



Storm Reveals Pitfalls of Assigning "Worth" to Those in Need

By John Lozier

Much has been made of the divisions in American society revealed by Hurricane Katrina. There arose a sudden – if perhaps fleeting – awareness of the depth of poverty in our country, of the role of race, of the precariousness of housing, even of the unjust distribution of health care.

Analysts and policy makers from left and right committed to consolidating the lessons of Katrina and resolving the dismal conditions the storm revealed. Conservatives called for remedies like further tax cuts and reduced spending, waivers of various regulations, and further devolution of control to the States. The formal statement of the National Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) Council and other national homeless organizations renewed our calls for new affordable housing, national health insurance, living wages, and consumer involvement in decisions that affect them. The destruction seems to have intensified

the polarized policy debates of our time, but does not seem to have really changed anyone's thinking.

The most stark and damning division that became evident after the storm has received scant attention, though. That is the distinction between the worthy and the unworthy poor.

Almost miraculously, resources sprung up for people displaced by

Homelessness is an on-going disaster of human making.

Katrina. As far away as Cape Cod and Los Angeles, public buildings and churches were converted into emergency shelters. Medicaid was provided for survivors. Subsidized housing waiting lists suddenly opened up, and 18 months of rent payments became available through FEMA. Counselors were dispatched to deal with PTSD and the great grief that was abroad. Citizens opened up their

homes to refugees they found on the internet. The outpouring of public and private compassion was admirable and unprecedented.

Meanwhile, people sleeping on the streets of Boston or Baltimore could not enter the new shelters, even as the buildings stood empty awaiting refugees who in some cases never arrived. 45.8 million Americans had no health insurance, many of them remaining homeless because they had no care for debilitating chronic diseases. When hurricane survivors were provided Section 8 or public housing in faraway cities, those who had been on the waiting lists for years were simply bypassed. The outrage of it all was not lost on homeless people; the HCH National Consumer Advisory Board warned that in diverting resources to serve hurricane survivors, even HCH projects "must not hurt the

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Bringing the Court System to the Community

An innovative program run by the Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court is helping people experiencing homelessness make a fresh start. Once a month, people with outstanding warrants for non-violent crimes can attend a special Homeless Court presided over by Judge Victoria Grant. Jill Ingraham, Probation Officer III, Court Intervention Programs, has run Homeless Court since January of 2004.

Homeless Court is a unique program because it is the only one that is conducted off-site, and not in a traditional courtroom setting, usually at St. Martin's Hospitality Center. Outstanding warrants can keep someone from obtaining ID or a driver's license, which you need to work as a day laborer or receive certain services. These can be real barriers to exiting homelessness.

According to Ms. Ingraham, Homeless Court assists people with clearing

their warrants so they can move forward in their lives. She explains, "The whole point of Homeless Court is to keep people out of jail. It's scary to come to court, so people avoid it. Also, if you're wondering how to get your next meal, paying off a \$75 citation is not going to be your top priority." A missed court date automatically means a warrant.

Participation is by appointment and requires a referral from one of several homeless services agencies, like Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless. "We take referrals from agencies where folks are working with case managers and client advocates that they trust, so they are more likely to actually show up," she says.

Homeless Court is set up just like a court room. Ms. Ingraham schedules about 40 participants per session. Several people often have more than

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Presumed Homeless

Homeless people are often victims of economic profiling, resulting in citations that can act as a barrier to receiving services and ending their homelessness. Scott Cameron, Executive Director of the Homeless Advocacy Coalition, provides the following definition of "economic profiling."

Economic profiling is the use of economic status as a consideration in suspect profiling or other law enforcement practices including police actions such as stops, citations and arrests taken for presumed reasons of safety, security, or public protection that subject a person to greater scrutiny or different treatment because the individual looks poor or homeless, and where a presumption is made that the person may be breaking the law solely based on their appearance rather than on reasonable suspicion.

To report an incident of economic profiling, or for more information, contact Mr. Cameron at 505-255-8323.

AHCH Board of Directors FY 2005-2006

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Board of Directors Meeting Dates

The Board meets the second Tuesday of every month at 5:15 pm. If you are interested in attending a meeting, please call (505) 766-5197 to confirm meeting dates, times and location. Dates of upcoming Board meetings are:
November 8
December 13
January 10
February 14

AHCH Project Tour Dates

AHCH conducts project tours for anyone interested in visiting our programs. Tours are the third Tuesday of each month and begin at 1:00 pm. Future tour dates are:
November 15
December - no tour
January 17
February 21
If you would like to join us, please call Stephanie Silver at (505) 767-1177.

