

Nov. 7, 2014 ROUNDTABLE ON THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY IN ADDRESSING LOCAL HOMELESSNESS

FUNDED BY: UO COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES, UO COMMUNITY PHILOSOPHY INSTITUTE, OREGON HUMANITIES CENTER, CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN AND SOCIETY, UO OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS. THANKS ALSO TO: MATT ROBERTS, UO PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT, MONICA GUY, AND ANGIE HOPKINS.

Introduction

The UO Philosophy Department's Community Philosophy Institute (CPI) began its Homelessness Project with three events:

1. A permanent website, "Home and Homelessness."
<http://homelessness.philosophy.uoregon.edu>
2. A Public Philosophy Colloquium on Nov. 6, 2014 featuring guest speaker Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Director of Social Justice Minor at CU Denver, Chad Kautzer (link to lecture below)
<http://homelessness.philosophy.uoregon.edu/events/>
3. A Nov. 7, 2014 Roundtable with Eugene community leaders and UO administrative, faculty and student participation, with a larger audience. The topic was: ***What is the Role of the University in Addressing Local Homelessness?*** (Lists of panel and audience participants follow this report.)

This report summarizes the proceedings and conclusions of the November 7 Roundtable. The roundtable agenda had two parts, each with time allocated for audience participation: (1) Comments by panel members on local problems and services; (2) Suggestions and ideas for what the University of Oregon can/could/should do to address homelessness in Eugene and on campus. After these agenda summaries, below, future actions and plans of the CPI are indicated (3).*

ROUNDTABLE AGENDA

THE ROUNDTABLE EVENT WAS ORGANIZED BY THE COMMUNITY PHILOSOPHY INSTITUTE COMMITTEE MEMBERS, WITH SUPPORT FROM THE PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT AND ADVICE AND SUPPORT FROM MATT ROBERTS, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF UO COMMUNITY RELATIONS. CPI ORGANIZING COMMITTEE CHAIR, NAOMI ZACK, BEGAN BY RELATING THIS EVENT TO PAST CPI EVENTS OF COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSION WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS. PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT HEAD, BONNIE MANN, WELCOMED PARTICIPANTS BY STRESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVE, INVOLVED PHILOSOPHICAL WORK AND MATT ROBERTS WELCOMED PARTICIPANTS ON BEHALF OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS.

(1) Summary of comments by panel members on local problems and services

Who are the local homeless and where do they come from?

Low income housing has been a long-term problem in Eugene, Oregon, for many years and homelessness has been increasing during the recent recession. Food insecurity is not new here and Mayor Kitty Piercy of Eugene said that in the past, Oregon was known as "the hungry state." While

* THIS REPORT WAS PREPARED BY NAOMI ZACK BASED ON NOTES TAKEN AT THE ROUNDTABLE BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY PHILOSOPHY INSTITUTE HOMELESSNESS PROJECT ORGANIZING COMMITTEE AND ADDITIONAL NOTES PROVIDED BY JANA THRIFT, EUGENE VIDEOGRAPHER, KATEY COATES-CHEYNEY, UO STUDENT, AND MILTON TAKEI, EUGENE/SPRINGFIELD SOLIDARITY NETWORK JOBS FOR JUSTICE. PLEASE EMAIL CORRECTIONS AND COMMENTS FOR FUTURE POSTING TO <NZACK@UOREGON.EDU>

some believe that the local homelessness population is made up mainly of residents from other states, local service providers, such as Pearl Wolfe, *Human Services Supervisor, Lane County Human Services Commission*, and Erik DeBuhr, *Executive Director, Community Supported Shelters*, claim that over 70% of the Eugene homeless have lived in the area for over one or two years. Greg Irwin, active in *15th Night*, a Eugene Chamber of Commerce program seeking to get 100 homeless young people off the streets (statistics show that to avoid homeless status, 14 nights on the street is the limit) attests that 75% of the 150 youths who become homeless each year in Eugene, are local. Jessica Claypool, *Manager, Looking Glass*, also agreed with the importance of getting young people off the streets. (Looking Glass can only keep them for 72 hours unless there are allegations of abuse, and their general mandate is reunion with their families.)

Mayor Christine Lundberg of Springfield noted that the homeless in Eugene are made up of different populations: youth and students, single adults, families, physically disabled and injured people, mentally impaired and substance addicted people, individuals who choose to disconnect from ‘the system,’ and individuals with behavior problems requiring the attention of law enforcement. Members of all these groups have varied access to social services, but it is a safe assumption that all of the local homeless lack funds for housing and are extremely poor.

