

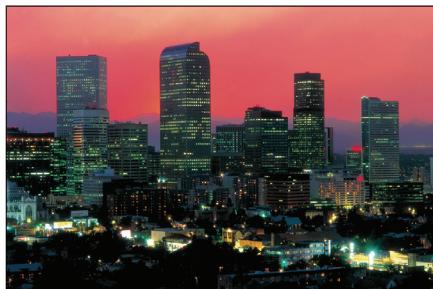
DENVER TO HOMELESS: "GET LOST"

Next month the Democratic National Convention will be descending on Denver, and 20,000 delegates, politicians and their aides will come to Denver to decide who will be the next Democratic Presidential Candidate, of course Obama is already the person they're going to pick, but that's not going to deter them from spending a ton of money and what amounts to a giant party. There will be fundraisers, cocktail parties, and grand galas. One thing that will be missing is the homeless.

The City of Denver, in an effort to sanitize the image of the mile high city, will be moving big screen TVs into homeless shelters and keeping the shelters open 24-hours a day. The city is also planning on opening emergency and cold-weather shelters to basically intern the homeless for the course of the convention. The city is even going as far as getting the homeless tickets to the museums, movies, and even the zoo to keep them out of sight and out of mind.

Rumors have persisted that the city will be sweeping up and arresting those homeless people that won't cloister themselves in shelters or zoos. Denver panhandler, Ronnie Wand told the Rocky Mountain News in a July 16th article that he expects that he will probably end up in jail for vagrancy during the DNC, and "I don't care."

With the Democrats planning on hiding or worse detaining a whole class of people based on their economic status, its scary to think that they are the "good guys."



BE THE MEDIA!

State of Disunion

PERCENT OF HOMELESS PERSONS nationally that are veterans:

26

PERCENT OF HOMELESS PERSONS locally that are veterans:

36

NUMBER OF SHELTERS in Grand Junction:

2

PERCENT OF HOMELESS PERSONS nationally that are African American:

49

NUMBER OF AMERICANS that are estimated to experience homelessness in any given year:

3,500,000

PERCENT OF THE ADULT POPULATION nationally that are veterans:

11

PERCENT OF HOMELESS PERSONS that are families:

41

NUMBER OF DOLLARS area homeless 'shelters' charge for a night of shelter:

3

PERCENT OF THE GENERAL POPULATION nationally that are African American:

12.8

PERCENT OF JOBS nationally that don't pay a living wage:

74

* Sources for the State of Disunion can be found at www.gjredpill.org

CALL TO ACTION

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GRAND JUNCTION,
COLORADO

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW THE TRUTH TAKE

The Red Pill



JULY 2008

VOL. 6 NO. 10

How would you live if you found yourself without a home? How would you survive? Where would you sleep? Where would you eat? Where would you go to the bathroom? Where would you shower? How would you get a job without an address or a phone? Do you think that it could never happen to you? Fact is that anyone, anywhere, can become

HOMELESS

GRAND JUNCTION'S WAR AGAINST THE HOMELESS

Chis spring and summer has seen a massive push by the City of Grand Junction to evict homeless camps along the Colorado River. Dozens of camps have been evicted. One source I spoke with said that he had been evicted from five different camps this spring and summer.

The city has had a policy since 2000 of clearing out homeless encampments in the spring, but this year the city "has been coming down harder,"

The raids on homeless camps is just the tip of a larger campaign by the city to make life harder for homeless in Grand Junction.

On April 21st, Carl, a 37 year native of the Grand Valley, was given a ticket while helping a friend move his camp. Carl's friend had been contacted by the police and was told that he had one hour to move camp. "After half an hour they came back and started handing out tickets."

Mark doesn't look homeless. He's clean shaven and he's dressed business casual. "Just because we're down here living in a tent don't mean that we want to be here forever. Piling on tickets just makes it harder to get on your feet." Mark said. Mark was forced to move his camp to BLM land after police told him and his campmates to beat it.

Mark's girlfriend added that she's "so stressed about getting kicked out [of their current camp by the police] it's hard to work and hold down a job."

