

The Least, the Last, and the Lost

George W. Bush's record on homelessness and homeless policy in America

by Becky Johnson

On January 20, 2005, President George W. Bush took the oath of office for his second term. The theme of his inaugural speech was freedom. Freedom from tyranny. Freedom from oppression. Freedom from want. Freedom from government interference.

Kirbyjon Caldwell, pastor of Windsor Village United Methodist Church in Houston, took the podium and read the benediction which included a blessing for "The Least, the Last, and the Lost."

Who are the least of Americans, if not homeless people? They are refugees in their own land. How has the first four years of the Bush administration affected homeless people?

According to the Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy, after examining recent information from the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 34.9 million people in the United States who go hungry or are food insecure — an increase of 3.9 million people since 1999.

About 3.5 million people in the United States are homeless, 39 percent of whom are children. Families with children are among the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population.

The National Coalition for the Homeless conducted a survey of cities across the nation this past year and found that "100 percent of communities surveyed lack enough shelter beds to meet demand and housing costs are out of reach for many, including the working poor."

One in seven Americans — a total of 45 million people, including 8.4 million children — lack health insurance. In addition, the cost of the ten most-used prescription drugs has increased nearly 9 percent in 2003, outpacing inflation.

SAY NOT WHAT YOU DID FOR YOUR COUNTRY

BUT WHAT YOUR COUNTRY DID TO YOU



20% OF THE HOMELESS PEOPLE IN

THE U.S. ARE VIETNAM VETERANS

Artwork by the San Francisco Print Collective

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