

what's inside

MORE DELORES

Formerly homeless vendor shares poems and creative writing
Page 13



VENDOR STYLE: A GUIDE

How to spot vendors with *The Bridge*

Page 8 and 9



THROUGH THE LENS

Photographer Dianne Loftis shares her experience

Page 11 and 12

MESSAGE FROM YOUR VENDOR

The Guest: Roommates or Friends?

BY TONI W.

Contributing Homeless Writer

Before my friend asked me to move in with her, I was living with another so-called friend. Her husband went to prison for eight months and he asked me to stay with her. At the time, I was homeless, so I moved in, thanking her and God that I had a house to live in. It was okay there; I slept on the sofa and sometimes on the floor, just for old times' sake.

This friend — she smoked that medicine. She would go in the restroom to smoke when I was around, but I told her she didn't have to do that. And sometimes late at night or early in the morning, I would have to go outside or in the breezeway when she would have company. I didn't have any money, so I helped around the house by cooking and washing dishes. I didn't mind at all, I said.

But one morning something happened. She had figured out that I didn't trust her, and she was right, of course. When she would go through my things and take what she wanted I didn't say anything. What could I say?

Even though it was kind of cold outside, she told me I had to move out tomorrow. Not next month, not next week, but tomorrow.

When I was homeless before, I would go to the V.A. to find cigarette butts. They would usually have some long ones. So I was on my way to the V.A. and I stopped at the emergency room to look at the newspaper. I wasn't there for more than 10 minutes when a security guard came and asked me what I was doing. Not thinking, I said I was just killing time.

Then he asked me to go downstairs with him. I went, and they started to make a big deal out of it all. After a while, I got upset, especially considering that I am a veteran. I started to curse him and his whole family. Then they decided to call the Memphis Police to come and get me.

I was under arrest for "criminal trespassing." I was in jail for two days until a friend finally came and bailed me out. I suppose I wouldn't have been there at all had I kept my mouth shut.

The next day, I came back to court, pleaded not guilty and took the case upstairs to the grand jury. The public defender told me that they would get in touch, but it has been over a year now. The day after my case, a friend and I were at the camp where we lived and three police cars drove up to us and said they were checking IDs. They only checked my ID, didn't even bother with my friend's.

I know they are supposed to have probable cause or a warrant to check or search you, but they had neither. I know they were there be-



UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER

FINDING A TRUE FRIEND: The difference between Toni's homeless life and her current life is striking.

cause of that case I took to the grand jury.

But look at God. Soon after, another friend, a real friend, asked me to move in with her. I asked her husband if it was alright and he said it was his wife's decision, so I accepted their offer and I've been living there ever since.

I've been here for four months now. We share our food stamps and what little money we have. The lights have been turned off, but we use candles instead. I also have my own room, so we have our privacy.

I like living with them. They go to bed early and don't drink much. Just on the weekends, like I do. They don't go to the club and stay out all night. I'm the one who goes out every once in a while and comes back the next morning. I never stay out too late because I don't want to bother them. I try to do unto others as I would like for them to do unto me.

We take turns washing dishes and cleaning up the kitchen. I really like living with them because they are so easy to get along with. Her

husband is a loner. He's no trouble at all. He just works and sleeps during the week. On the weekend, he might go out to eat or hang around with his workmates.

The lights are off, so there's no alarm to wake him up at three in the morning. I suppose the Good Lord wakes him up. Then he has to walk all the way to Lamar to catch the bus for work. And now he has a second job working with a friend of his, fixing up houses. I say to myself he's a good man. At this point, I don't think I could do what he does. But I can see the Lord blessing us all the time.

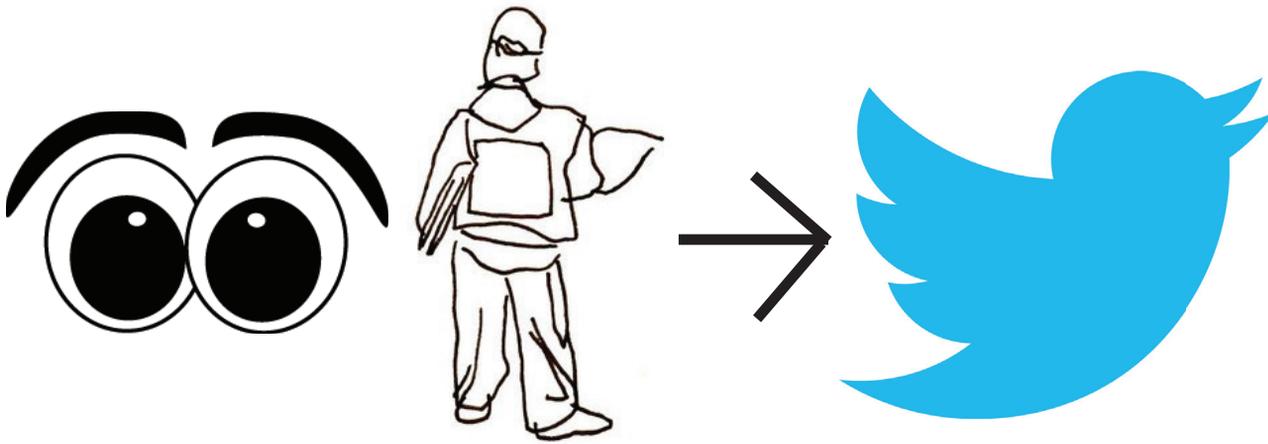
It gets a little hot in my room in the summer. In the winter, it was cold and I would lie under 10 blankets to feel alright. Either way, it beats living outside and sleeping on the ground. When I was living outside and it rained, everything would get wet: my clothes, my shoes.

I couldn't even find any dry cigarette butts on the ground.

Want your name in the paper?

Tweet us a vendor!

If you see a vendor of The Bridge around Memphis, take a location-tagged picture of him/her and tweet it to us @thebridgepaper! We'll print your name and possibly your photo in the next issue of The Bridge.



thebridge

Staff of *The Bridge*

Editor in Chief
Chloe Bryan

Head Copy Editor
Jamie Young

Design Editor
Sam Clark

Art Director
Monique Hagler

Homeless Editor
Aaron Banks

Editorial Policy

The Bridge is a monthly publication dedicated to issues of homelessness in Memphis, TN. It is run by volunteers and is unaffiliated with any religious or political organization.

All articles in *The Bridge* are approved by the Editor in Chief and directors. However, specially-labeled pieces from outside groups or contributing writers may appear and do not necessarily represent the views of *The Bridge* editors and staff nor do they constitute an endorsement.

The Bridge welcomes letters from all walks of the Memphis community. Letters to the editor should be sent to editor@thememphisbridge.com and may be edited for content.

Want to get involved?

How to Contact *The Bridge*

The Bridge is a publication by the Memphis Street Newspaper Organization. The Memphis Street Newspaper Organization is a non-profit and exists purely to provide reliable income for those with experiences of homelessness and also to raise awareness about issues of homelessness in the larger community.

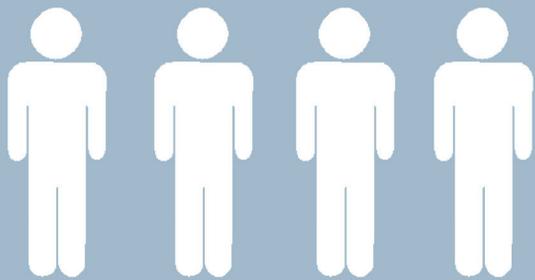
For advertising-related requests, please contact:
advertising@thememphisbridge.com

If you'd like to make a donation to *The Bridge*, please send donations to:
Memphis Street Newspaper Organization
2000 North Parkway, Rhodes Box 1630,
Memphis, TN 38112

Or contact:
donations@thememphisbridge.com

For more information, please contact:
info@thememphisbridge.com
Twitter: @thebridgepaper
Instagram: @thebridgepaper
Facebook.com/TheMemphisBridge

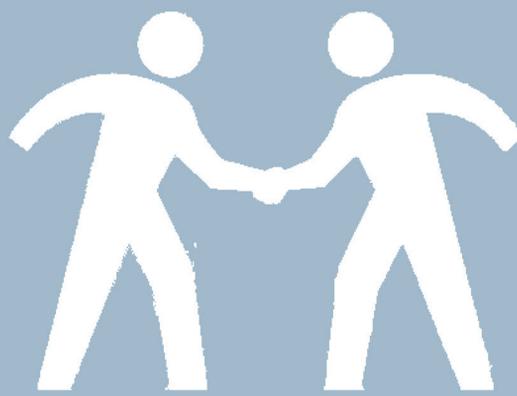
HOW IT WORKS: VENDOR TRAINING



People who have had an
**EXPERIENCE WITH
HOMELESSNESS**
come to a weekly
training session



Each vendor
will receive a
**BADGE &
20 FREE**
papers



After a brief interview,
they are given the skills to
SELL THE BRIDGE

Papers can be sold on
at local events and
**THE STREETS \$1
FOR ONLY \$1**

*Additional papers can be purchased for \$0.25.
Vendors that buy certain amounts of papers are rewarded with incentives
such as messenger bags and all-day bus passes.*

Like *The Bridge*?

We want to know more about you!
 Help us by taking our two-minute survey and you could win a

**\$50 gift card
 to Central BBQ!**

Visit tinyurl.com/bridgethegapmemphis



September Letter from the Editor

BY CHLOE BRYAN
Editor in Chief

Well, here you are. You're holding *The Bridge*. Where'd you buy it? On Highland, off Sam Cooper? Maybe you found it in Cooper Young. Or at a summer festival. Which vendor did you find? Was it CeeCee? André?