Dodi has been homeless for two years. She and nine others have a camp just outside of city limits. In May, GJPD officers and a single Mesa County Sheriff came out to their camp and issued three tickets and told the occupants to vacate the area. "They haven't come back," said Dodi. "I'm not worried, people have been living there for 20-30 years. Since May, the Mesa County Sheriff's Department has been out to Dodi's camp a couple of times for unrelated calls and have always been polite. "They told us 'you guys keep a good camp,'" said Dodi. "The Sheriff has always been cool, they're [the city] the ones that hate our guts."

"I've lived in town for 37 years, and the City Council, Mayor and the city police have an unwritten policy for the poor and homeless and in the past Mexicans: If you're rich, the police and city is here to serve and protect, and if your poor they're here to harm and harass," said Carl.

The City has stated that they want to run the homeless out of Whitman Park and has already taken steps in that direction. In a November 20th, 2007 article The Free Press reported that one of

the stated goals of the proposed \$98 million Fire/Police Safety Building is to 'reclaim' Whitman Park from the 'transients'. The \$98 million building is to be constructed adjacent to Whitman Park. The architect of the project, Dennis Humphries, said, "To help reclaim that lost piece will benefit (the city) and the citizens of Grand Junction." Then Mayor Jim Doody was reported as saying "I think it's a great opportunity to reclaim it [Whitman Park]."

Two weeks ago the City locked up the bathrooms and turned off the water fountain-further limiting the homeless' access to clean water, and further criminalizing the homeless who now have no legal place to go to the restroom. It could be argued this is their first step towards 'reclaiming' Whitman Park.

The City, Grand Junction Downtown Partnership, Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce, and others have all teamed up for the "Giving Spare Change Won't Make a Change" campaign, which encourages people to give to local shelters and charities rather than give panhandlers cash. What they fail to tell anyone is that it costs \$3 a night to stay at either the Mission or at the Homeward Bound North Avenue Shelter. These people need to come up with \$3 every day just to insure that they have a place to stay, but these signs continue to stand on the prominent 'spanging' corners throughout the city.

Attacks on the places where homeless people camp, sleep, congregate, and earn a few bucks, is a coordinated campaign to run the homeless out of town and amounts to Class War against those among us who have the least.

EVERY MONDAY • 6:00PM

A Voice of Reason, the local peace group meets to organize local actions to end the war in Iraq.

For more info call 245-3720

EVERY MONDAY • 7PM

A yet-to-be-named youth activist group meets to change the world and encourage youth participation.

The Bistro on 15th and Chipeta
Grand Junction, CO

A WALK THROUGH "STATUS-SYMBOL LAND"

Coday I have the displeasure of doing some canvassing in a quintessential American "ticky-tack" subdivision. It has been a long while since I've been in one of these places. Being more aware now of different ways of living, and having seen cooperative households and relatively colorful blocks like the one I live on, I am truly repulsed this time around. It's amazing to me that people who have options as far as housing goes would choose to live here. How has it happened that developers who build places like these can even make a profit in America, let alone flourish?

One thing that strikes me is how quiet it is here, even for a hot Saturday afternoon. There are no voices, no children outside. The sun beats down on white sidewalks and pale green lawns. Driveway basketball hoops are idle, and the one park area with its picnic shelter and kids' play area is empty. Of course it's hot out, temperatures in the 90s, but the overall atmosphere of the place makes me wonder if the park is used at all, in the evenings or otherwise.

The only people outside are mowing their all-American lawn or shuffling stuff around in a garage. A guy in a pickup comes by; he and the guy in the garage roll out a motorbike and drive off with it to play. They do their playing in the outside world somewhere; they certainly don't do it here.

I understand the phrase "status-symbol land" from the song "Pleasant Valley Sunday" better now. Every house here has

its similar prim landscaping, with its lawn, mulched tree, and gravel trim. Nobody plays on these lawns or sits under the trees; they're just there to occupy the space and denote territory. Every house has its shiny pickup on the gently sloping driveway.