Our Mission is to provide caring and comprehensive health and supportive services, linking people experiencing homelessness to individual and collective solutions, and to be a leader in creating service delivery models and solutions to homelessness.

AHCH, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization governed by a community-based Board of Directors, receives funding from federal, state, county, city and private funding sources. AHCH does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, sexual orientation or national origin.

El Intercambio ("the exchange") is a regular publication of Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless, Inc.

Editor, Stephanie Silver
Development Coordinator

From the ED...

As John Lozier clearly points out in our cover feature, recent events demonstrate that the federal government, when put to the test, can provide the means necessary to house persons who are homeless, not always under the most ideal conditions, but off the streets just the same. If only we could bring to the attention of the policy-makers the fact that on any given night in this country, there are millions of people who have undergone or are currently undergoing similar trauma in their lives and should be given the same priority as the hundreds of thousands displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

One of the best ways to change this is to exercise our right to vote and send packing those in office who contribute to keeping the poor, poor, and the homeless, homeless, both at the national level and more importantly, at the local level. Unfortunately it appears that there are too many people, for whatever reason, who just don't seem to care enough. Example: In early June here in Albuquerque, an Increase in Minimum Wage ordinance was voted down by the City Council (5 to 4). Supporters of this ordinance immediately organized and collected the required 13,000+ signatures to put this on the October ballot for the voters to decide. On October 4th, the voters had the chance to make a difference by voting in favor of increasing the minimum wage from its current \$5.15 per hour to \$7.50. The opponents organized, raised a lot of money, and strategically picked apart the much less important language in the ordinance, shifting the focus away from the obvious benefits to tens of thousands of Albuquerqueans, to the more mundane. They were successful, as less than 40% of the eligible voters in Albuquerque came out to vote and resulted in this measure being defeated by a mere ~1,400 votes.

Those of us advocating on behalf of people living in poverty and those who are homeless need to learn from examples such as these so that the next time elections come around we are more organized, better prepared, and assure that the political pendulum begins to swing toward policy-makers who are willing to work toward bringing an end to this unnecessary human suffering. We have our work cut out for us and the time to start is now!

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Please address all correspondence to:

Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless
PO Box 25445
Albuquerque, NM 87125-0445

AHCH Board of Directors Updates

AHCH announces the appointment of three new members to the Board of Directors.

Judith Jenkins

Ms. Jenkins is the Director of Student Outreach for Albuquerque Academy. She has a Masters degree in religious studies from the University of Denver where she focused on Abrahamic faiths. In addition to teaching history and English at the Academy since 1984, Ms. Jenkins has taught ethics, comparative world religions, medieval history and Latin American history. She serves on the board of directors for the Albuquerque Opportunity Center and the United Way Campaign.

Jerry Montoya

Mr. Montoya is a Health Promotion Specialist for the New Mexico Department of Health Public Health Division and is assigned to Bernalillo and Torrance Counties. He provides support to local health offices and community partners on issues involving the public's health. In terms of facilitation and planning, Mr. Montoya has worked with school districts, emergency management and preparedness committees and a variety of local, county and state planning teams. He is a member of the Bernalillo County Health Council and the New Mexico Public Health Association. He received his BA in psychology from UNM.

Mary Robinson

Ms. Robinson is Director of Accreditation, Licensure and Infection Control at Presbyterian Healthcare Services where she is responsible for designing processes and systems to ensure compliance with governmental regulations. She has worked at Presbyterian for 34 years. Originally from Nebraska, she has a BA in Nursing from the University of Nebraska and a Masters in Public Administration from UNM.

In Appreciation

The AHCH staff and Board of Directors express our appreciation to three Board members who have recently finished their terms of service.

Evelyn Baca - 1999 to 2005

Sean Olivas - 2002 to 2005

John Salamack - 1999 to 2005

Tail-wagging Therapy



For three years, AHCH's women's residential treatment program, Tierra del Sol (TdS), has enjoyed the enthusiastic contribution of Frankie, a Delta Society-certified animal assisted therapy dog. Frankie works at TdS with his companion human, Rutledge Beard, Case Manager/Therapist. His responsibilities include daily visits to each resident's apartment, sitting in on group therapy sessions, playing with the resident children and having an uncanny sense for who needs some supportive company and attention.

You might be surprised to learn that Frankie is an American Staffordshire Terrier; one of three breeds considered to be Pit Bulls. Those who believe the negative stereotypes about Pit Bulls have their views challenged when they meet Frankie and learn about his work. The truth is, Pit Bull-style dogs score 1/10 a point lower on temperament tests than Golden Retrievers.