How'd you hear about *The Bridge*? From a friend? On-line? In another newspaper? It could have been almost anywhere – *The Bridge* has been getting a lot of attention lately. I spent my summer in Ann Arbor, Michigan this year. One night, a friend of a friend told me that she'd heard about *The Bridge* from an online news outlet. "Are you really all college students?" she asked.

This question seemed odd. Of course, I appreciate any interest in *The Bridge*. But as a new editor, I had just really immersed myself in the paper's content – the physical strain, the spiritual turmoil, the poetry. And she wanted to know how old I was?

On page 10 of this issue, photographer Dianne Loftis wonders if all the recent attention surrounding *The Bridge* stems from its focus on homelessness or from the young average age of its staff. I think the latter is truer than we'd like to admit. *The Bridge's* back-story is admittedly a feel-good one – two college students, friends, beat the damning odds against starting a successful nonprofit.

This is an important, encouraging story, particularly for other college students. And it's a tale that needs to be told. However, as Dianne explains, it is often recounted at the expense of *The Bridge's* most important narratives – those of the vendors and the homeless contributors. When *The Bridge* is spotlighted, these stories often get lost in the shuffle.

Luckily, these stories are now resting in your hands. And that means that your responsibility as a reader is a little different than you may have thought. You've bought this paper. You've paid a dollar. Thank you so much – we appreciate you more than you know.

Now your job is to read.

Volunteer Odyssey is an immersive volunteering opportunity for job-seeking professionals. Over the course of one week, each individual experiences seven volunteer opportunities and documents their adventure through a series of online blogs. Follow the journey or start your own!

Twitter: @VolOdyssey
Facebook: Volunteer Odyssey
Website: www.volunteerodyssey.com
Email: info@volunteerodyssey.com

VOLUNTEER ODYSSEY

**VOLUNTEER
 ODYSSEY**

VO

**Stand Out.
 Give Back.**

Burn the House Down

BY TONI W.

Formerly Homeless Writer

This young man who burned his mother's house down: why did he do that? Was he angry with his mother, with society, or was he angry at both? His mother and father conceived him, but who raised him? Was it society or was it his parents? If it was this world that raised him, the young man was only doing what he has been taught by the television

and the radio. He couldn't help himself.

If he was raised by his parents, I think it was their fault. The Word of God says to bring up a child in the nourishment and admiration of the Lord so he will not venture far from the Word. If this young man's parents didn't bring him up in the Word of God, then this is their fault. He is what his parents made, so he behaves according to what he was taught by his parents.

If he instead learned from this world, which is

nothing but peer pressure and the news media, then he was a recipient of Satan the Devil. When a child is born, he is like a ball of clay; you, the parents, and this world can shape him any way you want. If the parents fail, they allow their child to be raised by Satan, which is this world.

Actually, he never had a chance. It was only a matter of time before he did something like this.

Sweet Tea and Meatloaf

by Cynthia D. Crawford/*Formerly Homeless Writer*

Crumble your ground chuck into a bowl
Salt and black pepper as little or as much as you please
Crack one or two eggs over the top
Crumble seven to ten saltine crackers and mix 'em in
Just a taste of seasoned salt
Chop and de-seed one whole bell pepper
Dice an onion. Careful so the tears don't fall in your bowl
Now, believe it or not, get out your shredded cheese --
Eight ounces is enough -- along with a half-can of tomato sauce
With bare hands, mix everything together
It can be soothing as the ingredients squish between your fingers
Plop everything in a baking pan and top it with the rest of your tomato sauce
Bake it all about 45 minutes to an hour at 350 degrees
While that cooks, take out your potatoes to wash and rinse
Leave the potato skins on to boil
Splash, splash, splash the potatoes into your pot and boil on high
Your meatloaf and potatoes should finish at about the same time
Turn the oven off and let your meatloaf cool inside
At this point, the potato skins will be partially falling off
Take a masher or fork and hand smash your potatoes
Add to your taste butter, salt and black pepper
Now my secret ingredient,
½ cup to a cup of mayo will make 'em smooth and creamy
Boil a can of green beans and butter
Bake your sourdough rolls with, yes, butter for 10 to 15 minutes
Make your plate and sit back with a glass of sweet tea
Almost like heaven to me



BLANK SLATE: Toni's childhood troubles led to a sinful lifestyle later on.

UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER

The Walking Homeless

BY EDWARD SHANDREW

Currently Homeless Writer

When you think of zombies, you think of "The Undead." But my analogy is that homeless persons are like zombies too. Just think of it: we're always in groups looking for food, walking slowly (due to heavy backpacks). Some, like me, are limping due to sore knees or feet. The police don't let us sleep, day or night.

I've been in Memphis for one month and three weeks and I see no end. It all started when I got off a Greyhound bus around 10 p.m. and walked down Airways Blvd. through a bad neighborhood. I arrived at a Shell gas station, bought some water, and had just proceeded outside when a man called me over. I had a bad feeling about it, but I walked towards him.

"Did you just get off the Greyhound?" he said.

"Yes," I replied.

"I can put you up for a while," he said, but I quickly declined. He yelled something toward another man in a white pickup. I hadn't noticed him before. I was worried, so I said I was going to a friend's house down

the road. That was a lie, but I had to get away.

I walked on for miles and miles, watching behind me. I arrived at a shopping center past the Kellogg Factory, headed to the back, and tried to sleep, but the mosquitoes were bad. I finally crashed, but I woke up to someone talking. I thought it was a cop, so I replied, "Yes, sir?" Then I realized it was security from the shopping center. He was talking to someone on the phone.

When he heard me, he grabbed a gun from his holster. "Don't move," he said.

I told him I was homeless and unarmed. He was trembling, but I was mortified. His hands were shaking, and I knew that this was it. I'm dead.

"Grab your stuff and run as fast as you can," he said. So that's what I did.

I then walked over a bridge and went to a TA. That's a truck stop. I had only \$12 to my name. I went inside and asked how much it was for a shower. It was \$10, so that only left me with two bucks. It helped relieve my bug bites a little.

I walked all night with no sleep until I found a

church. I stood by it, asking God for help and salvation. I waited until the church opened up. When it did, a man drove up and went inside. I knocked. No answer. I knocked once more. Same thing.

I decided to take my last two bucks and ride the bus to a better neighborhood. So that's what I did. I walked to the Union Mission and stayed there for five nights. Once my five nights were up, I decided to sleep downtown.

I get woken up at least two times a week. I'm tired and sore in my knees. I have to stand in lines to eat -- that and walking are why my knees are sore. People always cut in line. I can be the first in line, but I'm second or third in the door. It's not fair that I sometimes wait two hours before the doors open and I'm still last. I'm a small guy, so I don't say anything.

I went to the doctor about my knee. He gave me medicine and told me I could be 14 pounds heavier and still be underweight. I try to eat, but some try to kill people with kindness.

I truly think God has a plan for me here, so I'll stay until it's time for me to go.

Baking Bread, Building Bridges

BY NATALIE CIOCCA

Contributing Writer

Like most people, I love bread. This classic food staple makes it into most of my meals, fostering my perhaps excessive consumption of sandwiches. Honestly, it makes me a little bit uncomfortable to imagine a life without 24/7 access to bread. Then I think about the thousands of homeless and hungry Memphians who live their days unsure of when, where, and if they will have their next meal. This sobering truth quickly shuts me up. According to a Mid-South Food Bank study¹, an overwhelming 21.2 percent of the Memphis citizens in the Metropolitan Statistical Area are “food insecure,” meaning that in the past year they were generally unsure about where they would find their next meal. A Gallup Survey² ranked Memphis as the nation’s hungriest city back in 2010, and that label certainly lingers today.

Despite these overwhelming statistics, local organizations continue their hard work in Memphis’ fight against hunger. Well-known food charities such as the Mid-South Food Bank and MIFA remain vital resources. However, their chemically-canned and preservative-packed goods offer people little nutritional value. Thanks to Panera Bread, “food-insecure” Memphians are given the chance to add fresh bread to their often otherwise-stale diets. Since Panera was founded in 1987, its bakeries have donated their daily-made leftover bread to numerous homeless and hungry populations.

Around five years ago, Cordova welcomed Panera Bread to Trinity Commons, making it the first of Memphis proper’s four locations. Bakery manager Mike Theil explains that although the amount of extra bakery products fluctuates, plenty of bread remains uneaten and ready for donation by the day’s end. Every Panera bakery connects with local non-prof-

it organizations through which needy populations receive the donated food. Cordova’s Panera partners with Cordova’s Memphis Athletic Ministries (MAMS) and Advent Presbyterian Church, just to name a few, who pick up and distribute the bread donations to very grateful and hungry Memphians. Recipients can pick up the donations at multiple locations, including Memphis Union Mission.

Any human blessed with working taste buds and no gluten allergy (*update: a gluten-free menu does exist!) can easily enjoy Panera’s delicious bread, which the restaurants’ bakers make daily from scratch.

Now imagine the experience had by fellow hungry citizens when they see, smell, and especially eat a wholesome piece of Panera’s bread. In a sense, these Memphians who are unable to choose, let alone buy, their own meals have the chance to connect with the larger Memphis community by sharing the simple yet meaningful act of eating good bread. Such donations give our needy neighbors a uniquely dignified eating experience that food charities alone cannot.

