



Poor People's United Fund

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Boston's Spare Change Community

Spring 2018

"We need to remember that it is all one struggle, a common struggle. ...to reclaim the moral vision, we have to remember what it was...one nation, indivisible, with liberty, and justice, for all."

Kip Tiernan

Kip's Memorial Coming Soon! See more on back page

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Feeling befuddled? Anxious? Rageful? Frustrated? There is just so much awful stuff swirling around us that it's hard to know which way to go. For poor people things have never been good. Throughout her life Kip saw clearly the treacherous path we were walking -growth in the shelter industry - growth in hunger -more assets for the rich and a big dose of hatred of the poor.

I do believe that before she died Kip had a sense that the incremental progress that had been made over the years would soon be coming undone.

Since dedication of Kip's Memorial is now pending, I thought it would be the right time to remember her sitting at her beloved Selectric furiously pounding out her thoughts. And it's a good time to reflect on some of her powerful words. The speech I chose is one she wrote for the 1987 PPUF newsletter. It's disturbing just how well it fits today's situation despite the actors having different names. (oh God how we could use her wit and wisdom to penetrate today's goings on!) Just substitute current names for the ones in the piece.



Time of the Toad

It seems all of our chickens are coming home to roost, hunger, homelessness, lack of access to justice for the poor and the root cause of the crisis-cum chronic condition of America is simple: a transfer of America's resources from the poor to the rich, from the welfare of the public to the warfare of those with an unquenchable lust for power. I prefer to think of this transition from social consciousness to social Darwinism as the politics of accommodation. To illustrate it let's go back in time to still another dark day in our history, the days of McCarthyism.

*Dalton Trumbo, one of the Hollywood Ten, ultimately wrote a book about that period and called it *The Time of the Toad*. He got the story from the Dreyfuss case. The hopelessly inaccurate accounts in the French newspapers regarding the famous case prompted one young Frenchman to ask Emile Zola: "How come?" Zola answered: "If you go to the market everyday and for a sou or two purchase a live, fat wiggling frog and swallow it whole, and no matter how repugnant it seems, you do it for several days by the tenth day you really won't mind it and by the eleventh day, in fact, you even look forward to it." Well, that's probably how it happens. Accommodation. Hannah Arendt, speaking of another time in history referred to it as the banality of evil.*

It is once again the time of the toad. Let me briefly litanize some of the components: Iran-gate; AIDS; teenage suicide; Ivan Boesky and his Wall Street Merry Makers; Pearly Gate, the Moral Majority, those wonderful folks who have been rewriting the Bill of Rights, the constitution and the Gospels, blackmail, adultery, and drug addiction; the patriotic North and Poindexter pulling out the fifth amendment to save their own sweet skins; a sleep-in of over 200 homeless women and 400 children at the Boston State House, all of whom live 40% below the poverty level; the frightening increase in mortality rates of infants in Boston (mostly minority babies); hunger, homelessness, and lack of access to justice, to medical services, to education; a press conference called by Associated Grant makers last week and all human service agencies in Massachusetts to protest the proposed regulations that would retroactively tax all of us for speaking for the issues, the I.R.S. now calling that lobbying; bag lady dolls being sold in Copley Place for \$100 and \$200.

The bad magic of the federal government with its mirrors, and glitz and grotesque newspeak is a terrifying array of image vs. issue, substance vs. symbol and many of us out of fear, or ignorance, accommodate ourselves to it; smiling back at the lovable image of our genial Hollywood President who speaks of national defense and human service cuts in the same affable voice. More guns and less butter are the images that become issues rather than growing hunger, homelessness and deprivation that is breathtaking. Last year Granada, this year – I thought it might be Malden but it looks like Nicaragua. How much can we take? Plenty it seems. It is, my friends, the Time of the Toad.