What problems do unhoused people present to the housed?

Homeless people have no place of their own to sleep, store their possessions, keep themselves clean, or eliminate. A small number beg and a smaller number than that commit crimes, of two kinds: crimes that are an inevitable result of living on the street or camping in areas without facilities, e.g., trespassing and eliminating or sleeping in public.[†] A minority of the unhoused commit theft or violent crimes but there is no evidence that the homeless disproportionately steal or attack others compared to other violators. Overall, as Bonnie Mann, *Associate Professor and Head of UO Philosophy Department*, claimed, the homeless evoke visceral feelings of disgust among those of us with housing. But recognizing that need not result in blaming or abusing those who are homeless.

Are the homeless viewed and treated as part of our community?

Despite the fact that most of the Eugene homeless are bona fide members of the Eugene community who have lived among us for some time and consider Eugene their home and do not pose a criminal threat, several panelists and audience members remarked that those who are housed often do not view or treat the unhoused as law-abiding members of their own community. There is no doubt that homeless people are shunned, chased away, verbally abused, physically abused and that their possessions are destroyed or confiscated by local police officers. That is, the local homeless are generally not treated with respect. Michael Weed, Lane Community College Student Body President related a year he spent unhoused. During that time, he attended two terms of LCC and tried to conceal his unhoused status by camping away from campus. Urine was thrown on him, his backpack was slashed, his things were thrown in the river. He protected himself by staying away from downtown and the dangers of the “Barmuda Triangle,” an area overused by intoxicated college students. Sue Sierralupe, *Clinic Manager, Occupy Medical*, talked about the medical needs of local unhoused who include: female rape victims, those who claim they were injured by law enforcement from the Lane County Sheriff’s Office, victims of domestic abuse. The patients of Occupy Medical often do not have access to mainstream health care providers and may be turned away by local

[†] Some experts refer to such offenses as “crimes of misery” or “misery crimes” and argue that punishment for them cannot be justified morally or legally. See: John B. Mitchell, “Crimes of Misery and Theories of Punishment,” *New Criminal Law Review: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Fall 2012), pp. 465-510, Published by: [University of California Press](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/nclr.2012.15.4.465), Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/nclr.2012.15.4.465>, Accessed: 13/06/2014

hospitals. Yet, Sierralupe is sceptical and critical of charitable gestures toward the homeless that regard them as passive, helpless, objects of pity.

How should the homeless be viewed and helped?.

Audience participant Rhea Cramer, *Instructor/Supervisor, UO Family and Human Services*, remarked that people whose basic needs are not met are often unable to take action to better their circumstances. Erik De Buhr, *Executive Director, Community Supported Shelters*, who pioneered the use of ‘Conastoga Huts’ for Opportunity Village Eugene, stressed three priorities: safety, community/relationship building, and permanent housing and employment. (Community Supported Shelters supports two rest stops in Eugene.) Reverend Brent Was, *Rector, Episcopal Church of the Resurrection; Board Member, OVE*, stressed the importance of allowing people to make their own decisions and encouraging them to network and engage in and build communities. He continued that virtually everyone he knows on the streets is alone and that the community provided in temporary or transitional housing programs provides opportunities to build self-confidence and trust, as job-related skills are strengthened, along with self-presentation for job interviews. Overall, calling on faith-based support, Was said that we should remember to “Be good neighbors and share.”

More specifically, Andrew Heben, *Urban Planner for Opportunity Village Eugene* and author of *Tent City*, explained that the 60-80sq ft dwellings in Opportunity Village, cost about \$1,000 each to construct. For Emerald Village, now in planning stages, more commodious but still inexpensive housing with utility hook-ups could be constructed for \$10,000 to \$15,000 per unit.

A contrast was made between offering a homeless person a ‘hand out’ versus a ‘hand up.’ Rhonda Spangler, OVE resident, recounted the positive effects of support for self-care in a safe environment, as well as a chance to pursue further education. There was a consensus of the importance of this kind of attitude shift among both panel and audience participants.

Issues of understanding, education for the educated, and service work by university members were also broached by panelists: Pearl Wolfe noted the importance of listening to individual narratives or ‘stories’ of how people have become homeless. Chad Kautzer, *Assistant Professor of Philosophy, University of Colorado Denver and Speaker for the Nov. 6 UO Philosophy Colloquium*, suggested that it was important for members of a university community to understand the problems and causes of their local homeless populations. Throughout these Roundtable discussions, Pat Farr, *Chair, Lane County Board of Commissioners*, who attends to issues of health, land use, and human services for the homeless, emphasized the need for interns and welcomed UO volunteers.