Panera Bread’s generous work sets an ambitious charitable standard that other food franchises should follow. In addition to homelessness and hunger, this bakery raises awareness for the environment by challenging the restaurant industry’s long-lived cycle of wasting perfectly good food. Hopefully other local food franchises will follow suit by taking time to donate their leftovers to those in need. Panera Bread Foundation funds a nonprofit entity, Panera Cares® community cafe, which Memphis does not have, but should. In these locations, Panera feeds any person who walks through the door, regardless of his or her ability to pay. This generous expenditure not only raises hunger awareness, but also broadens their interaction.

These cafes can be self-sustainable. In order to keep



SAMANTHA CELERA / Photographer

GOOD FOR ALL: Panera’s daily donation of its leftover bread helps food-insecure individuals without costing the company.

the business’s food production and consumption in balance, they only successfully function in areas where both the rich and penniless regularly cross paths. Perhaps if more restaurants emulated Panera, homeless and hungry individuals would feel more comfortable alongside sheltered patrons, which would help ensure that such a cafe would safely run and thrive in Memphis. Active and conscientious participation by more community breadwinners could make this happen. Panera’s donations inspire communication between the hungry and businesses that care, all the while helping Memphis bridge the gap between food insecurity and security for deserving citizens.

¹ http://www.midsouthfoodbank.org/assets/1869/a_taste_of_hunger_resource_guide_2012.pdf

² <http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/2010/mar/30/going-without/>

Sideways Media is a Memphis, Tennessee-based web development company that specializes in AFFORDABLE Web, SEO, social media and strategic online marketing services. We assist clients in the development of websites that are the hub of your marketing efforts, both online and offline. Every organization is unique, but after nearly 12 years of web development, we have learned that there are some common needs that require web solutions that are integrated, proven, and effective for your business. Please visit <http://www.sidewaysphotos.com> to find out more!



The Radical

BY ALLEN HOORN

Contributing Writer

“The property of this country is concentrated in very few hands. The wealthy employ the majority of the people as servants, manufacturers, tradesmen, and other types of laborers. At the bottom of all of these classes comes the most numerous classes; the class made up of the poor who cannot find suitable work by which to support their own existence.”

Surely, the commentary above comes from the journal of some radically-minded thinker of the early 20th century preaching Bolshevism, Marxism, or the teachings of some other socialist philosopher to drum up support for their proletariat movement? Continuing to read the document from which this thought is taken further bolsters the assumption that the author was probably Marx himself.

“Whenever there is in any country, uncultivated lands and unemployed poor, it is clear that the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right. The earth is given as a common stock for man to labor and live on.”

The author clearly believes the country he is observing allocates their property unfairly and effectively shuts out much of the lower class in what he calls a violation of natural rights. These must be the musings of a counter-culture revolutionary hellbent on destroying the establishment.

If this is the impression you take away from these thoughts, you are halfway right. They are the musings of a radical and revolutionary, but they are not the musings of a socialist or Marxist. These are the thoughts shared by Thomas Jefferson in a letter to John Jay in 1785 while serving as the ambassador to France for the newly-formed United States.

As Jefferson journeyed around the French countryside before the French Revolution, he observed the plight of the poor. His countrymen, our Founding

Fathers, had begun to discuss forming a new government and writing a Constitution. Even though he was on the other side of the ocean, Jefferson frequently commented on the problems he wanted to avoid in the development of the new country.

One of the gravest issues facing the French monarchy during this time was the great disparity between the wealthy and the poor. As the ranks of the poor grew, and the opportunities to rise out of poverty shrank, the condition of the French state became less and less settled. While the wealthy landowners in France enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle, the working and unemployed poor were frequently left to beg for scraps from the masters' tables. Within the decade, the French Revolution would begin.

Why is any of this important?

Fast forward 240 years, and the United States finds itself in similar circumstances. The wealth of our nation is concentrated in very few hands. Now, I am not a subscriber to the ideas of the Occupy movement or the 99-percenters. But this is not a radical or contentious thought either. Facts are facts: a very small group of Americans possess a vast majority of the wealth in our country.

What's more, similar to the pre-revolution French state, these wealthy Americans employ the vast majority of Americans as servicepersons, manufacturers, tradespeople, and other laborers. Think about it. Most of us work for someone else. Even if we are the top dogs in our organization, most of us are beholden in some way to someone up the ladder. This was not the part of France that disturbed Jefferson. As long as people were able to support a modest lifestyle and keep from sinking into despair, the country would have been able to remain stable.

Jefferson's concerns lie with the treatment of the lowest classes in France. He was concerned because property rights were being overextended to the wealthy while the lower classes were being denied opportunities to rise above their meager existence. This widened

the gap and perpetuated extreme poverty.

Today, in America, we have such a lower class living in extreme poverty. Frequently, these people find themselves without a job, without a home, and without opportunities. At the same time, we have allowed the wealthy to secure for themselves ever-increasing property rights without any obligation to share in the bounty of the American wealth. Just as Jefferson observed in France two centuries ago, we allow landowners and banks to hold property off the market to prop up values in the rest of the market while millions struggle to find adequate and affordable roofs over their heads.

I am not a radical to the same extent as Jefferson. I believe in our country and the form of government people much smarter than I developed. Just as Jefferson went on to say in the very same letter, I do not support an equal distribution of the resources of our country. Such a system is impractical and has failed spectacularly in other parts of the world. We should never remove the motivations we have in place for people to achieve a higher station in life through talent, skill, hard work, and determination.

But we must also recognize the consequences of our current course, one in which enormous inequality means misery for the bulk of our country. Jefferson called on legislators to invent many “devices for subdividing property” in order to create a more stable and lasting state in the New World. If we continue on a path that creates a perpetual class of people who are robbed of the basic natural rights endowed in all of us, we can never truly be too far away from a catastrophic failure of our own.

We must learn the lessons of the past that correlate to today's issues. We must fight to protect the rights of all people to life, liberty, property and the pursuit of happiness regardless of the amount of money in their pocket, the color of their skin, or any other characteristic that has no bearing on their status as a human being.

About Allen

Allen Hoorn, a former restaurant manager in New Orleans' French Quarter, has just announced his newest project: Homeless America.

This project, a series of seven documentary episodes, seeks to educate sheltered individuals about the true causes of homelessness and poverty in the United States. Beginning with the colonization of America, the episodes seek to broaden Americans' understanding of homelessness through various epochs of history, relating the historical challenges of homelessness to the challenges faced today. You can find more information about this project on Kickstarter at <http://kck.st/157fLWA>

or by visiting Allen's website at

www.streetnewsnetwork.org.

“Despite all of the troubles I had growing up, I have always tried to do things the right way. I got a job after graduating from high school. I worked extremely hard at my job and enjoyed pretty good success at it. I also paid my way through college. It took me longer than most people and required me going to a community college. But I did what I was supposed to be doing, according to what everyone tells us we are supposed to do.

When I moved to the DC area, I had to rent a room from a shady character for the first several months. I was paying him more than \$600 a month just for a bed in an unlocked room. When I moved in, there were five other guys living in the three bedroom house. One guy was paying rent to sleep in the living room. One guy had a dark corner in the basement next to the laundry.

This is what the world had become for many people. Parents who can't keep the heat on. People losing their houses to foreclosures. Parents losing their jobs and falling behind on their bills until they lose everything. Grown adults who have busted their asses for decades being expected to live in a dark basement next to a drainage basin.

”

-Allen Hoorn



ALBERT POTTER/ Streetroots

IMPOSSIBLY HOMELESS: Hoorn documents how a change in situation can drive anyone into homelessness.

Walking in Memphis

BY AARON BANKS
Contributing Writer

If you sit on your front porch for a while, you'll inevitably see a few solitary men and women walking down the road. Bags on their backs and a look of fierce determination on their faces, they brave the elements and walk. And in the oppressive heat of a Memphis summer, walking is no easy task. With highs climbing near 100 degrees, those who walk face a much higher risk of heatstroke and dehydration. But walk they must.

My day's a little different. At 8 AM, I roll out of bed and jump in the shower. At 8:20, I put on some clothes and grab a bowl of cereal. At 8:45, I get in the car and head to class.

This morning routine depends on one thing: a car. Without a car, my four-minute drive quickly turns into a 22-minute walk. And while 22 minutes may not seem like that long of a commute to those who live in suburbs like Collierville or Germantown, a 22-minute drive into downtown Memphis turns into an 8 hour walk once a car leaves the picture.

For those without a car, the easy alternative is the Memphis bus system. Relatively fast, simple, and affordable, Memphis' buses serve as a way for car-less commuters to reach their jobs on time. But the Memphis Area Transportation Authority, a frequent savior for those without a car, may not be around much longer. The service, which operates at a 1.75 dollar fee per ride, has seen a 30% cut to its services due to budget cuts. This comes coupled with a precarious rise in fuel and equipment costs.

And the cuts and reductions are far from other. Mayor AC Wharton's recent budget proposal involves a 2.4 million dollar cut to MATA's funding. While this

budget has not been approved at the time of publication, MATA has already planned to cut half a dozen routes and reduce service hours by 20%. The pace of these cuts is troubling: MATA president William Hudson said that "if MATA continues to be cut at this percentage, the service will be forced to shut down in 15 years."