This neighborhood, if you could call it that, has a clear class identity. Everyone makes about the same income, owns a shiny pickup, a lawn mower, and a microwave, and has satellite TV. Does everyone think the same as well? Do they care what goes on in the outside world? It would seem not, most of the few people who are at home show little interest in or knowledge of the election races I'm promoting.

Strangely, I sigh with approval upon seeing a house with an unkempt lawn, some unruly, liberated flowers and a few weeds. It reminds me of the landscape as it might have been before this place was built, of the trees and the other vegetation and life that were there, even in a high desert such as ours. In their place is a manmade, artificial, concrete-and-fertilizer wasteland more barren and lifeless than whatever was there before. Every tree is placed deliberately, crudely, exactly in the middle of a plot of grass, and casts a stiff shadow below it. These trees look as artificial as everything else. Nothing I would sit under; it's just part of the trim.

House-like structures, yes. Air-conditioned shelters, of course. But could these really be called homes?•

"JESUS" FROM PAGE SEVEN

of the man with the sign begging for change. Sure, I realize that the Gospels are only four books in the biblical canon, but what other books could be more important than first hand accounts of the life and works of the person you call a savior? If you believe Jesus to have been perfect, and that he is the embodiment of who we should all strive to be, how can you refute the legitimacy of what he said, even using other scriptures from the old or new testament? Shouldn't the way he lived trump all other teachings? How can so many who claim to be the servants of a man they believe died unjustly

on a cross deal so unjustly with those who share many of his circumstances? How can they be blind enough not to see the ways in which they behave just like the Pharisees and the Sadducees, chained to their physical comforts and fear of change? I say that the ones who in streets cast out their fellow humans from their hearts as they proclaim the name of love in the halls of their worship are the same that crucified Christ before and are those that will crucify him again. Amen.♦

RED PILL LOCATIONS

You can pick up your copy of The Red Pill at the following locations: Planet 9, Heart of the Dragon, Third World Imports, Planet Earth, Moe Ping's Kool Things, The Hot Tomato, Kleen Sting, Colorado Java, Contemporary Glass Works, Change Skateboards, Coffee Muggers, Triple Play Records, Pretty Things, Dream Child Entertainment.

Download the Red Pill at: <http://www.gjredpill.org>

Become our friend on myspace.com @ http://www.myspace.com/gjam_theredpill

BACK ON THE RANGE

 Once again we had been on the road for hours, instead of snow drifts piled along the road, we passed ancient worn corrals and abandoned homesteads. The hills were a vibrant green and the valleys were filled with the mewlings of wandering vagabond herds of sheep. Our first stop was at a busy corral where two local ranchers and a Peruvian herder were docking sheep--clipping their ears, cutting off the tails and then ripping out the testicles with their teeth. This was life every spring in the sage brush-covered hills of Northwestern Colorado.

On this trip, instead of finding Nepali herders stashed away in the deep mountains, we found mostly Peruvian men working the herds in 90 degree heat. Sheep docking season is the only time of year where their Patrons (the ranchers) interact with them on more than a once a month basis. Recruited by the company Western Range from their home country, these Peruvian men left hoping to make enough money to return home in style after the end of their 3 year standard contracts, yet the majority of them will never obtain that dream.

The average Peruvian herder makes 720 dollars a month, which comes out to about 8640 dollars a year. The official U.S. poverty line for a family of one is 10,400 dollars a year. Herding sheep is a brutal job, filled with 12 to 15 hour days year-round with no days off. Except for the lamb docking season, these men ride the range alone with nothing more than a herd of sheep, a couple of dogs and a horse or two for company.

The abuse that these men must put up with by their employers borders on the sadistic at times. A Westword article written by Stuart Steers in 2001 shows a lack of food and water, beatings, and verbal abuse (<http://www.>



westword.com/2001-02-01/news/meaner-pastures/). If a herder stands up for himself, he can be dropped off at an immigration office with no money and nothing to show for his dedicated back breaking labor. This recently happened within the last week when the Peroulis family (who have already been found guilty of abuse once by the federal government) dropped off a

Mr. Amador Inga Aquino with only 600 dollars in his pocket at the office of senior special agent with ICE, David Smith. Mr. Peroulis claimed he had caught his herder poaching, but Justin Pallock, with the Division of Wildlife, found no wrong doing in the case and Mr. Smith put Mr. Aquino up in a hotel until

he could receive legal aid. Imagine working for two years then being abandoned with only 600 dollars in your pocket, thousands of miles away from your home and loved ones.



