Poverty and Homelessness Resources

"Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man made and can be removed by the actions of human beings."

Nelson Mandela
1918–2013

No one should be left out in the cold
The Rose That Grew From Concrete

Written by Tupac Shakur

Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature's law is wrong, it learned to walk without having feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air.
Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else ever cared.

Tupac’s Childhood:

Now a martyr of gangster rap, Tupac Amaru Shakur was born in 1971 in Brooklyn, New York, the son of two Black Panther members. Born into a family notorious for their brushes with law, he had no contact with his biological father until he was an adult. Violence was nothing new to the youngster whose mother was imprisoned while pregnant with him. It is no surprise that his music was full of references to ghettos, street violence, gangs and other social problems because he faced these trials while growing up. Shakur’s family was poverty-stricken; he began living and hustling on the streets before the age of 18. Despite his impoverished circumstances, he managed to work his way into the prestigious Baltimore School of the Arts. There he shined, writing raps and acting. The rest, as they say, is history.
An Excerpt From: “The Cop and the Anthem”  
By O. Henry

1 Soapy moved restlessly on his seat in Madison Square. There are certain signs to show that winter is coming. Birds begin to fly south. Women who want nice new warm coats become very kind to their husbands. And Soapy moves restlessly on his seat in the park. When you see these signs, you know that winter is near. A dead leaf fell at Soapy’s feet. That was a special sign for him that winter was coming. It was time for all who lived in Madison Square to prepare.

2 Soapy’s mind now realized the fact. The time had come. He had to find some way to take care of himself during the cold weather. And therefore he moved restlessly on his seat. Soapy’s hopes for the winter were not very high. He was not thinking of sailing away on a ship. He was not thinking of southern skies, or of the Bay of Naples. Three months in the prison on Blackwell’s Island was what he wanted. Three months of food every day and a bed every night, three months safe from the cold north wind and safe from cops. This seemed to Soapy the most desirable thing in the world.

3 For years Blackwell’s Island had been his winter home. Richer New Yorkers made their large plans to go to Florida or to the shore of the Mediterranean Sea each winter. Soapy made his small plans for going to the Island.

4 And now the time had come. Three big newspapers, some under his coat and some over his legs, had not kept him warm during the night in the park. So Soapy was thinking of the Island. There were places in the city where he could go and ask for food and a bed. These would be given to him. He could move from one building to another, and he would be taken care of through the winter. But he liked Blackwell’s Island better.

5 Soapy’s spirit was proud. If he went to any of these places, there were certain things he had to do. In one way or another, he would have to pay for what they gave him. They would not ask him for money. But they would make him wash his whole body. They would make him answer questions; they would want to know everything about his life.

6 No. Prison was better than that. The prison had rules that he would have to follow. But in prison a gentleman’s own life was still his own life. Soapy, having decided to go to the Island, at once began to move toward his desire.

7 There were many easy ways of doing this. The most pleasant way was to go and have a good dinner at some fine restaurant. Then he would say that he had no money to pay. And then a cop would be called. It would all be done very quietly. The cop would arrest him. He would be taken to a judge. The judge would do the rest.

8 Soapy believed that above his legs he looked all right. His face was clean. His coat was good enough. If he could get to a table, he believed that success would be his. The part of him that would be seen above the table would look all right. The waiter would bring him what he asked for.

9 He began thinking of what he would like to eat. In his mind he could see the whole dinner. The cost would not be too high. He did not want the restaurant people to feel any real anger. But the dinner would leave him filled and happy for the journey to his winter home.

10 But as Soapy put his foot inside the restaurant door, the head waiter saw his broken old shoes and the torn clothes that covered his legs. Strong and ready hands turned Soapy around and moved him quietly and quickly outside again.
Soapy turned off Broadway. It seemed that this easy, this most desirable way to the Island was not to be his. He must think of some other way to getting there.

At a corner of Sixth Avenue was a shop with a wide glass window, bright with electric lights. Soapy picked up a big stone and threw it through the glass. People came running around the corner. A cop was the first among them. Soapy stood still, and he smiled when he saw the cop.

“Where’s the man that did that?” asked the cop.