And if Memphis' sole public transportation system continues to sit on the chopping block, more and more Memphians will not only have to walk miles to the nearest bus stop, but also walk even farther once they exit the bus. As transportation options deteriorate, economically disadvantaged job seekers will find it increasingly harder to get to work on time. In short, if they can't walk, they can't work.

Here's an example. Say one Frayer resident has a job on President's Island. He currently takes bus route #15 to the island, which takes slightly more than an hour each way. If #15 is cut, as it is under the current budget proposal, he will have to take a different route -- one not nearly as convenient. To reach the far end of the island, he will have to add a two hour walk to his commute. And he won't be the only one affected. Nearly 5,000 people work there, most of them low-income.

Ideally, those 5,000 people forced to walk an extra two hours would consider a change in employment. They'd work somewhere closer to home. But the economy isn't ideal for quitting a job at the drop of a hat (or a bus route). Ideally, these 5,000 could purchase cars to shorten their commutes, but that is much easier said than done for those living paycheck to paycheck. Maybe they'll be able to hitch a ride with a coworker or friend. Some will. Many won't. And although they must expend several extra hours of energy to get to work, that extra labor won't show up on their paychecks.

Commuters are not the only ones walking in Memphis. Many of the city's homeless residents rely on walking as their primary mode of transport. With a place to call home, these individuals often spend the whole night traveling, searching for a safe place to rest. The prospective changes to MATA's service mean that increasingly bigger portions of their travel will be on foot. And for those who travel from soup kitchen to soup kitchen in search of basic sustenance, the walks will be the longest of all.

Many tend to think that unemployed and homeless individuals don't need to go from place to place. Yet their situation forces them to travel far more than one might expect. Soup kitchens, while often lifesaving resources, are often located miles from one another. And if someone who is unemployed wants a job, they'll probably have to travel all around Memphis in search of one. The chances of finding a job within reasonable walking distance are much lower than when the bus becomes a factor. And the chances of keeping that job? Even lower, once travel time makes it harder to arrive at work promptly.

Memphis ranks as one of the ten largest cities in the country by geographic area. For commuters all across the sprawl, getting around is no easy task -- even with a car. But if the proposed budget cuts to MATA takes effect, jobs, food, and opportunities for many struggling individuals will become impossible to attain. If you would like to help someone get around Memphis for the day, MATA sells daily passes (with no expiration date) for \$3.50 apiece at its terminals. And if you want to tell your city council representative how you feel about budget cuts to our public transportation system, fill their mailboxes with suggestions.

Obituary

Frank James Juliano passed away August 24th, 2013

Married to Angela Juliano, he left behind 33 grandchildren, was a veteran of the U. S. Marine Corps, and was a member of the Collegiate Clan of Eagles Native American.

Submitted by his longtime companion, Bobby Williams

We asked people attending soup kitchens which location they preferred:



St. John's Methodist



St. Mary's Episcopal



Idlewood Presbyterian



Soup Kitchen International



St. Luke's Episcopal



Calvary Episcopal



First Presbyterian



HUEY'S[®]

Blues, Brews & Burgers!

The Bridge Vendor Uniform



Certified Vendor

The Bridge Hotline
(901)-800-9245

The Certified *Bridge* Vendor badge - vendors receive one after they sign an Independent Contractor Agreement.

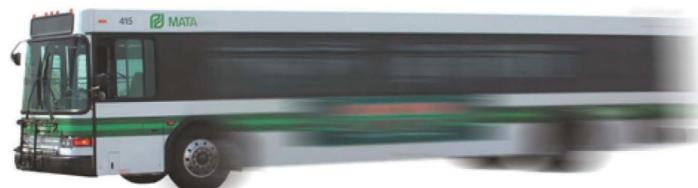
When vendors buy **\$10** worth of papers, they receive a messenger bag with our logo on it.



Vendor Kenneth Smith



When vendors purchase **\$15** worth of papers, they receive a vest with *The Bridge* logo.



Memphis Area Transit Authority
www.matatransit.com • (901) 274-6282

Every **\$10** worth of papers bought gets our vendors a free all-day pass for transportation on MATA.

A Photographer's Reflection

BY DIANNE LOFTIS

Contributing Writer

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but whose words, exactly? I've been identified as a "photographer" since high school: a generous title for someone who knows little about photography beyond shutter speed. From the first time I picked up my dad's old film camera, I loved the way it felt in my hands, the sounds it made, and the way everything looked through its viewfinder. I started messing around with other cameras and soon found myself with a small collection, along with a new label as a "photographer" who knew how to work them. Some people have romantic ideas about my ability, but in reality it's as simple as observation. I rely on the calming tones my dad's Pentax can capture, or the candid expressions that I can freeze from reality on a rare, proud occasion. Nonetheless, that was enough for me to get noticed by the founders of *The Bridge* and start taking pictures for the paper. Recently while working on a photo assignment, I was approached by someone inquiring about my project. I was shadowing two homeless individuals in order to convey what a day in their life might look like. The stranger that approached me was a well-groomed, 30-something guy in a black North Face windbreaker and freshly-pressed khakis. "Excuse me," he stopped me and the two people I was working with. "Could I speak with you in private for a moment?" Emphasis on "in private," indicating that he felt uncomfortable with my companions being included in the conversation.

That kind of separation is the last thing I want when working with the homeless. I had just reached some small level of security with the folks I was shadowing and this exclusive talk wasn't about to aid the situation. That morning, like every time I go out to do something for *The Bridge*, I put in a conscious effort to be respectfully nondescript in appearance and this man had to go and play the game of "one of these things is unlike the other." The camera is kind of a dead giveaway, but I still always try to keep my clothes relatively conservative. How important that practice is I still have yet to determine; but I was nonetheless annoyed, wondering what this man could possibly need to discuss with me privately. We were strangers, after all. "Um...sure," I hesitated. My companions continued a few paces up the street but didn't leave more than six feet between us, so they could really hear the whole thing anyway.

He asked me what it was exactly that I was doing. I should have invited him to ask Mike, because I honestly didn't know anything about what was on the agenda that day. Instead I gave him my well-practiced elevator explanation of *The Bridge*, hoping to end the awkward conversation. He didn't take the hint.

"Interesting...yeah, see, I decided to have someone drop me off downtown at 5:30 a.m. without any money and just, you know, see where the day takes me," he said. He told me about his church's efforts to understand the experiences of the homeless community and the blog he'd been keeping on the topic. All I wanted to do was say "That's great, why don't you try asking someone who can actually teach you something about what it's like to live on the street for multiple years? Look, there are two wonderful resources right there, listening to you talk about all of your endeavors to understand stories like their own."

Of course I acknowledge that first encounters with the homeless can be intimidating and this man was



MONIQUE HAGLER/ Contributing Artist

BEHIND THE LENS: The realization that sometimes you can never truly walk a mile in someone else's shoes.

only looking for some fellowship, but the interaction reflected the main concern I have for our street paper. There are probably many people who approach *The Bridge* the same way that North Face guy approached me — and it makes sense. Every Memphian is acutely aware of the city's homelessness problem; its presence is impossible to ignore. Seeing a young college kid having a normal conversation with a homeless person, on the other hand, isn't an everyday sight for most. It may not be commonplace, but noteworthy? Of course not, especially when it is the goal of *The Bridge* to normalize dialogue between the sheltered and homeless communities. Nor do our efforts to write, photograph, and discuss in order to present the perspective of homeless individuals outweigh the stories themselves. If this man, who was truly concerned about homelessness, isolated me as the point person to talk to, what might that say about other people who encounter work done by *The Bridge*? Is the fact that the large majority of staff are college students a bigger selling point than the paper's focus on homelessness and initiative to offer a source of income for vendors? When I read through the positive press the paper has received, both topics are always included, but considering that the most obvious distinction that can be made between *The Bridge* and other street papers around the country lies in the age of its administrators, it's hard to deny that this is the main source of our national attention.

While our youth is interesting, it says nothing about our product. It might prevent people from reading further into what our articles actually say. Yes, product: like any business, we're out to sell. But the tricky thing is that *The Bridge* as a product means different things to different consumers. Some people, and ideally

most, buy the paper to read it, valuing the information that will instill better awareness. Others buy for the good feeling that comes from supporting something worthwhile. Regardless of motivation, every paper purchased puts a dollar in deserving hands, but the more people buying for content, the more sustainable and effective *The Bridge* will be. In order for the paper to prosper and in order to make progress towards the goal of "bridging the gap between the homeless and the sheltered in Memphis," we need to be able to constantly adapt and reconsider our approach. For every service-minded organization, these threats exist and sometimes even self-induced momentum can create a checkpoint. An NPR article on Nashville's *The Contributor*, a street paper that *The Bridge* is largely modeled after, brought attention to the problem of revenue changing the paper's appeal. For some customers, a vendor's success can be a game changer. Without the clear, visual affirmation that their money was going to a person in need, many consumers became uninterested in buying *The Contributor*, much less reading it. It's an issue that *The Contributor* is forced to face at this point in its flourishing career, and that *The Bridge* will face in the future as long as the unsustainable, feel-good aftereffects of buying are more appealing than the information we print. I can clearly see that the change of environment around *The Bridge* is quite real and could potentially bring us a completely different kind of press in the near future, not to mention the fact that I've already heard a few homeless individuals express a "what now?" kind of concern.

See "Photographer" on page 11

“Photographer” (cont.)