Back on the range, the loneliness and sadness seeping from these men's eyes was heart wrenching. Loyal to their herds and the work, they gave up their families, lured to a job wandering the wilderness of Colorado and Wyoming, hoping to make a better life for their loved ones thousands of miles away. At least one immigrant sheepherder dies a year in Colorado and Wyoming,

either from the horrific winter storms or through accidents or tick bites. They receive a minuscule amount of money for their labor and endure abuse despite their dedication.

To see the mini-documentary of this trip and interviews with some of these herders, please check out our website, www.gjredpill.org or you can also find the video on youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2Ws9vCFd7I>.

GET INVOLVED

There are a lot of ways to volunteer or donate to help the homeless here in the Grand Valley: Soup Kitchen 243-0091, Catholic Outreach 241-3658, Community Homeless Shelter 256-9424. Rescue Mission 243-4230, and don't rule out heading to the park to give people food, work, camping gear, or clothes yourself.

HOMELESS IN HELL

Homeless In Hell is a regular blog by Lori McCauley. Her blog provides moving, compassionate profiles of homeless people in the Grand Valley. Check *Homeless in Hell* at: www.myspace.com/lorimccauley. Many of McCauley's great photos grace this issue.

 Normally, my weekly blog concerns the homeless. This week it's about me, however, who isn't homeless but came very close to it last week.

I had been rooming with a "friend" from work for about four months. I originally moved in because the housing cost in Grand Junction has skyrocketed. For example, a 3-bedroom townhouse rents for around \$1500 monthly. My goal moving in with this friend was to save money, and to buy a home in Denver soon.

My son and I moved in with this friend and her family in early November. My roommate had three daughters living with her, one of whom had a small baby herself, and a live-in teenage boyfriend. It was definitely a full household. We shared a room, sleeping on bunkbeds, thinking that it was great because I would save a fortune and, at the same time help my friend, who was having financial difficulties at the time (her husband had been incarcerated).

Within this time, my roommate found the "love of her life" and has since decided to move him in and kick me out. She gave me nine days notice, knowing that I had been living paycheck to paycheck. She also knew that I had not saved any money due to the huge grocery bill (half of which I insanely paid for her kids to eat). I was essentially supporting not just myself and my son while living there, but the eating habits of her three children, and the teenage boyfriend. I was paying anywhere between 30%-50% of the grocery bill, which was way too much. I was also giving her a portion of the rent she paid and a percentage of the utilities. Paying off old bills to improve my credit (to buy my house) was not feasible during this time, and I had less money than when I was paying full rent before in my townhouse.

In a panic, I wasn't sure how I was going to come up with \$3000 in nine days to find a place to live. I found it very ironic that others were joking, "Well, maybe she can live on the Point with the rest of her new friends," meaning the homeless. True, I had



Courtesy of Homeless in Hell blog.

made some new and interesting homeless friends, but was not looking to join the ranks.

I was really scared. I had never been in a place where I thought I wouldn't have a home. Thankfully, I found who my true friends were and have since moved. I only purchase groceries for myself and my son, and the rent is even cheaper than it was with her. I have also been able to pay off some bills and have actively renewed my goal of buying my own home.

I wrote this for all of you who think that being homeless is a black-and-white issue. Statements like "They just don't want to work" or "They could find a job if they really wanted to" are just ignorant when you look at my situation. I am educated, work, have a decent wage, and come from a very comfortable background. Yet, there I was, almost in the same situation as the people I have been profiling, with no roof over my head, wondering how this could've happened. I have learned valuable lessons from this, ones of friendship, independence, and compassion.