In Struggle and Hope

Kip, Georgia, Margaret, Lynnette and Fran

New Tax Law and Donations to Charity

You may have heard about the changes in federal taxes. One of the changes that has non-profits worried is the impact of the doubling of the standard deduction. Many people itemized on their taxes because some of those itemizations allowed them to reduce their tax burden, for example mortgage interest and donations to charities. With an increase in the standard deduction, unless you make a huge amount of money, you will not benefit from itemizing charitable donations. Non-profits are concerned that as a result people have less incentive to donate to charity.

And without the incentive, people will lose an important reminder to give to charity. In the past, as the end of a year approached, people who had not yet made charitable donations said, "Oh I had better make donations before year end so I can itemize those on my taxes and get some tax relief." This built in annual reminder resulted in many charities including PPUF receiving over 60% of their donations between November and December of each year.

We have great confidence in our donors and hope you will be able to stay with us while we keep on keeping on working on hunger and homelessness.

Trying Everything to Reduce Food Insecurity

by Georgia Mattison

Led by our Worcester Congressman and SNAP advocate, Jim McGovern, and the Food Snap (Food Stamp) Improvement Coalition, Massachusetts has had a significant Impact in staving off cuts in Food Stamps in Congress. At the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) and Feeding America Anti-Hunger Policy Conference in Washington, DC, February 25-27, our Massachusetts attendees offered materials developed by the Greater Boston Food Bank and the Children's Health Watch showing the massive health costs that would result from cutting food stamps. The materials showed an avoidable \$2.4 Billion cost tied to malnutrition. Those costs would far outstrip the costs of all food programs. This is the first study of the health related costs of hunger and food insecurity in Massachusetts. One in ten people in the Commonwealth cannot afford enough food to be in decent Health according to an October 4, 2017 survey by the United States Department of Agriculture.

At the Conference a panel of insurance providers talked about standards of reimbursement to doctors for screening patients routinely for food insecurity and providing referrals.

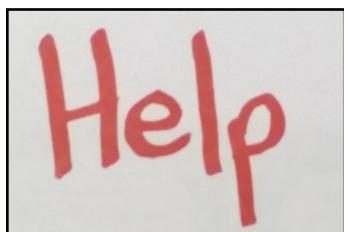
The Massachusetts Law Reform Institute MLRI released a study of 154 Massachusetts school districts' current charge/shaming policies. Children who do not have money for food are shamed in lunch lines, their trays of food sometimes dumped in the trash. The report received a lot of press attention. Massachusetts Senator Creem has quickly filed a bill to end public lunch shaming by adopting the recommendations from MLRI's report. They include mandating all school districts that are eligible for the Community Eligibility Program CEP to implement it. CEP provides free breakfast and lunch to schools who have over 62% of their students eligible for free and reduced meals. It also requires all school districts to see if students are enrolled in any food program that would automatically make them eligible for school breakfast and lunch.

Lift the Cap on Kids has convinced 81 Massachusetts representatives, a majority of the House, to sign on to Lead Sponsor Marjory Decker's bill h85/s34 to end the practice of excluding a baby born while the mother receives Transitional Aid for families with Dependent Children TAFD from benefits. Dr Deborah Frank, Director of the Grow Clinic at Boston Medical Center has measured the increase in malnutrition in all the kids in the families affected malnutrition results in higher health cost over time. The welfare coalition submitted testimony from 20 different organizations including PPUF at the March 16 Committee on Ways and Means at the State House. The welfare coalition has brought together over one hundred organizations to push for the end to this cruel and egregious family cap.

NEWS FLASH! We are excited to tell you that the MA State House passed the bill! On to the MA Senate!



Please Help PPUF



As Kippy said to you in a 1990 letter,

"Can you help us today? Because today is the only day we have really. Tomorrow is for those who can see their way clearly to it. And while our faith remains strong as ever, our check book is very queazy. Anything you send will be greatly appreciated."

PPUF has been able to assist 150 individuals & families with food, back rent, utility payments, and medical supplies. PPUF advocates for people who are

eking out an existence and assists organizations working to get help for people addicted to opioids.

Because we would go crazy if we didn't, we try to block out the political noise around us as best we can then identify people we can help and issues we can have an impact on. We depend upon you to do this work. As Kip said, "Anything you can send will be greatly appreciated."

