



Poor People's United Fund

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Boston's Spare Change Community

Spring 2023

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Kip loved this time of the year. She frequently said, "I could have opened Rosie's on Good Friday but Easter seemed a better day." It's a perfect time of year to take in the messages of Spring, Passover and Easter because they are all about HOPE. But in truth we need to focus on hope every season of the year. In this newsletter I have included quotes & stories that aid in my reflection on the state of the world. People like Kip and Mel King help me keep my balance. Perhaps they will help you too. The following quote is so apropos to our situation today that it sounds like she wrote it yesterday.

"Face it. We have been mugged big time by our false prophets who are busy creating our realities and redefining our lives. But there are windows of opportunity. I can touch it. I can feel it. I can taste it and I couldn't get up in the morning if I didn't believe it. I also believe we care, that we do too give a damn. And I have this enormous faith in you and me that somehow we will make it through the night together. We need to once again have faith in ourselves, to believe that we can change things together."



We need to keep our wits about us and our strength up. We have a lot to do. We just need to stay alert and work together. Understandably, this is not easy. Some days the news- lots of it bad news- feels as if it's coming furiously from every direction. Children murdered in Nashville. Ukraine being pummeled. Banks failing. Where do we start? Policies to tamp down inflation impact all of us but especially low income and no income people. Which assaults on poor people do we address? For Poor People's United Fund for 43 years we have focused on hunger and homelessness. Food prices continue to rise yet SNAP benefits (food stamps) are under siege - again. With your help we are able to keep individuals and families from running out of food. One young man told me that he is going to school and by the time he pays for rent and books, there is nothing left for food.

We have acclimated ourselves to seeing homeless people wandering our streets, sometimes standing with signs asking for money at intersections. More affordable housing is needed. How long have we been saying that? Since the mid-1990s the U.S. has lost 200,000 units of public housing much of it due to years of decay from underfunding. There has been no funding to replace those lost units. One of the last bastions of affordable housing are mobile home parks. Even though people may own the mobile home, they do not own the property it sits on. Around the country the owners of those parks are selling them to developers. After such a sale, most of the residents will find themselves homeless. The National Coalition of Low Income Housing survey showed a US-wide shortage of 7.3 million affordable housing units for extremely low income renters.

PPUF joins with others to make sure that those who hold the purse strings understand how dire the situation is for those of us who have little or nothing. The US Census report says that as of **early February 2023, an estimated 21.1% of households with children are facing food insecurity.** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP- food stamps) benefits go to 1 in 9 Massachusetts residents... 767,000 people! Our colleagues at Mass Law Reform say that "Nationwide, federal nutrition programs provide 19 of every 20 emergency meals- private charity could never address the full need for food."

Our hope is that you will stay with us while we keep on keeping on and work to help alleviate hunger and homelessness.

In Struggle and Hope,

Fran, Margaret and Georgia.

Good Friday Reflection

(Delivered by Kip Tiernan at the Paulist Center Good Friday service, April 9, 1993)

The passion and the logic of Jesus, as he felt his life slipping away, is still impressive to me, after all these thousands of years. He cared a lot. And he knew that even in his death, caring must go on. And so he bequeathed John to Mary and Mary to John, knowing they would in turn care for each other. In an increasingly hostile world, the words “Woman, this is your son. Son, this is your Mother” become more meaningful. In a world of battering and brutal systemic violence on mothers and sons, who cares now? There was this wonderful woman in the Old Testament, who ran shrieking through the streets, claiming she could not get justice in either the courts or the synagogue. It seems no one cared then either. In an effort to meet some of those needs I started Rosie’s Place on Easter Sunday, 1974. And several years later (1979) I began the Boston Food Bank. And yet, here we are, nineteen years later, with homelessness and hunger worse than ever before.

In a world of dismissal and brutality and prejudice, who cares? Hallmark to the rescue, perhaps? A fleeting moment of “Oh yeah, it’s Easter or Mother’s Day or Christmas” – not enough my friends. How dare we not care! How dare we not stand up for our sisters and brothers in agony. How dare we deny the reality of what is happening to all of us? One man who changed life forever for all of us dared to care. Dared to bequeath caring to the rest of us. Have we become so callous and insensitive that we turn our backs on the most fragile, the most vulnerable, the most precious...the women in our life...the men in our life...the children in our life? To care is to count ourselves among the lucky.