Thank you to those that have shown these to me. You know who you are. •

Wednesday, August 6th, 2008 • 5PM

Drinking Liberally Get together

Coffee Muggers
644 Main St. Grand Junction, CO

Kannah Creek Brewing
12th and Walnut, Grand Junction, CO

HOMELESSNESS: REAGAN'S TRUE LEGACY

Homelessness, did not exist to the extent that is does now before the Reagan years. Certainly there were skid row bums and drunks, but the drunks had well funded detox centers to go to. And there certainly were not the homeless children we have today. Today, 40% of homeless people are children under the age of 18.

Soup kitchens and homeless shelters had not been seen since the Hoover days of the 30s, until Reagan took office. What went wrong? The answer goes far beyond bad luck or bad timing. It was bad policy.

Reagan was notorious as a strike buster and hated unions. Real wages took a nosedive during his eight year reign, and the value of the minimum wage dropped 16%. Even when people who are working are making less money, there are consequences. One of the consequences is that people living on the edge slipped into near permanent poverty.

The single greatest crime of the Reagan era was probably the slashing of the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) budget from \$32.2 billion in 1980 to \$7.5 billion in 1988. Rental vouchers, low income housing and construction of low income properties plummeted in this 8 year period. People had to go somewhere, and for many, that meant the streets.

Reagan also slashed unemployment, disability, food stamps and aid to families with dependent children. All of these cuts took a horrific toll on the American poor. Drug treatment programs discontinued due to lack of funding—an abomination considering the ongoing crack epidemic, and Nancy Reagan's hypocritical "Just Say No" program.

Forty five percent of poverty between 1979 and 1988 was directly related to government funding cutbacks. Spending on social programs dropped by an average of 22 billion a year during this time. All of this occurred as wealth for the richest 20 percent of the population skyrocketed.

Reagan also slashed funding for the mentally ill. His plan to de-institutionalize chronically mentally ill people was to build a network of neighborhood clinics to serve the poor mentally ill. The problem was that he never provided funding, just gutted the institutions and never built any clinics. And where exactly were the poor supposed to

sleep between appointments anyways?

So there you have it on the "Great Communicator," Ronald Reagan. Life was good unless you were poor, which became more likely. If you weren't chemically dependent, or if you had kids, you were pretty much left out of the loop.

It is hard for today's youth to understand it, because homelessness is so pervasive nowadays, but there was a time not so long ago when it was mercifully rare. McCain and Obama aren't going to do much to change things either. Largely thanks to one President who turned society on its head, homelessness is here to stay.



Courtesy of Homeless in Hell blog.

Wednesday, August 13th • 7PM

Dr. Bob Bowman, Former Director of "Star Wars," will be speaking on the unseen realities inside Washington D.C. and the "State of our Union" Donations requested.

Moss Performing Arts Center Recital Hall Mesa State College. For more info, call 245-3720



BEGGARS OF LIFE: A HOBO AUTOBIOGRAPHY

—BOOK REVIEW—



Jim Tully's autobiographical novel, *Beggars of Life*, is a straight forward account of an adolescence spent hopping trains, dodging railroad bulls, and tredging through the hobo jungles of early twentieth century America. Originally published in 1924, a

quarter century before the Beats came into prominence, and around the same time Hemingway was publishing his first short stories, *Beggars of Life* eschews both the stringent architecture of Hemingway and the frolicking and occasionally sentimental lyricism of Kerouac, while maintaining their direct hands-on, hard living approach to realism. This unpolished, spare and often uncomfortably immediate form of literary expression Tully developed to match the intense events and people he observed would later be dubbed the hard boiled style."

"Beggars" starts out with a young Tully, son of an Irish ditch digger, sitting on a trestle in St. Mary's, a small Ohio town, talking to a hobo named Bill about riding the rails. Now this isn't your genteel bum of bedraggled illumination taken to life on the back of freight to unlock the secrets of nirvana. Hell no—this is a kid whose eye got knocked out in Arkansas and now ties a patch over the empty socket with a shoe string. The next tramp Tully recounts is an old drunk at the end of the trail who likes to tell about books to strangers and carries Voltaire in his pocket. Not exactly Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarity. Anyways, Young Jim gets some basic tips about punks and Yeggs then decides to split. First place he goes is Muncie, Indiana, where he helps unload the train in exchange for the ride he just received. He has dreams of making it as a writer and proving his worth to all the people in his home town. He gets a little homesick and reminisces about his first love Edna, his brothers, sisters, a drunk chain maker and a maniac farmer.