Continued from page 10

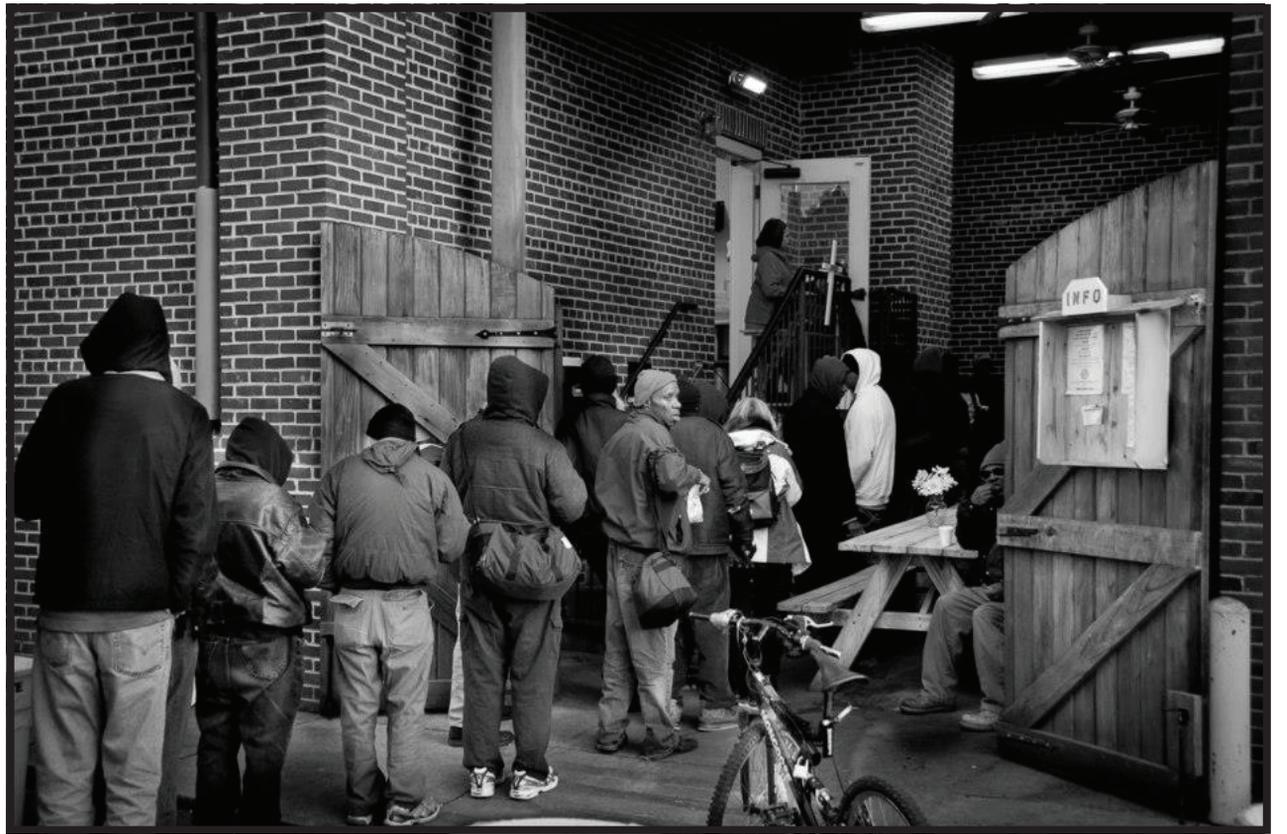
I’ve been asked countless times while working on photo assignments whether I think I’m actually making a difference by taking pictures of the homeless. The two ways my photos could make an impact would either be by way of new subject matter or exquisite craftsmanship. Because I respect the privacy of the individuals I work with, my subject matter is limited to their comfort zones. I can’t offer a window into the most difficult and intimate moments of these people’s lives unless they want to share them, which narrows my ability to expose readers to unseen subjects.

Of course, there are photographers in the world who have the ability to inspire something as close to empathy as virtually possible, but as I mentioned earlier, I’m just an amateur.

Maybe one day I’ll take the kind of pictures that could make you almost feel the grime of four days’ sweat on your clothes, the backache caused from a barely-lined concrete bed, or the joy of the rare day where these truths are less heavy on the mind. At this point, my pictures seem to speak more as the stamp of volunteer work than a catalyst for real understanding.

After debating it for a while I usually end up flattening my argument in the end, ultimately stating that if the main way *The Bridge* has tangible impact is producing income, the paper is a product, and my photographs simply make it more visually interesting and desirable. People like pictures, it’s as plain as that.

The other day, I ran into someone I had photographed for a previous issue and asked him if he’d seen it in the paper. He said he had, and that it was fine. When it dawned on me that this man was neither the subject of an article nor a vendor, I understood the blunt reality that the only



BILL PIACESI / Focus for the Good

WAITING THEIR TURN: The voices of those on the street are all too often silenced.

change my picture had certainly made was that I looked at him differently than I might have before I met him. What an isolated exchange.

It is my hope for *The Bridge* that our ratio of homeless to allied writers increases in the near future, and that opportunities to see through the lens of someone experiencing homelessness, like the “Unsheltered: Unseen” project greatly increase. It’s the best way we can constantly push the envelope and provide stories with real substance. I have a hard time believing that it would be possible to maintain the momentum we’ve started without pushing towards goals like these.

My experience taking photographs for *The Bridge* has certainly brought me some stimulating conversations and the occasional moment of fulfillment, but I’m simply not the subject of the

work and never should be, nor should my colleagues. “College Kids Doing Good” is an exhausted headline that doesn’t compel me to read the article below.

In fact, it seems pretty strange that I’m even writing this reflection for the street paper. About 2,000 words to assert that my perspective doesn’t even compare to that of someone who has experienced life on the streets — that’s two empty pictures right there!

The homeless community in Memphis has enough stories to fill *The Bridge* for years. Diverse, unexpected, and compelling points of view that too many people jumble together into a single stereotype.

focus for the Those individual voices, those are what we need to deliver. Those are what will



The Bridge would like to thank Bluff City Sports for their generous help in printing new vests for our vendors!



The GED System

BY BROOKE BIERDZ

Contributing Writer

Say what you will about the shortcomings of the American education system, but the current infrastructure has its fair share of positives. The General Educational Development tests, colloquially known as the “GED,” are various tests that upon completion certify that the taker has mastered high-school level academics. The beauty of this system is that the tests are a barometer for four years of high school, thus affording high school dropouts the opportunity to earn their diploma in an alternative mode. More than 18 million people have attained a GED since the program’s inception, and approximately seventy percent of GED recipients completed the 10th grade before dropping out. In the last fifty years, American education as an abstract concept has been scrutinized by pundits constantly, but literature on the history and development of the GED is nigh impossible. Hopefully this article can adequately explain the emergence of the GED, what it takes to get one, and why getting a GED is a more than viable option, and the unfortunate privatization of the program.

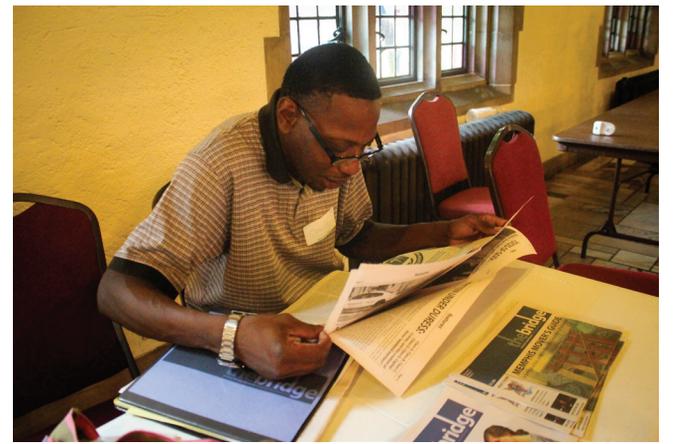
The first GED test was released in 1942 as a direct result of the emphasis on the industrialization of America coupled with the influx of returning veterans from World War II. The American Council on Education (ACE), organized during the first World War, sought to prevent college educated young men from being used in the war effort to “avoid destroying the reservoirs of the productive of experts/reckless waste of irreplaceable talent” (Samuel P. Capen, “Effect of World War 1914-1918”). Therefore, they deemed it necessary to identify, train, and assign existing World War participants to jobs. It was during this time that the seeds of the modern GED were planted. Another was already rumbling with the increasingly test Europe, so general education reform became a source of much hoopla in governmental circles. Thus, the American Council on Education developed the multiple choice system examination to adequately place the millions of returning veterans in the American workforce. The Depression had sobered politicians into avoiding further unemployment, but America’s industrialization necessitated some sort of benchmark. As such, demonstrable high school competence became the barometer for these veterans to compete in the growing industrialized job market in which high school education was practically a prerequisite.

Since approximately 95 percent of American higher education institutions and 96 percent of employers accept the GED as a viable alternative to a high school diploma (ACE), getting a GED is the right choice for motivated individuals who couldn’t complete high school due to unforeseen circumstances. It’s important to note that not having a high school diploma is the main prerequisite that blankets over every state, but every state has slight variations in other requirements. Most states offer preparatory courses and fee waivers. In Tennessee, GED candidates must be at least 18 years old and without a high school diploma. Seventeen year olds are eligible if they can attain an age waiver signed by the superintendent of his or her applicable school district and if they are not currently enrolled in high school. Obvious necessities like valid photo identification are musts, and the maximum fee testing centers can charge in Tennessee is \$75.