To care is to know that we are loved, that we are precious, and that our lives mean something to somebody. There was a time we cared. Remember? Remember civil rights in the fifties and sixties: A black man led us all into the light for a little while before he was cut down before his prime. There was a stone tablet just outside the Lorraine Motel room where Martin Luther King was shot down; on that tablet was the phrase from the book of Genesis which read: “Behold, here comes the dreamer, let us slay him and see what becomes of his dreams”. For too many the dreams became deferred. Our streets were awash with the blood of our children, our mothers, our grandmothers, our sisters. This past winter was a killer for the lonely, the dispossessed, the ones who ran shrieking through the streets to get justice, and the cold Boston snow didn’t give a soft white damn. “Woman, this is your son. Son, this is your Mother”.

Once more we need to regroup. We need to remember. We need to care. We need a moral, ethical, critical voice today. “No! In the name of God, not in my name will you do this...not in my name will you summarily dismiss the most fragile”. But the retreat has replaced the rage; the fax has replaced the fury; the press release has replaced the passion. I miss those days of confrontation, the in your face dialogues we insisted upon. I miss...the collective, communal, collegial, “care-ing”... Because, my brothers and sisters, we are accountable,,, we must somehow, find ways to make a difference in somebody’s life today. It begins by caring and by standing up for someone else and being willing to take the risk of being human for God’s sake.

If not you, who? If not now, when? We need to recreate a community worthy of us, a society in which it will be easier to remain human. We need to hold ourselves accountable for each and every one of us. Why? Because we care. Because it is our legacy. Because Jesus asked us to when he said “Woman, this is your son. Son, this is your Mother”, and we cannot fail Him or we will fail ourselves.

Update on Lift Our Kids- End Deep Poverty

Deep Poverty is income below half the Federal Poverty Level.

Deep Poverty for a family of three is **\$1036 a month** (January 2023).

For 20 years, the maximum TAFDC (Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children) grant for a family of 3 with no income was **\$593 a month** — not even close to the Deep Poverty Level.

In a historic breakthrough, the Lift Our Kids Coalition persuaded the Massachusetts Legislature to increase grants by 10% in January 2021.

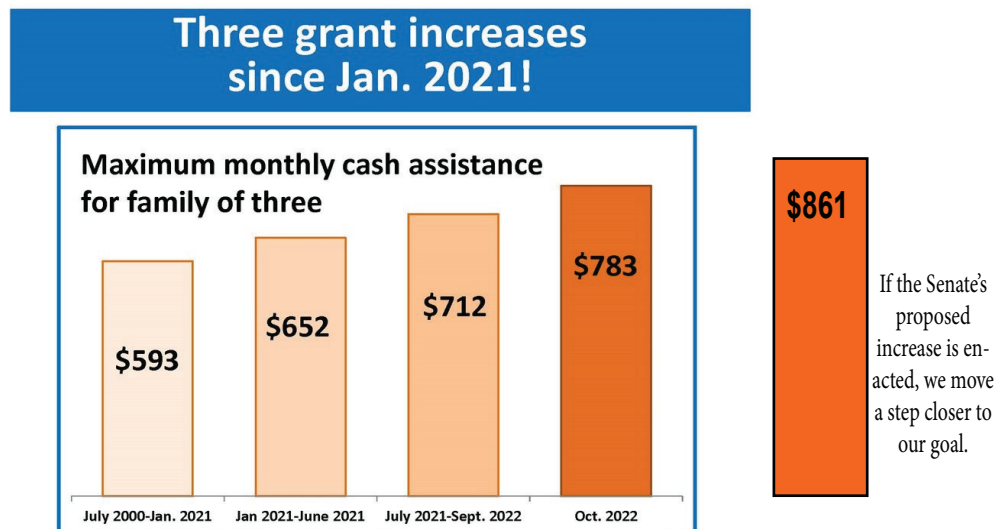
This was the 1st increase for TAFDC since 2000 and the 1st increase for EAEDC (benefits for elders and persons with disabilities) since 1988.