(2) Suggestions and ideas for what the University of Oregon can/could/should do to address homelessness in Eugene and on its campus.

IMMEDIATE

- ❖ REQUEST STATEMENT FROM UNIVERSITY OF OREGON ADMINISTRATION EXPRESSING CONCERN FOR LOCAL HOMELESSNESS PROBLEMS AND A UO SUPPORTED REST STOP FOR WINTER 2014-15. **NOTE: CURRENT REST STOPS IN EUGENE TYPICALLY PROVIDE A SAFE SPACE FOR SHELTER FOR 15-30 PRE-SCREENED INDIVIDUALS, A DUMPSTER, AND PORTABLE TOILETS.**

Ongoing and Longterm

- Provide an **on-campus** food pantry or food vouchers for UO food-insecure undergraduate and graduate students. **Note: Reverend Hale of the First Presbyterian Church runs the Student Food Pantry Episcopal Campus Ministry, Eugene.**
https://calendar.uoregon.edu/event/foodpantry#.VGZia_nF_To
The University of Oregon provides food for Food for Lane County which is a principal source of food for the Student Food Pantry, but, according to Reverend Hale, the University of Oregon does not at this time directly fund or donate to this off-campus pantry.

- Provide a warming center on campus for students and community members during extreme weather.
- Educate members of the university community, including law enforcement, about the causes of contemporary homelessness and different homeless populations. Provide humane and respectful guidelines for interactions with members of these populations.
- Maintain support and information concerning UO student and graduate internships with local homelessness service providers.
- Support research in relevant departments about individuals and distinct groups within the local homeless community.
- Support courses taught by UO faculty that incorporate contributions and co-teaching from local homeless people and their advocates.
- Create connections between academic units and new progressive projects for the homeless community: legal investigation of zoning laws pertaining to tiny houses by members of the UO Law School; University of Oregon School of Architecture and Allied Arts may be a source of design.
- Support construction of a tiny-home village, populated by both students and homeless in the community, on or near campus.
- Relate success stories of formerly homeless athletes on the ‘Jumbotron’ before football games.
- Hold university-wide food and necessities collection drive, with donations to be distributed to local homeless service providers.
- Support or contribute to storage space for the possessions of local homeless people.
- Cooperate with local faith-based organizations on their efforts toward aiding the local homeless and assist these organizations in communicating their present services for the homeless, within the faith-based community.
- Assist in local clean-up projects within the City of Eugene and riverside camps in Springfield.
- Outreach to unhoused UO students by relevant units on campus.
- Provide more effective enforcement of rules and laws against excessive alcohol consumption by UO students, now believed/alleged to lead to abusive and violent acts against homeless individuals in the downtown area of Eugene.

(3) Present and Future Actions and Plans of the CPI

- Request that UO Administration take the following actions immediately, in anticipation of this winter: make a statement expressing support for help to local homeless populations; provide explicit support for an additional rest stop.
- Meet with relevant administrators and units on campus to develop explicit, named programs to address the needs of unhoused and food insecure UO students. **Note: evidence of unhoused UO students is presently anecdotal but widespread. Needed is administrative identification of support for this group with accessible information about UO assistance.**
- Meet with relevant administrators and units on campus to develop workshops with UO faculty, students, and relevant staff and community service providers to begin collaborative programs, for example, internships.
- Begin plans for an international conference on homelessness at the University of Oregon. (funding will be sought for support of this event.)
- Maintain the existing CPI website as a central forum for scholarly, creative, and service work on homelessness issues, both locally and beyond.