“Don’t you think that I might have done it?” said Soapy. He was friendly and happy. What he wanted was coming toward him. But the cop’s mind would not consider Soapy. Men who break windows do not stop there to talk to cops. They run away as fast as they can. The cop saw a man further along the street, running. He ran after him. And Soapy, sick at heart, walked slowly away. He had failed two times.

At last Soapy came to one of the quiet streets on the east side of the city. He turned here and began to walk south toward Madison Square. He was going home, although home was only a seat in a park.

But on a very quiet corner Soapy stopped. Here was an old, old church. Through one colored-glass window came a soft light. Sweet music came to Soapy’s ears and seemed to hold him there. The moon was above, peaceful and bright. There were few people passing. He could hear birds high above him.

And the anthem that came from the church held Soapy there, for he had known it well long ago. In those days his life contained such things as mothers and flowers and high hopes and friends and clean thoughts and clean clothes.

Soapy’s mind was ready for something like this. He had come to the old church at the right time. There was a sudden and wonderful change in his soul. He saw with sick fear how he had fallen. He saw his worthless days, his wrong desires, his dead hopes, the lost power of his mind.

And also in a moment his heart answered this change in his soul. He would fight to change his life. He would pull himself up, out of the mud. He would make a man of himself again. There was time. He was young enough. He would find his old purpose in life, and follow it. That sweet music had changed him. Tomorrow he would find work. A man had once offered him a job. He would find that man tomorrow. He would be somebody in the world. He would—

Soapy felt a hand on his arm. He looked quickly around into the broad face of a cop.

“What are you doing hanging around here?” asked the cop.

“Nothing,” said Soapy.

“You think I believe that?” said the cop.

Full of his new strength, Soapy began to argue. And it is not wise to argue with a New York cop.

“Come along,” said the cop.

“Three months on the Island,” said the Judge to Soapy the next morning.
Poverty and Wealth

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The stork flew over a town one day,
And back of each wing an infant lay;
One to a rich man’s home he brought,
And one he left at a laborer’s cot.

The rich man said, ‘My son shall be
A lordly ruler o’er land and sea.’
The laborer sighed, ‘’Tis the good God’s will
That I have another mouth to fill.’
The rich man’s son grew strong and fair,
And proud with the pride of a millionaire.
His motto in life was, ‘Live while you may,’
And he crowded years in a single day.
He bought position and name and place,
And he bought him a wife with a handsome face.

He journeyed over the whole wide world,
But discontent his heart lay curled
Like a serpent hidden in leaves and moss,
And life seemed hollow and gold was dross.
He scoffed at woman, and doubted God,
And died like a beast and went back to the sod.
The son of the laborer tilled the soil,
And thanked God daily for health and toil.
He wedded for love in his youthful prime,
And two lives chorded in tune and time.

His wants were simple, and simple his creed,
To trust God fully: it served his need,
And lightened his labor, and helped him to die
With a smile on his lips and a hope in his eye.

When all is over and all is done,
Now which of these men was the richer one?
POVERTY STATISTICS

- More than 3 billion people, around half of the world’s population, survive on less than $2.50 per day.

- The poorest country in the world right now is the Central African Republic with Gross Domestic Product per capita (average income per person) of $652. The richest country in the world right now is Qatar with a GDP per capita of $127,660. (The U.S. is ranked 11th with a GDP of $57,453.)

- A family of four (two parents and two children) have to have an income of under $24,600 per year to qualify as living below the poverty line in the United States.

- The average age of a person in poverty in the state of Texas is 9 years old. This is due to many single mothers with multiple children under the poverty line in our state. Homelessness is not the dirty, scruffy man on the side of the highway with a sign; the face of homelessness is a child.

- One of the biggest problems right now in regards to poverty is what is known as the “invisible homeless” - people who are living in shelters, churches, cars, or with friends, but do not have a permanent place to call home. In fact, many students in this building are considered a part of the “invisible homeless” population.

- 25.81% of students at AHS are economically disadvantaged. That’s over 1 in 4. These students are much more likely to struggle in school and have a significantly higher dropout rate than other students. Most likely you have a friend who is struggling in this area, and you don’t even know it. It might even be your family.

- Recently Kingwood and Atascocita police officers have found an increase in tents and campsites on local walking trails. It is believed that many people who are evicted from their homes or who flooded during Harvey are staying in the woods behind local neighborhoods as means for survival. They have nowhere else to go.