes me
whenever
I lay my shoes
In the corner of the garage
rest proud
A pair of wine colored size seven
dress shoes
the ones
he stumped his feet with
the last time
I saw him and
snapped
“You’re a lousy son” I could have
retorted
“You’re a lousy father”

Long ago
I learned
to walk away
and I did
for twenty years
In the Fall
I removed
the wooden shoe tree
from each
slightly scuffed shoe
I thought it best to
donate
put the shoes
in a bag
placed them
outside my door
When the truck came
I tore open the bag
removed the shoes
There they still rest
in the corner
so calm, so unlike him.

Innocent But Guilty
by Claire J. Baker

Let’s face it, love,
now we’re homeless!
Our debts from illness
took us down — way down!
No time to call for help.
We’re less than a speck
from the moon or anywhere.
People don’t care, they stare
at us in our chosen spot
for today.
It’s best, love,
that we move on, roam.
Yet always remember
that when both of us could
work, we had a HOME.

Driving in the Country
by Claire J. Baker

If we spot road-kill
we want to move
the injured creature
onto a softer bed —
spin needles or leaves,
provide a gentler recovery, or passing;
make a small shrine,
circled pebbles,
flower marker.

On the flip side, what can we do
when we see an injured, ill,
or dying homeless person
on a tough city street?

Down to the Bones
by Carol Denney

It’s hard to believe in the daytime
there where the brother was hit
shot like a dog by the dumpster
this was some serious shit
kissed by some fool with a shotgun
arguing over some buy
people just act like it’s natural
everyone wants to get high

chorus: everyone wants to get high
everyone wants to get high
people just act like it’s natural
everyone wants to get high

Right near the dollar store entrance
right behind Everett and Jones
eating alive by the hunger neighborhood
down to the bones
everyone hopes they’ll get lucky
the next score might be the one
everyone hopes they’ll get lucky
the next score might be the one
no harm done,
I’ve had rats for company sleeping
in more than one downtown alley.

The Mind’s Current
by George Wynn

There often seems
is shaping itself
a poem or story
observe how
characters will go
the lives of
or what directions
in a poem?
images will flow
So much is unfolding in the mind’s
satisfied.
Sleepless night in the basement. He was
him. He’d gotten it right after many a
Xavier’s eyes, his nose — it was really
The paint had disappeared into the
uniqueness of Xavier’s face. It was done.
Xavier’s eyes, his nose — it was really him.
He’d gotten it right after many a
sleepless night in the basement. He was satisfied.

No Home to Return to
by George Wynn

San Francisco days
with allayway flavors
hidden rats
and empty cigarette packs
trash eaters
and a 40 year-old
bare chested
bare footed
panhandler
with pockets and clothes
turned inside out
with pus infested feet
grabbing my spare
quarters screaming
“Look, I’m not a monster!”

Family
by George Wynn

She has a long day
at the nursing home
for low pay.

She comes home
late at night.
her father sleeps
on her couch.
She scolds him
for poor decisions.

Tomorrow
she will come home
and her brother
will be sleeping
on her couch.
She will scold
him for poor decisions.

The next night
she will come home
and her sister
will be sleeping
on her couch.
She will scold
her for poor decisions.

“My door will always be
open to them,” she cries.

“After all they’re family.”

January Nights
by George Wynn

Way past my bedtime
I feel old and crazy
in my blue slippers
by the reading lamp
unable to take my
face out of another
exotic Somerset Maugham
story with an ending
that stuns and open
to interpretation
and a cure for
my loneliness (at
least for this night).

Hungry Pen
by George Wynn

Pen races across page
fills up empty space
when pen slows down
sometimes it happens

The Next evening
Gladys gave him
the money to buy
a cake saying
“let’s celebrate
the finishing of
your painting."
Zane smiled
and said, “Sounds good.”
He walked off briskly
to a Stockton Street
Italian bakery.
After they finished
munching on cake
and drinking coffee
Zane brewed,
Gladys said
“I apologize for
the nice downstairs.”

“no harm done,” said Zane.
“I’ve had rats
for company
sleeping in more than
downtown alley.”
She gave a slight grin.
“I bet you have.”
It was to be one of
their last happy moments.
Gladys grew weaker
and weaker as the months
passed. Once she received
the diagnosis of pancreatic
Cancer, the disease
overwhelmed her frail body.
She passed on soon afterwards.
Her relatives were greedy
for her property
and ice cold towards Zane,
and he’d gotten it right after
many a sleepless night in the basement.
He was satisfied.

Zane showed his painting to Gladys.

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pine needles or leaves,
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Zane showed his painting to Gladys.
She writes: “In the picture I took, Angelic Supernatural Light flows from it! Her Judy Jones took this photograph of Mother Teresa’s Chapel in San Francisco. little bro and only our love remains you know morrows not promised your last luv like each second’s your last

my blood curdling screams opened heaven’s doors sending healing angels to my side may my weary soul’s tears open hardened hearts to feel wallow in life hug until you can hug no mo give like you never did before make each soul you meet believe they are god’s finest masterpiece luv like each second’s your last

tenderloin by Jan Steckel You savor T-bone. Poodle wolfs ground kidneys. Panting muzzle, lolling tongue longer than life. Hunger’s hot breath. You can hardly bear the dog’s eyes. How will you carry your rare steak past the woman who sleeps under the overpass? by Peter Marin Ark of Loneliness New York by Peter Marin Filing in, one by one, as if into an ark of loneliness, out of the rain the shelter, its gray emptiness anchored at the bottom by green cots arranged in rows, boots tucked under, men asleep, rocked on the surface of watery dreams by a great storm never to end.

by Judy Jones sippin’ my morn brew when medical examiner gave me a ring we have your baby bros remains and callin’ to inform you my blood curdling screams opened heaven’s doors sending healing angels to my side may my weary soul’s tears open hardened hearts to feel wallow in life hug until you can hug no mo give like you never did before make each soul you meet believe they are god’s finest masterpiece luv like each second’s your last

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