He takes shelter with a bunch of

vagabonds in a shed and a cop pops in. The rovers give him a cup of coffee then he leaves on amiable terms only to return moments later with reinforcements to present Young Jim, or Red as he refers to himself in the book, with his initiatory round-up. First rule: Never trust the cops. After his brief internment, Red finds himself in an attic dormitory of some ancient crone watching a haggard old timer rasp out his last breath.

This is also not Mark Twain. This is an America rarely documented—a bleak underbelly that serves as a shadow of the prosperity above. Like the underground city in Fritz Lang's Metropolis--except real.

Young Red leaves town and finds a job as an assistant to Amy, the beautiful fat girl, a sideshow queen. Then to Chicago to meet up with Bill. Then to Cedar Rapids, where a drifter recounts a botched love affair he had in the Phillipines. Next to Omaha, then a town called Mabee. The inexperienced protagonist learns to dodge dicks, gets paid to vote for two candidates who are running against each other, almost dies of fever, watches men get senselessly beaten, gets bully, rides the rods under the train, befriends a safe cracker named Oklahoma Red only to watch him meet his doom while attempting to jump a train, then witnesses the lynching of a black man.

Tully pulls no punches depicting things as he experienced them and passing no ethical judgement upon them or the people he meets. He is not a moralist. He does not cry out for some kind of solution to poverty nor does he revile the bourgeois. Instead, he gives an honest account of the hardships and camaraderie of scatterlings and wanderers who live in a manner that has little changed in the last one hundred years. Like I said, this isn't ?, nor is it a construction of pared essentialism. It's a truthfully episodic telling of a fragmented culture hiding within an much larger, even more disassociated society. If you're into understanding humanity, you might want to give this book a shot•

AUGUST 24th-28th & SEPTEMBER 1st-4th•DEMOCRATIC & REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

You'd better mark it on your calenders now, and request the time off of work, because at the end of next month, large protests are going to rock Denver and Minneapolis. The DNC is going to be in Denver from Aug. 24-28th and the RNC is going to be in the Twin Cities from September 1st-4th. Check out www.dncdisruption08.org and www.rncwelcomingcommittee.org for more info and updates.

See you in the streets.



MY STORY —THE HOMELESS IN THEIR OWN WORDS—

HMy story is twisted! I'm 34, I have lived in Junction since 2002. I'm a D.J., a student, I work a lot. I have a full-time job. I have seen 38 states and 2 countries. Seen all kinds of walks of life. I'm liberal, I raised myself since the age of 16. I've been sober for the past 11 years. All my life, I've lived on the edge of my seat. Bein' homeless has always been a struggle once yer in it, it's hard to get out, hold a job, go to school, work at a radio station and try to sleep and keep up on assignments with out slippin'. The justice system is fucked up. It's the human spirit against the System. As long as the Government is jacked the poor will always pay the price. Homeless Camps bein' raided every spring, havin' to start over 'cause the police chief is asshole. The city council is another example of ways the homeless is bein' harassed. Out

of 16 years, I've had two apartments. They gave me a sense of peace. A piece of mind. I lost them both due to layoffs. I do landscaping for a living. I've never had the experience of having children, or bein' married. (Guess I'm cursed). Livin' in bigger cities is a ton harder bein' homeless, I can't imagine it.

If I strive to get out of this hole I'm in, I know I can do it. People who know me don't treat me like I'm homeless! They treat me like I'm a real Person with real issues. The hardest time of year to be homeless is winter time, especially during semester finals. In the economy today, if you ain't smart, financially you are one check from bein' homeless.

The shelters here are good to me, but charge \$3 a night. This government is headed for trouble if it keeps goin' the way that it is.