The GED test consists of five principal subject areas: Language Arts: Writing, Social Studies, Science, Language Arts: Reading, and Mathematics. Just like any other standardized test, the GED is given in uniform test conditions as outlined by ACE. Some states require the test

to be taken in one sitting, whereas others split the test in two days. In Tennessee, a GED candidate must have an average score of 450 on the total test along with no score below 410 on any of the five tests. (tn.gov) Tennessee also offers free GED preparatory classes through the Office of Adult Education at the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. If you’re interested, you can call them at 615-741-7054. Memphis City Schools offers various practice centers and testing sites, and they can be reached at 901-416-2133. Two prominent resources are the Messick Adult Center, where various concentrations of skills are offered, and AdvanceMemphis, a job training site that pays their low income GED candidate’s fees. Both institutions offer free training and are perhaps the best places to go to if you’re interested in earning a GED. However, places like these are in danger.

Though the infrastructure of the GED is largely associated with the state, there has been a movement to update the test to a for-profit standard. Unfortunately, this has led to many negative externalities that in the long run can only harm potential GED job seekers. Michael Rhodes of AdvanceMemphis says that the principal reason for updating the test is to match the common core shift of K-12 educational standards. Companies like Pearson and McGraw Hill jumped on this shift to plug their GED systems. Both have their own preparatory courses and books, and both charge significantly higher prices than the previous model. The only real benefits of this for-profit model are cost-saving for states, since they can get out of subsidizing the test - leaving the burden on GED candidates. This is a problem because GED candidates are seeking jobs and as such are often not in the position to fork over upwards of \$150 dollars to get a GED. Furthermore, Pearson and McGraw Hill tout technological advancements in the system as justification for the price bump, but this only brings forth a new set of problems. Companies must note that a significant population of GED candidates don’t have computer literacy. As a result, GED candidates are burdened with another annoying and costly skill to attain. This shift also hurts establishments like Advance Memphis, since their establishment is a job training site that pays GED fees for their candidates. Thus, the states and communities who subsidize these institutions bear the burden



DUSTIN TAYLOR/ Staff Photographer

GETTING BETTER: The GED system offers some hope

of significant price increases. And there’s no real reason for this shift. Some analysts suggest that privatized infrastructures increase the likelihood of success in finding jobs, but the GED has been means tested against K-12 education. The findings proved the assertion that people with GEDs and high school graduates are, on average, at the same skill level upon completion of their respective education. Tennessee has plans to introduce two new tests, the Pearson View GED test and the ETS test. This can only further befuddle the marketplace, since it was already tough enough to convince employers of a GEDs legitimacy in the workplace. Having two tests will only add to the confusion.

Memphis has some quality resources that for potential GED candidates. If money is an issue, most centers offer free training. Getting a GED or the equivalent of a high school diploma is becoming increasingly important since even the most menial jobs require high school training. We are in danger of losing our subsidized systems if the privatization of resources continues, and the GED is also in danger of losing credibility with the influx of differentiated private tests. Furthermore, work must be done to combat the stigma associated with GEDs, since the system has been shown to be equal to the traditional educational system. Fortunately, Memphis is one of the premier cities to get a GED and subsequently get a job with that GED, but we must be wary of the disconcerting privatization of the system.

Mention this ad when setting up a new alarm monitoring service with Community Security and a portion of each monthly monitoring payment will be donated to *The Bridge*. You gain peace of mind while also helping *The Bridge* continue to make a positive impact in your community.



**Community Security - P.O. Box
1356 - Olive Branch, MS 38654 -
Lic.# C-0244**

1-800-464-2132

www.givecommunitysecurity.com

Delores Washington: Poems and More



SHIVEN SAMANT / Staff Photographer

Delores Washington attended Mississippi Valley State University in Itta Bena, Miss. and Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph, Mo. Formerly homeless, she is now the recipient of numerous honors and awards for her work. Delores has recently written her first major nonfiction work, titled "Journey II: Poetry and Prose," an account of her striking experiences with homelessness.

A Perfect Vacation

I know you dream of it all winter long — your summer get-away, your perfect vacation — when you're sitting in your office, or when you're standing in a warehouse assembly line or McDonald's or wherever you earn your living.

The perfect day at the beach: white sand, beautiful blue ocean, golden sun-rays beaming on your skin giving you a warm, giddy embrace. You're being caressed by ocean breezes.

You lean back in the desk chair at your office, clasp your hands over your head, intertwine your fingers, close your eyes and there you are, swimsuit-clad — lying in your beach hammock and sipping a blue-orange piña colada.

Yes — the perfect vacation?
Or is it really the perfect vacation? Would you like to travel to a new destination; unscathed, undisturbed and out of the world, truly away from it all?

A trip to the universe: peaceful, serene and cosmically breathtaking. Imagine a stretch of twinkling stars as far as you can see. You float through a sparsely white-lined layer of clouds, flying like Superman. Your arms are down by your side, your head tilted upward, navigating you through the darkness of time. Time wears a smile so wide it's almost maniacal.

You fly into a broad spectrum of light where you enjoy a spectacularly-lit and colored parade of winged people, large butterflies, and birds that you've never seen. You float over to a table of plenty — bowls of red, green, yellow, and purple fruits; platters of steamed and roasted green goods, juicy tender meats surrounded by golden-white light.

Suddenly, you hear a voice.
"Wake up, Charlie. If I catch you sleeping at your desk again, you're going to get a permanent vacation."
The perfect vacation: go to the beach and don't go to sleep at work ... enjoy.

Gray City

The homeless, the lost, the lonely;
Wayfarers passing though,
Old men, young men/women; wandering
— pondering?

Laden with bags, sacks of worn rags,
draped in overcoats;
All belongings on their backs, humans
living in shells

Dirtied, raggedly, grimy, matted-haired;
Lying on streets, in gutters;
Shamed, abused, misused.

Circumstantial victims, vagabonds, no-
mads, or just gypsies?
Humans; lonely, lost, loveless; overlooked/
overtaken by societal crooks.

Women

Majestic, beautiful, mystical, powerful.
Her smile, her presence; warms, feeds, fulfills needs;
Man's shining star, his sunrise.
Her aura lightens the day, softens the night, makes you smile, your soul soar.

Without woman — the world would be a jungle without a flower — wild and green;
Woman — sweet flower in the jungle.

Doom/No Bloom

Sadness; my sad/your sad.
Gloom, doom; my doom/your doom.

Days of laze gone, now remains erstwhile by;
tears and fears.
I & I, illiteracy (unawareness) & ignorance (ac-
cepting it).

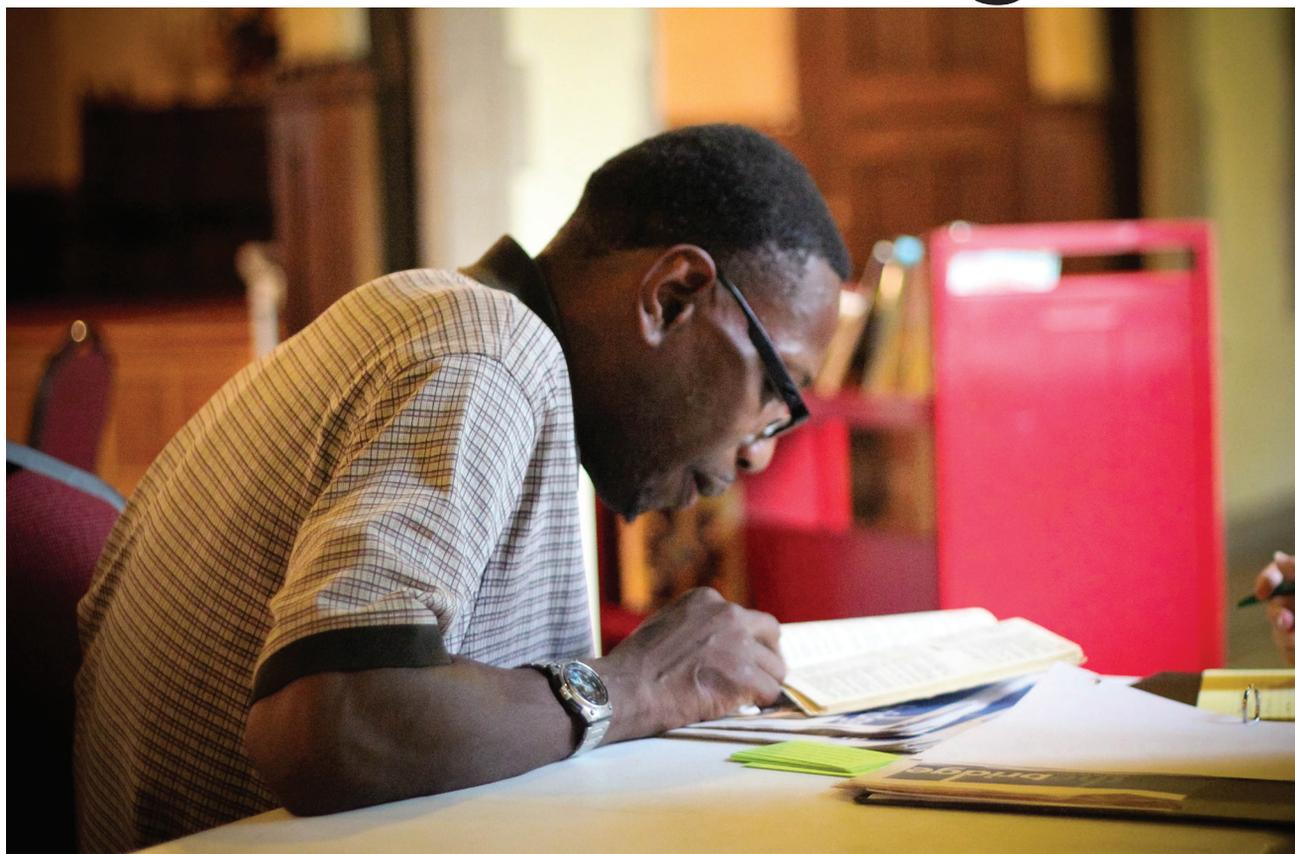
What's left?
Pains and frowns; a world going upside down.
You're beaten, scorned and trodden down.
You tried to win; but in the end,
You were beaten; by deceit, scorn, and worn.
You gave up.