Frankie's breed, according to Ms. Beard, is part of why he is so helpful at TdS. "Many of the women in the program really identify with Frankie. Homeless people are victims of similar prejudices prejudices by the media and the public."

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First Day of Winter 2005

AHCH announces the launch of this year's First Day of Winter campaign. The winter solstice, December 21st, is a national day of remembrance for those who have died while homeless.

The First Day of Winter helps raise much-needed unrestricted funds to support AHCH's work with people experiencing homelessness. Keep your eye out for this year's direct mail piece and information on how to get involved. It will be arriving in your mailbox soon.

The Giving is Easy

AHCH announces a new option to support our work; direct, electronic donations from your checking account, savings account or credit card. Signing up for electronic funds transfer saves you time, is secure and helps lower our fundraising costs so we can use even more of our resources on direct services. Funds can be transferred monthly, quarterly or annually. To begin donating to AHCH using this service, or if you have any questions, please call 766-5197.



Sabrina Henderson, Medical Clinic Receptionist, greets clients with a smile.

You can help make possible AHCH's work with homeless people to make choices that transform their lives.

- My 100% tax deductible contribution is enclosed.
- Please contact me to set up electronic funds transfer.
- Please revise my mailing label as indicated below.
- Please remove my name from your mailing list.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Please make checks payable to Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless or complete the credit card information below. Mail to:
PO Box 25445, ABQ, NM 87125-0445

Visa or Master Card? _____

Name on Card: _____

Card Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____

Signature: _____

Wish List

Our clients need items to help make them more comfortable during the cold winter months.

Please consider donating: hats, scarves, mittens, athletic socks, bottled water, and lip balm.

Other needs include:

diapers
toiletries
vitamins, ibuprofen, Benadryl
holiday foods: turkeys, pies, canned sweet potatoes, stuffing mix, etc.

To make a donation of these priority items, or if you have any questions about making a donation, please contact Stephanie Silver at 767-1177.

Tail-wagging cont.

An example is the criminalization of homelessness (e.g., panhandling laws) and Pit Bulls. Rutledge says that breed specific laws in some areas are really a form of discrimination regarding the "kind" of people who are associated with owning these dogs because they are thought to be owned primarily by dogfighting rings and drug dealers.

Frankie has been such a good therapy dog that Ms. Beard went to Colorado last summer to get another Pit Bull. She found Diego who is a refugee from Denver's Pit Bull ban. Frankie is showing him the ropes.

United Way Donor Designations

If your company participates with United Way you can designate AHCH to receive your contributions by writing our name on the donation form.

Assigning Worth cont.

thousands of people who suffer the tragedy of homelessness every day."

Homelessness is an on-going disaster of human making. It doesn't lend itself to gripping television and lacks the sudden intensity of a hurricane, but the imbalance of our response has deeper roots. We have a long history of judging who is worthy or not worthy of our compassion and support, a history so long that "blaming the victim" is a cliché. Medicaid, Medicare and public housing, for instance, are available for poor women with children and for elderly and disabled persons, but certainly not for the masses of dispossessed single adults who, it is said, should get a job, stop drinking, or stop malingering. If only it were so easy.

We could have learned from the hurricanes about the vulnerabilities that we share, about our common lot. Until we learn that, Americans will continue to withhold our vast resources from the "unworthy" among us. When we do learn, we will create enough housing for everyone, and health care for all, and incomes that people can survive on.

John Lozier is the executive director of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, Nashville, Tennessee.

Special Thanks

A special thank you to the Evening Optimists Club for their generous donation of soap, lotion, baby powder, shampoo and disposable razors.

Homeless Court cont.

one case pending and there are usually some no-shows. The cases have all been reviewed by the judge and attorneys ahead of time. Each person's file contains any relevant crime history and personal data.

Judge Victoria Grant developed the program in 2001 based on a model that was successful in San Diego, CA. Attorneys Carlos Pacheco and Jonathan Ibarra of the District Attorney's office and defenders Daniel Iviy-Soto and Tom Clear, III volunteer their services every month as well.

Dismissal of charges is based on the participant's progress in working toward exiting homelessness. If the Court does not receive proof of progress, such as regular meetings with a case manager, the case continues until next month. Homeless Court does not assign probation. "We want to go ahead and resolve the cases," says Ms. Ingraham. Some may be assigned community service.

This past year Homeless Court had 315 cases referred, 107 of which were dismissed.

"I'm very grateful for every single agency in town that works with the homeless and Homeless Court," concludes Ms. Ingraham. "Hopefully it changes some lives."

For information on Homeless Court, contact Jill Ingraham at 505-841-8173.

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Our vision...To live
in a world that is just
and without
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