HOUSING BUST HITS GRAND JUNCTION



For months we have heard about the housing bubble bursting with waves of foreclosures sweeping the nation, but here in Western Colorado, our economy appeared insulated by the current oil and gas boom. It seemed like the foreclosures would never hit us.

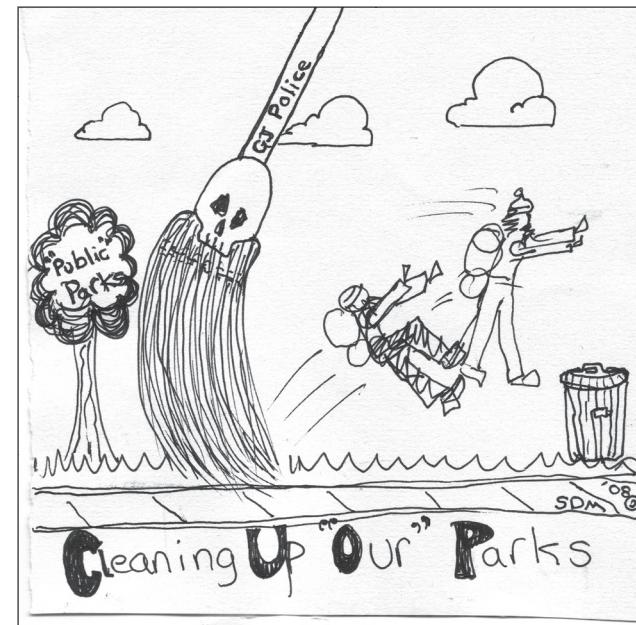
However, buried in the Daily Sentinel, dated July 26th, deep in the classified section under legal notices, in superfine print, were the legal notices for 33 homes that are in foreclosure here in the Grand Valley. In the first half of 2008 there were 230 foreclosures in Mesa County. At that rate there will be 460 foreclosures filings in Mesa County this year. Compare that with 312 foreclosure filings in 2006. That's an increase of 47% in two years.

Thirty-three foreclosures is 33 families with nowhere to go. Some will find the money to stay, some will sell and find a

place to rent, and some won't. Some will move in with family and friends, some will sleep in their cars, some will end up at the area homeless shelters, and some will join the legions of people in soup lines.

There is further evidence that the housing market here in the Grand Valley is cooling off. Up until December there were approximately 500 houses sold a month, for the past 5 months there has only been about 300 houses sold a month, and there are signs of sales slowing even further.

As the economy continues to head south, more and more working class people will be forced out of the bottom, and find themselves living on the streets. It comes down to a refrain that this writer has heard from many homeless people: "Anyone can become homeless, just like that."



Every Friday 6:00PM-7:00PM
A Voice of Reason holds weekly peace vigils to protest the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

7th and Main St. Grand Junction

Upcoming Issues
War on Terror: August 16, Trans/Gay: September 13, Death: October 18th, Consumerism/ Alt. Living: November 15th.

Submissions Welcomed!

JESUS WAS HOMELESS

*I can't say that I love Jesus
But he made some observations
"New Age Leper" by R.E.M.*

Jf Jesus were born today he'd be murdered again and the "Christians", the supposed followers of his doctrines, would be at the head of the line to watch the spectacle. Strange how the "Christians" seem to be the ones who least understand the life that Jesus lead and are typically scared of anything radical, which the person they like to refer to as their "savior" inarguably was. Christ's behavior, as it is recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—the only books in the bible that claim to be direct, eye witness accounts of his years on earth—was a far cry from the anaesthetized, flacid bumbling found in many of today's church halls. He didn't practice the fear mongering techniques used by so many priests in our modern era as a means to gain mind control over their congregations, degrading them into giving as tithe more than any compassionate God would ask. Nor were his methods in any way akin to the covetous jackal-eyed hypocrisy of the televangelist sect (why people still fall for their scams is beyond me);

no, Jesus of Nazareth, for the time when he was preaching, seems to have been a firebrand who understood the notion of solidarity perfectly and lived it. He did not speak from behind some ornate rostrum of expensive mahogany to a crowd of people come only to pat themselves on the back or to terrify themselves to a point where they no longer feel responsible for making up their own minds or using their

own free agency, a behavior which seems anachronous in a land of people who claim to cherish their liberty so much.

