



Poor People's United Fund

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Boston's Spare Change Community

Fall 2015

“What then is our response when one of us has been exiled, ostracized? Do we merely cluck our collective tongues and say, “Too bad.”. Or do we make ourselves heard?” (Kip Tiernan)

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Oh what a world it is! I bet you never thought you would be subjected to ‘the Donald’ 24/7. The views of other candidates in his camp are not all that different, however. He is just louder. It has never been clearer that they are the party that would rather inflame fear, bitterness and divisiveness ... Building walls, fences and policies to keep ‘them’ out instead of fostering thoughtful consideration of how to address the problems of a new world situation - a world where people are migrating more frequently due to threats of starvation, war or ethnic cleansing. We need a Congress that wants to do the work of constructing an immigration policy that actually works.



I think Noam Chomsky nailed it recently when he said they are not actually a party. They are domestic insurgents. Sure seems like that. Congress is not a place where discourse on the public good takes place, where approaches weighed, compromises honed.

Talking about keeping people out, it's been a year since the Long Island shelter was closed forcing hundreds to the streets without the chance to gather up their meager belongings before departing. The reason: a rusty bridge. And how were they evicted? Multiple buses over that same condemned rusty bridge. No way to keep the shelter open, as there is no other way to get there, the City said. Seems odd that a few months later a private citizen hired a ferry to transport 400 kids back and forth to a camp on Long Island!

Jim Stewart, longtime advocate for homeless people and the Committee on Homeless Solidarity, pulled people together for a multi-location rally to mark the one year anniversary of the Long Island closing. PPUF was there. We joined with others to protest the structures that are killing our brothers and sisters.

As Kip said many times: “Society has accommodated itself to managing the problem rather than solving it.” Jerry Jones of NYC Inner City Law Center said, “For decades, there's been this willingness to abide people living in absolute destitution,...” It is not rocket science to deduce that what is needed is

more affordable housing, not a proliferation of shelter beds and expensive shelter management systems.

There is a cruelty about having to wait a year for a place to lay one's head for a rest. While we drag our feet people die. There was a new shelter opened for a percentage of the men removed from Long Island but no new accommodations were made available to women. They still languish on the streets or in already overcrowded shelters in horrid conditions.

Homelessness is growing all over the country. Where is the moral outrage? Where is the sense of urgency?



10/18/2015 Residents of Boston Public Library 5 am

Los Angeles and Portland, Oregon have declared a state of emergency. They are investing both money and are making changes in zoning in order to speed up the building of affordable housing.

I would like to end with a quote from Pope Francis: "there is no social or moral justification --- no justification whatsoever for the lack of housing..." We agree.

We know everyone is busy. But we hope you might be able to take time to help us celebrate 35 years of PPUF. Yes, we are a small organization but we say what needs to be said about the plight of poor people and provide a bit of help for people living on the edge and have been doing that for 35 years! Old South has offered ppuf shelter for all those years and we are eternally grateful. We could not have done any of this work without having a home at Old South nor could we have done any of it without your support!

Please join us Sunday, **November 15th** from 3 to 5 to remember Kip, meet our friends from Homes for Families hear the soothing voice of jazz singer and dear friend Rebecca Parris and see some fun photos (maybe you will be in some of them!)

In struggle and hope,

Georgia, Margaret and Fran

PPUF Food Certificates

There are many ways to measure poverty. For us at PPUF, the incredible need of many poor is demonstrated by the thanks we receive for the very small amount of help we are able to give a few families in desperate need. Families are deeply grateful for even a ten dollar food card. When you consider how little you can buy with ten dollars, it conveys how very hard many lives are. Those who call us for rent help, moving expenses, back utility bills and a variety of other needs, are also grateful for the referrals we make to them. They often say that they have called nine or ten agencies and that we were the only agency to call them back. Every human service agency is overloaded and without adequate funds. It is thanks to all of you that we are able to help some of those who are in desperate need, as well as to continue to press the legislature to do more for poor families.

Help Make Sure that the Mass Trust Act Passes This Year

by Vicky Steinitz

Help Make Sure that the Mass Trust Act Passes This Year

This summer, as the endless election season gets underway, Donald Trump's outrageous anti-immigrant rants are daily fare and all the Republican contenders are competing to outdo him. Political attacks on "sanctuary cities" are escalating in Washington after the murder of a young woman in San Francisco by an undocumented man who had reentered the U.S. after multiple deportations. The waves of anti-immigrant hysteria and racism which have stopped national immigration reform in its tracks continue to mount.

We know that scapegoating of vulnerable groups is a powerful tool of demagogues. Attitudes toward immigrants have always been volatile, easily influenced by the media framing of unique events. Still, the current assault on immigrant rights, particularly here in Massachusetts, feels unprecedented. In an effort to restore immigrant communities' trust in the police, a coalition of grassroots activists has been seeking to end the so-called Secure Communities program and to pass a MA Trust Act. The MA Trust Act aims to stop cooperation between local law enforcement and the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement office (ICE).

Secure Communities is the misnomer given by ICE to a directive which asked local law enforcement officials to hold undocumented immigrants until ICE can pick them up, place them in detention centers and on the road to deportation. During the Obama administration, an unprecedented number, more than two million undocumented immigrants have been deported. In 2013 alone, 438,421 were deported. While ICE claims S-Comm (the activists' shorthand) is aimed at criminals, more than half of those detained had no previous criminal record.