<http://homelessness.philosophy.uoregon.edu>

UO Community Philosophy Institute Roundtable

“The Role of the University in Addressing Local Homelessness”

Nov. 7, 2014, 3-5 PM, Knight Library Browsing Room

3:00 – 3:15

WELCOME: Matt Roberts, Senior Director UO Community Relations, Bonnie Mann, Philosophy Department Head, Naomi Zack, CPI Organizing Committee Chair

3:15—3:45

Panel—Experience with Homelessness in the Community

Kitty Piercy, *Mayor, Eugene, Oregon*

Christine Lundberg, *Mayor, Springfield, Oregon*

Michael Kinnison, *Manager, City of Eugene Human Rights and Neighborhood Involvement,*

Jessica Claypool, *Manager, Looking Glass*

Greg Rikhoff, *UO Assistant VP and Chief of Staff, UO President’s Office*

Erik De Buhr, *Executive Director, Community Supported Shelters*

Andrew Heben, *Urban Planner for Opportunity Village Eugene (OVE) Board*

Reverend Brent Was, *Rector, Episcopal Church of the Resurrection; Board Member, OVE*

Sue Sierralupe, *Clinic Manager, Occupy Medical*

Rhonda Spangler, *OVE representative*

Michael Weed, *Student Body President, Lane Community College*

Pearl Wolfe, *Human Services Supervisor, Lane County Human Services Commission*

Chad Kautzer, *Assistant Professor of Philosophy, University of Colorado Denver and Speaker,*

Nov. 6 UO Philosophy Colloquium

Greg Erwin, *Eugene Chamber of Commerce, Managing Principal, Sapient Private Wealth Management*

Pat Farr, *Chair, Lane County Board of Commissioners*

Naomi Zack, *Professor of Philosophy, University of Oregon*

3:45-4: 00

Questions from Audience

4:00-4:30

Panel—What Is/Should be the Role of the University of Oregon?

4:30-5:00

Questions and Comments from Audience

5:00-5:40

Coffee/tea/cheese and fruit, discussions

UO Sponsors of CPI Homelessness Project: UO Philosophy Department, College of Arts and Sciences, Center for the Study of Women and Society, Oregon Humanities Center, UO Community Relations.

UO Community Philosophy Institute Homelessness Project Organizing Committee members:

philosophy faculty – Naomi Zack (chair), Mark Alfano, Colin Koopman; Graduate Student Rep – Russell Duvornoy, Graduate Student Organizing Assistant – Jon La Rochelle

AUDIENCE MEMBERS (update as of Nov. 7)

Matt Roberts, Senior Director, UO Community Relations
 Karen Hyatt, UO Community Relations
 Gino Grimaldi, Springfield City Manager
 Judith Baskin, Associate Dean, UO College of Arts and Sciences
 Dave Hubin, President's Office, University of Oregon
 Gabriela Martinez, Center for the Study of Women and Society, University of Oregon
 Jane Irungu, Director, UO Center for Multicultural Academic Excellence
 Bonnie Mann, Philosophy, University of Oregon
 Ted Toadvine, Philosophy, University of Oregon
 Scott Pratt, Philosophy, University of Oregon
 Russell Duvernoy, Philosophy, University of Oregon
 Mark Alfano, Philosophy, University of Oregon
 Colin Koopman, Philosophy, University of Oregon
 Katey Coates-Cheyney, Student, University of Oregon
 Jon La Rochelle, Philosophy, University of Oregon
 James West, Student, University of Oregon
 Matt Cooper, Cascade, University of Oregon
 Jana Thrift, Videographer, Eugene, Oregon
 Jennifer Frenzer, Advocate, Eugene Oregon
 Robert Molinar, Sociology, University of Oregon
 Jackson Morawski, Student, University of Oregon
 Catherine Siskron, Photographer, Occupy Eugene
 Michael Carrigan, Program Director & Shelter Rights Organizer, Community Alliance of Lane
 County
 Rhea Cramer, Instructor/Supervisor, UO Family and Human Services
 Vicki Nelson, Occupy, Eugene
 Guy Hastings MA Student Philosophy
 Ken Neubeck, Eugene Human Rights Commission
 Ben Stone, Eugene Weekly
 Tanner Owens, Daily Emerald
 Milton Takei, Eugene Springfield Solidarity Network/Jobs with Justice
 Captain James Karl Durr, Patrol Operations, Eugene Police Department
 Lt. Eric Klinko, Eugene Police Department
 Chief Carolyn McDermed, University of Oregon Police Department
 Lt. Brandon Lebrecht, University of Oregon Police Department
 Sgt. Frank Sorrentino, University of Oregon Police Department

Also

Mary Broadhurst
 Dave Spangler
 Tracy Joscelyn
 Bill Goldsmith
 Art Bollman
 Nathan Showers
 Praise, Site Manager, Eugene Safe Spot
 Wayne Martin, Retired Pastor, Homeless Wisdom Circle,
 Majeska Seese-Green, Director, A Community Together
 Debra Josephson, MA Student, Journalism, UO

