

**Forsaken
and
Forgotten:**

**People Living Unhoused
Deserve Better**

Commentary:
by
Morgan W. Brown

It is obviously apparent to this observer that, except for those times when they become much more visible within public view than is socially acceptable as well as widely desired by those who appear to mainly have only their own financial or other self interests in mind, people living unhoused (aka living homeless) have essentially been forsaken and forgotten by both government and society in general; cast away and left adrift, to simply rot and perish, as if they were merely trash.

If this seems like a rather harsh rebuke, the fact is that the experience as well as reality endured by people living unhoused is actually much harsher, particularly when coupled with deliberate indifference, not to mention outright scorn (read: contempt), on an ongoing basis.

Until I became permanently housed again in mid-August of 2009 (after twelve lengthy as well as extremely grueling years living without permanent housing during the last go around), homelessness was something I experienced in one form or another, off and on, more or less over nearly a 36-year period.

Despite these countless experiences, I was never able to get very good at coping with living homeless. It always took a lot out of me when living without permanent, safe, warm, dry shelter.

By the way, for those who might have assumed otherwise, although recreational camping might usually be a rather enjoyable experience, when one has nowhere else to live, having to camp out in the rough with few -- if any -- available resources, it is quite an entirely different matter. I know.

There have been many times when these experiences, or something that happened to me during them, have made me feel utterly defeated, helpless, hopeless and worthless.

If it were not for all the support and assistance received, especially when it was most needed, things would certainly have become much worse for me than had already happened to be the case however.

The fact is that homelessness can happen to most anyone, at any time, for a variety of reasons.

To my way of thinking, our society was built on the premise that it is better to share with others than it is to dictate and hold something over them. This is what I understand the Vermont motto, Freedom and Unity, to mean anyway.

Based on personal experience, along with my observations of others over the years as well, I remain convinced that it is extremely crucial to provide hope, opportunity, shelter, support and services to people when they need such assistance.

It is as crucial, however, to do this in a manner that does not force a person or family to choose between having access to these or having to give up certain freedoms and responsibilities - along with the independence and self-respect that goes with them - that people who are housed may take for granted, yet still prize for themselves as well.

Rather than attempting to manage, control or coerce people in ways that we may want to believe is for their own good, our efforts are best served when they are positively focused. This provides people with a better working role model for building faith and trust in themselves and between others.

No matter why or how many times or ways a person or family is in need, everyone deserves to be believed in and offered the assistance they may seek and require toward helping themselves meet their needs.

In this way, people are not only helped toward becoming housed again, but they are more easily and freely encouraged to learn or enhance skills, strengths and abilities of their own that anyone needs to be independent members of the community.

Time and time again, I have seen that what can make a difference in the circumstances and well being of a person or family who is either living homeless or at risk of becoming homeless is when they receive quality contact, support, encouragement, services and shelter when needed.

Our communities will be enriched and strengthened when each individual and family living within them has permanent, safe, decent and affordable housing, along with the other usual and basic needed opportunities as well as resources, from which to thrive and grow.

Morgan W. Brown had previously lived houseless (aka homeless) off and on over a period of numerous years in many of its various forms since his initial experience with homelessness at the age of seventeen. He currently resides, permanently housed, within Central Vermont.