The Lift Our Kids Coalition persuaded the Legislature to increase grants by an additional 9.1% in July 2021 and another 10% in October 2022.

These increases would not have happened without the persistent advocacy of our legislative leaders, Senator Sal DiDomenico and Representative Marjorie Decker.

Even with these increases, grants are still far below the level of Deep Poverty

The maximum TAFDC grant for a family of 3 with no income is \$783 a month, \$200 a month **below** the Deep Poverty level of \$1036 a month for 3 people.



Skyrocketing inflation has already eaten up most of the recent increases.

Deep Poverty hurts kids.

Health and emotional damage

Toxic stress

Impaired school performance

Homelessness & housing instability

For more information, please visit LiftOurKidsMA.org
or contact: Deborah Harris, Mass Law

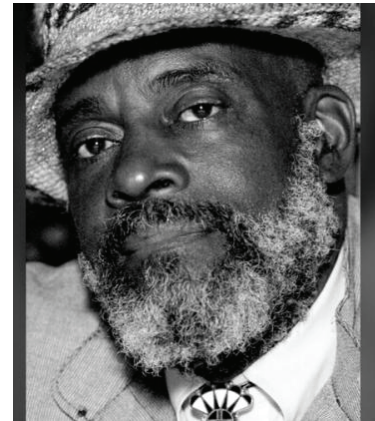
Reform Institute, dharris@mlri.org, 617-357-0700 x313,
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Mel King

A snapshot of Kip Tiernan's comments at Mel King's MIT's Symposium
On the Power of Love in Research, Planning and Education.
May 18, 1996

When Mel King approached me ... to speak here, I should have known the scope of interest- The Power of Love and the Love of Power. How it intersects our lives. It's a little I think, like the future of capitalism and the future of poverty. How inextricably linked they are. Anytime Mel has asked me to be somewhere or say something, I have never said No, partially because every time I asked him to be somewhere or say something, he was there.

It is safe, I suppose, to say we began our respective journey together many many years ago, walking the same streets, see the same problems and people, knowing somehow, that love would find a way. When I was a member of the Warwick House/St. Philip's team ministry in Roxbury, Jack White and I did our first fundraiser for Mel in 1979, when he was running for Mayor against Kevin White. When he ran again in 1983, needless to say I was there again and was invited to speak this time on Joe Williamson's front porch to a group of supporters. And as I looked over the crowd I said, "We are a rainbow coalition of support. We are black, white and yellow and red. And we are old and young and this rainbow I see before me will be yet another beginning for those of us who yearn for freedom and justice...



The students here at MIT have been fortunate enough to have at their disposal the views and hopes and dreams of Mel King. And I hope you have listened carefully to what this extraordinary man has had to say over the years. Those of us who have walked the walk with him would do it again in a heartbeat. Because he is kind, and generous and wise. He is also a man of great passion and as political reporter, Ken Harnett said, "King is one of the few political figures in Boston who doesn't stray from a set of fiercely held values. The least pragmatic of politicians, King has a compulsion to say what he believes even if his message isn't necessarily what people want to hear."

A portion of an editorial from the Bay State Banner

... Through all his causes and campaigns, King was guided by humanism, a love for all people, that made him one of the best of us.

I ask you to honor the measure of this great man. Follow his lead and try to help everyone you come across. Even if you don't understand them. Even if they don't look like you. Even if they do not come from where you do. Even if they don't sound like you. Even if their interests don't seem to align with yours.

Move forward despite the fear of others, as King did. Ignore the limitations society tries to put on you, as he did. Call out the injustices that hurt all of us, as he did. Ask others to stand in the breach with you and require ourselves to be better and never hate.