S-Comm created intense fear in immigrant communities, fear that children would return from school to discover their parents had been detained, fear that contacting local police to report criminal behavior or domestic assaults, would lead to one's own detention and deportation. Community trust in local law-enforcement deteriorated and the security of life in neighborhoods with large concentrations of immigrants declined. Indeed, S-Comm produced its opposite -- insecure communities.

Despite Obama's Executive Actions last year to end Secure Communities, increase prosecutorial discretion in ruling on individual cases, and provide temporary protected status to many undocumented immigrants, the deportation machinery remains in place and is almost as active as ever. PEP, the Priority Enforcement Program (PEP) has replaced S-Comm. It emphasizes that the focus is on detaining criminals but it appears to be continuing its practices under another name.

This fall is a critical time in the fight to pass the MA Trust Act. Please contact your state representatives and senators and ask them to support the bill. The legislation is currently in the Public Safety and Judiciary Committees and there will be a hearing this fall. We need to fill the hearing room with supporters and will post the hearing date on the PPUF website as soon as it is announced.

The MA Trust Act is one of three pieces of current legislation aimed at easing the plight of undocumented immigrants. The other two are the Safe Drivers Act which allows undocumented persons to obtain drivers licenses and the Dreamers Act which makes students eligible for instate tuition if they are high school graduates and have lived in the US for three or more years.

In August, Gov. Baker said he would veto these pro-immigrant bills if they reached his desk. Before meeting with advocates to hear their arguments, before evaluating evidence presented in the hearings on these bills, he announces his intent to veto the legislation. This is unacceptable. We cannot allow the ugly anti-immigrant statements and actions to continue that are tarnishing our history as a welcoming state. It is time to fight back.

FOOD

SNAP UPDATE—Margaret Rhodes

In our last newsletter, Georgia Mattison described the chaos that resulted when the Commonwealth rolled out a new computer program that evaluates client applications without any social work oversight. Formerly, a social worker would check each application to make sure that there were no errors. With the new program, 50,000 households were dropped from the system, most of them due to errors. When recipients tried to contact their DTA office, they experienced long waits and often could not reach anyone even by phone. Perhaps needless to say, food stamps are critical for many families, sometimes their only source of income. Without food stamps, families go hungry.

Since April, with the new Commissioner in place, a few much-needed changes to the beleaguered SNAP program have been made. Although Comm. McCue has not agreed to hire more social workers—he should; they are much needed—he has required workers to process applications on Saturdays until there is no longer a backlog. SNAP households are slowly being added back, according to a report from USDA.

A second change to SNAP addresses DTA's former policy of "expunging" SNAP benefits if they were not used up quickly enough. Those whose unused benefits were taken away often did not know why and were left without funds. There are many reasons why a client might have unused funds. If they receive a small benefit, they may wait until there is enough for a real shopping. Some have to wait for assistance to shop, and others may have lost their card. DTA will no longer "expunge" unused funds, a practice that was in fact illegal.

DTA has also revised SNAP calculation notices to give more information, so that clients know whom DTA has on record and the source and amount of income of each family member, as well as the deductions included. In this way, clients have a way of knowing whether they are receiving the proper amount.

These are steps in the right direction but much more is needed. There are so many applicable deductions (such as for medical cost, dependent care and housing), each with its set of confusing parameters, that it is still difficult for applicants to figure out whether they are getting the funds to which they have a right. Many still do not get the one-on-one help needed to understand the complicated rules.

The food SNAP coalition (with Georgia Mattison's participation) and the Mass. Law Reform Institute continue to work to improve the conditions for poor people in Massachusetts. It is thanks to their efforts that the above changes have been made. We very much appreciate the calls all of you have made to legislators in order to prevent the worst legislation and to improve the lives of those who need food stamps. Much remains to be done.

We learned of a great new group in Arlington that rescues food in order to feed hungry people.

To learn more... go to
781-819-4225 or go to foodlinkma.org



Housing

The Right to Remain Movement

Community groups from across the city will come together to build our movement and relationships by discussing housing, zoning, jobs, land, and transit policies, testifying to city council candidates on the citywide displacement crisis, and planning strategy and tactics.



Right to the City Boston is an alliance formed in 2007 of grassroots based-building organizations representing low-income, poc/immigrant communities working together for Social Justice. Alternatives for Community and Environment, Boston Workers Alliance, Chinese Progressive Association, City Life/Vida Urbana, New England United 4 Justice, Neighbors United for a Better East Boston have all come together under a platform of values and principles...the Right to Stable Community, the Right to Economic Justice and Good jobs, the Right to Democratic Participation, the Right to Public Good and the Right to Healthy Environment. Our collective work is centered on fighting displacement and gentrification of our BOSTON. We have launched a comprehensive Right to Remain stabilization campaign focused on tenant rights and protections, community control of land and development and making speculators pay.



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Non-Profit Organization

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Save the Date



Poor People's United Fund

35th Anniversary Celebration!

← **Sunday, November 15th** →

3 PM to 5 PM, Old South Church, 645 Boylston Street, Boston



Honoring Kip:

**An overview of PPUF History
Current Efforts & More!**



— with —

**Jazz Great and PPUF Friend
Rebecca Parris**



"The Journey to Justice Must Be Done In the Company of Others"
-KipTiernan