Hope Springs Eternal...

A long-time advocate for homeless people will be retiring soon. Sister Linda Bessom, SND (Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur) is a person with whom we have worked over the years. Sr. Linda participated in every fast Kip initiated. At rallies and demonstrations she rallied us all to action and somehow had an appropriate social justice song she tenaciously tried to get all of us to sing (and we did !)

Sr. Linda has been working with Mass. Homeless Coalition serving as Outreach/Senior Community Organizer since 1995. Since its beginning in 1981, the Coalition has acted from a strong belief in the inherent human dignity of each person and considers housing as a basic human right, integral to the common good. Through direct service, homelessness prevention and advocacy, the Coalition attempts to ensure that everyone has a place to call home.

Through her ministry in Lynn, Sr. Linda worked to help the organization achieve its mission of eradicating homelessness by collaborating with people who address the root causes of homelessness. She listened to the voices of the people most impacted and engaged them in a process to find long-term solutions to bring about systemic change.

Sr. Linda has long been a voice for people experiencing homelessness and those struggling for decent affordable housing, adequate income and accessible services. PPUF joins many others in expressing appreciation for her years of vital work for the poor and homeless people of Boston. We hope she will be able to get some much needed rest!



common cathedral

By David Albaugh

Introduction: Old South Church is true to its urban calling. When the bridge to Long Island was closed it set off a series of crises. Homeless people lost access to their meager belongings, their IDs, medications, photos etc. The community of Old South joined other churches, synagogues and mosques in responding to the needs of those displaced, collecting and distributing clothing, coats, gloves.

The effects of the bridge closing are still being felt. It was impossible for the city shelters to absorb the hundreds who had been sheltered on Long Island. Through it all Old South continued to join with other religious communities in the City to do what it could to help alleviate the suffering. One of those groups is now PPUF's next door office neighbor at Old South. It is a fantastic organization named **common cathedral**. We wanted you to get to know about their dedicated work.

Common cathedral (the originator of the Ecclesia movement, now a worldwide network of outdoor churches) began during the summer of 1994 when Rev. Dr. Debbie Little Wyman, an Episcopal priest, first met with unhoused people on the streets of Boston offering sandwiches, friendship, and referrals. From that simple beginning unhoused and housed people, service providers, clergy, seminarians, artists, and professionals of all kinds continue to come together in activities that work to meet the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of unhoused persons in Boston.

The mission of common cathedral is to build community, provide spiritual care to unhoused people in Boston and bridge the gap between housed and unhoused people. Together, we support chronically impoverished persons who face many obstacles such as mental illness, addictions, isolation, or the stigma of having been incarcerated. Through leadership opportunities, one on one support and creative outlets people find self-esteem and a supportive community where all are welcomed.

common cathedral is unique in the following ways:

All are welcome – no one is turned away

We are not a government agency and have no requirements for participation

We care for both the physical and spiritual well being of our community

We work together and learn from each other every day

We celebrate all faiths and traditions



The common cathedral community is comprised of a small but dedicated staff, volunteers, and un-housed individuals who benefit from our work and often take the lead in forming programs and ensuring their success. During the week we offer Sunday worship, places to be in community, an open art studio and small groups. In all we do there are leadership opportunities that provide housed, unhoused and low-income persons the chance to succeed and find meaningful community in the City of Boston.

As mandated by our mission, all of our programs are designed by and for our community. Together, we create safe, "common" places where all are welcome, all are respected, all are loved, and every story is heard. Through our outreach, we strive to share our lessons of compassion and hope with those outside of our community.

Join us – volunteer, advocate, and be a part of the common good!



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Non-Profit Organization
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**Installation of Kip's Memorial
To Begin In May!
Dedication Event Will Follow
(A Few Weeks After Installation is Complete)
Perhaps In June?
Keep Your Eye On PPUF Website.**

If We Have Enough Lead Time, We Will Send You A Dedication Date Notice



Save the Date!
Kip Tiernan Memorial Dedication