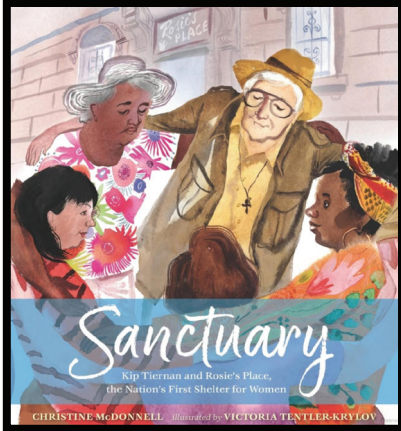
The best tribute we can pay to Mel King is to remember we can make this world a better place. Mel showed us how. We have the power to make our community better if we just sit down, as he did at his legendary Sunday brunches, and break bread, talk, plan

Read a biography of Mel online at
<https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/honorable-melvin-king>

From the Author of Sanctuary

Writing Sanctuary: Kip Tiernan and Rosie's Place, the Nation's First Shelter for Women.

Christine McDonnell



I never met Kip Tiernan but I feel as if I know her well. I taught at Rosie's Place for seven years and got the idea of writing about Kip during this time. Frequently the guests would ask if I had known Kip. "She was something else," they'd say.

My first idea was a biography aimed at middle school readers. In 2016 I spent the fall reading Kip's papers. I had written several chapters and a proposal when, at a writing conference, I saw picture book biographies of social activists. I knew instantly that this format was a perfect fit for Kip's story, making it accessible to a wide audience.

People ask me what I hope children and other readers

will take from this book. My answer: I

hope we will all learn compassion from Kip's example. In 1993 Kip said, "We must, somehow, find ways to make a difference in somebody's life today. It begins by caring and by standing up for someone else and by taking the risk of being human."

I sign every copy of Sanctuary with these words: Dare to Care. That is Kip's challenge to us all



Recognition: Goddard Riverside CBC Youth Book Prize for Social Justice; Horn Book Fanfare Best Books of 2022; Kirkus Reviews Best Books of 2022; Rise: A Feminist Book Project honoree; SLJ Fuse #8 31 Days, 31 Lists: 2022 Nonfiction Picture Books

OTHER NEWS



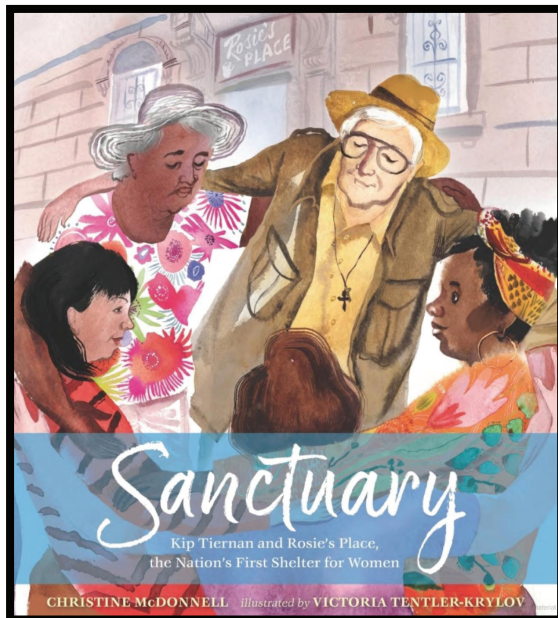
****Old South Retirement:** Last spring we reported that Senior minister, Rev. Nancy Taylor was retiring. This spring Old after 23 years Old South Administrator, Helen McCrady is embarking on a new life chapter. Helen was the person who made the place hum. She knew where everything was, what was next on the annual calendar, how to organize things for weddings, funerals, concerts, and marathons! Helen is a problem solver. Everyone in the building knew whatever we were trying to accomplish, it would all work out because Helen had our backs. PPUF will always be grateful for her many kindnesses and the numerous ways she helped both PPUF and Community Works over the years.

May the road rise up to meet you, Helen.

****This year Rosie's Place turned 49!** Stay tuned for special celebrations on the upcoming 50th year. (It's a mixed blessing. Yes? Too bad there needs to be a Rosie's Place. Yet, thank God it's there.)



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German theologian Dorothy Soelle told us “We must not dwell on uncertainties that might overwhelm us, but rather on possibilities. In living history as we are, we see not only war, but resistance to war: not only injustice, but self sacrifice: not only silence in the face of tyranny, but defiance: not only callousness, but compassion. _____

Please check with your local library to make sure they have a copy of *Sanctuary*.
Then let me know what your trip to the library reveals! Thank you.

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