WRITTEN WORD: Delores muses about the nooks and crannies hidden within.

DARIO PIGNATELLI / Reuters

The Passage of Time



DUSTIN TAYLOR/ Sideways Media

IN THE MOMENT: What would you do if you had nowhere to be?

BY ANNA LOCKHART
Contributing Writer

Rumor has it that Father Time sits up in the clouds with an hourglass, stroking his long white beard and ensuring that each moment follows the one before it in an orderly fashion. A grain of sand brings another day, another month, another year, so on and so forth, indefinitely. Of course, more valid notions of celestial orbits and rotational patterns exist, yet they can feel just as abstract when we measure the content of a life against its length; it's like saying that a relationship lasts for three cycles around the sun or that a person has been missing for six of the earth's steady spins. The real world isn't quite so neat and tidy.

Memories don't cluster together according to the planet's voyage around a star. Our thoughts are nonlinear, and our present condition informs the way we retell our past. This is certainly true for David Wicks, a vendor for *The Bridge* and frequenter of Idlewild Presbyterian's "More Than a Meal" program on Thursday night. It took an ongoing struggle with homelessness to convince him that his journey was worth sharing.

David begins with his earliest memory: it is a foggy recollection, more of a feeling than a concrete moment, but it is his own. "We didn't have much," he notes, "but we had family. And we were happy." He grew up in Orange Mound, and he has been in Memphis all his life. He adds that his mother was, and still is, a huge source of support and encouragement, the primary parent-figure guiding his formative years. His tales of adolescence blend together as he condenses whole years of his life into a few brief sentences. There was construction work at age thirteen, the onset of peer pressure, the allure of laziness, and

the "wrong crowd" offering simple solutions to complicated situations. "I had to keep up, you know, to keep people from talking," David says with a shrug. He cites his desire to fit in with his friends as the primary reason he did not graduate from high school. When asked about his first experience with homelessness, however, his tone and focus shifts. Rather than summarizing years of his life, he zeros in on a single day.

"I was 25 when my nephew died," he recounts. "I just stopped caring, gave up completely." The event was jarring, to say the least. David began making decisions without considering the consequences and soon found himself without a home. Since then, his living situation has been in a constant state of flux. Now, his story is not organized by months or years, but by the times he had shelter and the times he did not. "One minute I have a home, and the next minute I don't," David says when discussing the on-again, off-again nature of homelessness. The nights that he cannot find a place to sleep are challenging. "You can't just stay in one place," he explains. You have to be in near-constant motion, only pausing for brief naps and relocating before you draw attention to yourself. Check the hour, count the minutes, rest your eyes, and move on.

David is not interested in relaying the day-to-day details for too long, though. He grows tired of it quickly. There is another chapter in his story, one that he feels is worth more time than the others. "I remember the exact moment I found God," he states, leaning forward slightly. The shapeless haze of his earliest recollection is gone, now replaced with vivid details of the location and the people who helped guide his path. "I was staying at the Calvary Rescue Mission here in Memphis, and I met some pastors that changed my life."

The Mission's own genesis story is quite unique:

A man named Milton Hatcher founded it in 1967 after a self-imposed two-and-a-half day stint in the building behind his house. After 60 hours of isolated soul-searching and devoted praying, Hatcher emerged with a plan. Today, 46 years later, the shelter is still leaving its mark in the homeless community. Its website broadcasts the tagline: "Burdens are lifted at Calvary." Judging by David's broad smile when discussing the memory, it's safe to say his load was considerably lightened.

There is a pause in the conversation while David pulls a white, leather-bound Bible from his backpack and gently places it on the table between us. This is his response to the question, "How do you pass the time?" Aside from occasional sketches and conversations with friends, he mostly loves to read. He gently taps on the cover, engraved with the familiar title in golden cursive. "Everything is in here, you know. It's history, adventure, romance. It teaches you things. It gets you through the night." When asked about a favorite passage, he flips to *James 1:12* and reads it aloud: "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him." He acknowledges that many of the trials he has faced have been the result of poor choices, but he does not think for a moment that his situation is beyond repair, or that the crown of life is unattainable. David is not afraid of time limits.

"I'm 42 years old," he says, adding as a sidenote that his birthday — July 30 — is not usually cause for lavish celebration. Perhaps he'll go out with a small group, but he says the routine is getting old. "So many people say it's too late for me," he says. "They say that I've run out of chances, but I know I can do better. I've seen myself do better." He admits that he is embarrassed when he thinks of friends his age that are well on their feet with homes, cars, and jobs. But he does not get discouraged. He has plenty of short-term and long-term goals for the future. For starters, he wants to get more involved with H.O.P.E. and become more active with *The Bridge*. "In the end," he says, "I want to show the love that was shown to me." He doesn't have dates picked out or a rigid checklist to fulfill, but that does not mean he is not working towards those goals. He makes strides every single day.

Although David's past influences his every decision and his future offers newer, brighter horizons, he is remarkably anchored in the present. He doesn't glance at his watch once during our lengthy conversation.

While most of us tend to bank on tomorrow's payoff, stuffing our resumes and waiting patiently for greener grass, David roots himself in the current moment. He is among the wise, lucky few who value the possibilities of today far more than the potential fruits of the future. He is here, he is alive, and he is content.

"Wherever you are," he says, "you have to appreciate what you've got."

NO REST FOR THE WEARY: Homelessness and sleeplessness on the streets of Memphis

BY JAMIE YOUNG
Contributing Writer

I am a proofreader by trade. I spend most of my days searching for accidental omissions and hidden inconsistencies in some poor writer's heartfelt lines.

My business is small and quiet and unremarkable, but I'm painfully grateful for it because it afforded me the most startling thought recently: what if we were to proofread this city? The way it operates, the subjects and predicates in our laws and on the ground, whether past and present are in agreement.

From the outside, I see Memphis as full of people who would lose themselves if they lost sight of how others are doing around them. The porches and patios lined with folks watching out for one another, for better or worse. When Memphians ask you how you are, they take the time to listen to your answer.

We steep ourselves in faith, with more than 2,000 houses of worship blanketing the county. Many offer food and kindness to the hungry and alone in some shape or form, or support tireless agencies that do. But with all of our efforts to lend a hand, there's one basic necessity I notice we are forgetting: sleep.

You can't hand out sleep. If there were sleep banks like blood banks and food banks, we could all donate a few spare hours. Cultivating quality sleep for those who drift off with one eye open on the streets or in shelters and transitional housing means looking at the circus of services offered from another angle: how can we flood this city with a sense of safety and peace, the kind that allows for uninterrupted rest and restoration?

Because sleep is important, more so than we realize. Apart from getting lip service in safely-worded articles from medical establishments and glowing endorsements from mattress manufacturers, sleep is mostly ignored by the problem solvers of the world. It's the killjoy cousin of nutrition and exercise on the list of things a body ought to do better.

Most Americans aspire to live a life less ordinary, so we work hard and play harder. This takes its toll the cumulative sleep debt we incur over the span of our lives literally shrinks our brains and our bones. It's a massive contributor to the kind of conditions you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy (like diabetes, colon cancer, and stroke). You are 400 percent more likely to die in the next 14 years if you habitually accrue less than six hours of sleep a night.

Parents of young children lose a full six months of sleep in the first two restless years. Going without three hours of sleep is the equivalent of walking around intoxicated.

These two facts make me wonder if public drunkenness is illegal in Memphis and nearly everyone sympathizes with the exhaustion felt by new mothers and fathers, why aren't we more concerned about those experiencing homelessness? The constant danger and interruptions felt by those without a place to call their own are the worst sleep conditions I know (outside of battle).

So while I fully support the struggle to keep our shelters open and food programs plentiful with every kindhearted fiber of my being, I think that the big, tangled-up pile of Christmas lights that is homelessness in this country should be reframed with an entirely different aim: good, effective sleep. The stuff that

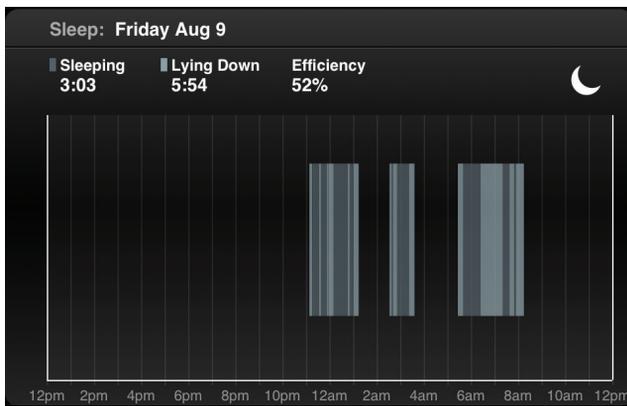
clears out the cobwebs, that turns the scribbled page over for new beginnings and happy endings.