Jesus didn't care about the safety of a chapel or a temple and he didn't need the tepid rituals of the priests of his day. In fact, he saw these things as barriers between the people and the actual work that needed to get done. What work? The work of loving our fellow human beings, no matter what the circumstances of their existence maybe, and realizing that we're all in this battle for love together. But of course, I'm no theologian, that's just the way I interpret scriptures like Matthew 6:5: "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." Maybe I missed the point of that one, though. I suppose, since I am a layman, and I don't claim to believe that Christ is the only person who died for all of our sins, it's possible that I'm missing the entire purpose of his teachings in the Gospels, but I can't help but be baffled by all of the nice shiny new trucks in the church parking lots on Sunday, and the gaudy clothes of the preachers and their

acolytes, and the abominable way homeless people are treated on a daily basis when it says so clearly so many times in the teachings these people profess to follow things like "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth" (Matthew 6:19), "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven" (Matthew 19:21) "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into



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the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:23) and "woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation" (Luke 6:24).

Garrish materialism is probably the most obvious flaw among Christians and unbelievers alike, and therefore it's the easiest to point out and address. Afterall, it's symptoms are placed, very intentionally, right before our eyes. Opulence would probably lose most of it's effect and allure otherwise. All I have to say about the lust for objects is this: "And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things entering in, choke the word, and make it unfruitful." (Mark 4:19)

Prejudice against our fellow humans, on the other hand, is something kept in the heart and given voice and expression much less often than materialism and usually only in circumstances where the person harboring the hate feels safe revealing it. Like when the family is loaded together in the pick up coming home from church and mom or dad notices a man standing on the side of the road flying a sign for food and they say to their kids, "Don't give people like that money. They can work for themselves." Or better yet dad leans out the window and screams, "Get a JOB," not knowing anything about the circumstances of the person's life or realizing that it's easier than good Jack Christian thinks it is to end up homeless and without recourse to the basic necessities we should all be entitled to. What about Matthew 25:40, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" then in verse 45 of the same chapter, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." So could it be that by slandering the ones who, in the eyes of our society, are the least—for we all know that the common perspective in our country is that the value of a human is parallel to the amount of money they have and the amount of crap they own—a person is actually slandering Christ? And that by not even making an attempt to understand the person you are prejudging you very well maybe prejudging and dismissing the one you call the Messiah

without a second thought? And what about that old addage, used even in the secular realm, that comes from a scripture in Luke: "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."?

Yes, many of the soup kitchens and shelters in the U.S. are managed by people affiliated with Christianity in some way, and of course, there are people who, on some level, try to live the doctrines contained within the Gospels. Is this the majority of Christians, or is it the majority which teaches their children that the homeless are either wealthy swindlers who have made a fortune by pretending to be a bum or that they're just as able of doing the things that every "normal" person should do, like working a job and owning material possessions, when Jesus himself, during his ministerings, was homeless, and not only was he homeless, he was cast from the cities where he preached and seldom allowed to rest in one spot because the priests and the wealthy in those cities feared his teachings. And why were they afraid of him? Because he preached to the outcasts and misfits, of course. Matthew 8:20: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

Ofcourse it's the obligation of the entire human race to see to it that each person is treated with the dignity and the respect they deserve for being a singular, unique entity in the cosmos, for we are all miracles of sorts. I direct this article at Christians specifically because they have adopted as a title for their religion the name of a man who fought for the poor, the downtrodden and the rejected, yet miss the entire point of how he spent his time on earth, more so, it seems, than those of us who are willing to make a more or less objective study of the things he preached, at least the way it is reported in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Seldom have I seen someone who readily promotes themselves under one of the Christian denominations actually taking the time to ask a homeless person about themselves or actually listening to the story

"JESUS" ON PAGE ELEVEN

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