There is very little research examining the sleep quality of the unsheltered. One study by House the Homeless found that individuals experiencing homelessness get about 5.1 hours per night. All three studies were based on self reports, which only allows for a bird's-eye view of the situation since not many of us can observe our own sleep, except for maybe Leonardo DiCaprio and the cast of "Inception."

We at The Bridge weren't satisfied with such a murky picture of sleeplessness among those without stable shelter, so decided to do a little experiment of our own. With the help of four anonymous current or formerly homeless volunteers, we came up with some semi-scientific numbers which we hope will one day inspire a full-fledged study.

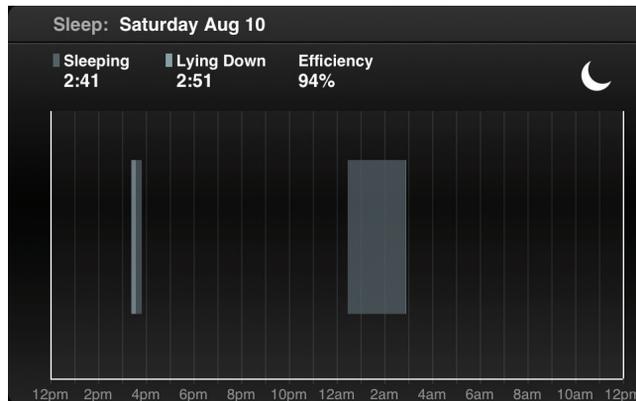
Participants were asked to wear a consumer-grade accelerometer with motion and temperature sensors that purports to detect "micromovements" that indicate quality of sleep. Each participant wore the monitor for two consecutive days. Here is a readout from one participant along with the author's data for comparison:

Formerly Homeless Participant's Sleep Pattern, Day One:



TROUBLED SLEEP: light gray areas indicate tossing and turning. The individual expressed having a history of sleepwalking in the past brought on by anxiety and stress.

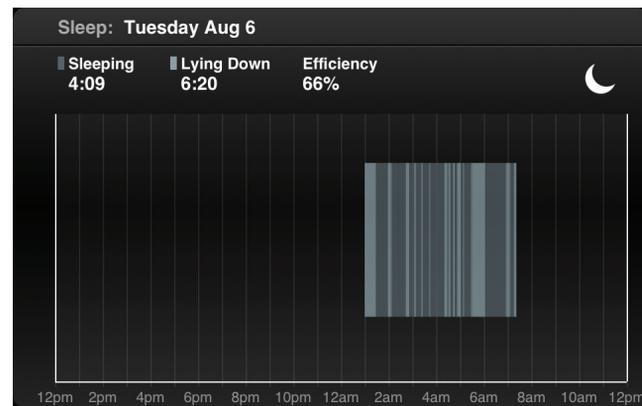
Formerly Homeless Participant's Sleep Pattern, Day Two:



STILL TROUBLED: The overall quality of sleep improved, but the quantity is still insufficient. Experts write that even a loss of two to three hours result in a 32 percent loss in alertness.

"Factors like noise, heat, light, and interruptions and disturbances by others would make homeless populations particularly susceptible to sleep disorders," veteran sleep expert Dr. Ken Lichstein made clear. Harassment by police and property owners is inescapable for those sleeping out in the open. Some simply ask the sleeper to move on, while others resort to tactics that defy all logic and human decency.

The Author's Housed Sleep Pattern (for comparison):



AUTHOR RESPONSE: The author admits that she is not a perfect role model for sleep hygiene.

We are told by credible sources that local officers have used billy clubs to beat the legs of those fast asleep and poured buckets of dirt on people who doze off near the federal building downtown.

A representative from the Memphis Police Department denied that homeless individuals are unfairly targeted, stating, "We don't treat [a person who is experiencing homelessness] any differently than anyone else. No special treatment." In all actuality, we've seen that some cops go above and beyond to look out for the down and out. They should be celebrated for their foresight and concern.

The most insidious consequence of sleep deprivation is its assault on one's outlook and mood. Dr. William Marincheck of the Saint Francis Hospital Sleep Center explains, "Lack of sleep deeply affects interpersonal relations, memory, cognition, and disposition." How can we expect individuals whose lives are tattered and torn to pluckily pull themselves up by their bootstraps with a Tiny Tim rallying cry if they are very-nearly sleepwalking the days away?

Imagine if you were surviving on little to no rest and navigating life in nearly constant danger to your person and possessions. I know I wouldn't proceed cheerfully in those circumstances. One group defines homelessness as "sleeping rough, acting tough." Several investigations have shown experiences of homelessness can actually cause mental health problems, rather than the other way around.

The suggestions for a good night's sleep imply such complete control over one's circumstances as to produce peals of laughter from some of the individuals interviewed for this piece.

See "Sleep" on page 16



Sleep

Continued from page 15

For a perfect seven to nine hours, experts recommend awakening at the same time every day, avoiding caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, large meals, and strenuous exercise four to six hours before bedtime, and maintaining a completely dark, noiseless, and technology-free sleeping environment at an ideal temperature of 65 degrees Fahrenheit.

All the cells of your body are born again as you sleep. Within three days' time, the body is completely replaces the contents of all major organs apart from the skeleton and the lens of the eyes, given that sleep is satisfactory. You're a lot younger than you think, or a lot older than you could be if you aren't getting enough rest.

Perhaps instead of pushing those who sleep in public out of sight and off the premises as is done in Atlanta and Tampa, we should be pulling them into a safe space for a chance to rest up and plan out their next big move. Advocates have gone so far as to contest the criminalization of sleep in these areas as unconstitutional, citing Eighth Amendment protections against cruel and unusual punishment.

Georgetown University surveyed municipal ordinances across the country and found that as shelters closed, there was an immediate uptick in public sleeping bans. This begs the question: where can one go? Fifty-five percent of all persons experiencing homelessness in the U.S. have received citations for sleeping in public.

Shelters offer a roof but little more for many seeking refuge. A 2005 review by the U.S. Department of Justice found 106 cases of rape within the female population of a New York shelter. Nearly 15 percent of shelter residents admit to being assaulted within the confines of a facility, but it's estimated to be far greater. Aside from violence, bed bugs and theft of cherished belongings are anecdotally rampant.

Locally, too many Memphis shelters are allegedly a source of physical and sexual danger, including the Beers Van Gogh Center for Excellence currently under scrutiny by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigations for reported sexual assault on its residents diagnosed with mental and physical disabilities.

These conditions lead many out of the shelter and into the open, including several teenage San Diegan runaways who were willing to share their stories for this article. Each young man and woman attributed feelings of hyper-vigilance and fear to their eventual addiction to energizing upper drugs like crystal meth. Substance abuse robs a person of sleep, often without their knowledge. "Alcohol is particularly detrimental," Dr. William Marincheck of the St. Francis Sleep Center points out. But without emotional support from family or friends, substance use and abuse is a vicious given. A newcomer to the area at a H.O.P.E. meeting said, "Sometimes the bottle was my only friend."

Solutions to the problem of providing safe sleeping spaces have inspired inventors and urban designers to untold flights of fancy, including the pictured insulated igloo built from packing peanuts by 12-year-old Max Wallack. With more than 700 souls succumbing to hypothermia every year in the United States, the models offer a glimmer of hope for those exposed to the elements. The logistics of providing such shelters and conspicuousness of the structures leads many to believe that the designs are better suited for temporary use in times of disaster, however.

Permanent supportive housing is the key to feeling

My name is Joe.
This is my voice.
This is my livelihood.



safe and satisfied, the evidence suggests. Apart from a few self-governing transitional encampments in the progressive towns of Portland and Seattle, there is little to show for improvements in health and stability within shelters and transitional housing. Supportive housing also costs far less per person than piecemeal shelters and guards against relapse: recipients are shown to stay in one place for 24 months or more and show no increase in substance abuse, according to the Mayors' Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness.

I am new to the fight against homelessness. Just five months in, with a whole lot to learn. But as a fellow human and someone whose job is to read between the lines, I wonder why the biological need for deep sleep is absent from the debate. It ought to be an inalienable right of all people for the good of all people, based on the research.

Supporting our brothers and sisters in their pursuit of life, liberty and a full eight hours just makes sense to me. Let's put this issue to bed through the proven means of safe housing and better access to mental health resources starting today.

MORE INFO

SLEEP AND HOMELESSNESS IN THE U.S.

Sleep Shelter Plans of Master Tinkerer Paul Elkin
<http://highmileagetrikes.blogspot.com/>

House the Homeless Sleep Health Study 2011:
<http://www.housesthehomeless.org/2011-health-sleep-study/>

WITHIN MEMPHIS

Mayors' Ten Year Action Plan to End Homelessness
http://www.cityofmemphis.org/portals/0/pdf_forms/Action_Plan_Final.pdf

Local Permanent Supportive Housing Advocates: Community Alliance for the Homeless

Web: <http://www.communityallianceforthehomeless.com>

Telephone: 901.527.1302

Community Police Relations Facilitators and Safe Shelter Activists: Homeless Organizing for Power & Equality (H.O.P.E.)

Web: [facebook.com/homelessorganizing](https://www.facebook.com/homelessorganizing)

Telephone: 901.300.0006

If you are interested in calling for a measurement-based sleep study of individuals experiencing or recovering from homelessness, please contact homelessleepstudy@gmail.com.