



# Poor People's United Fund

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**Boston's Spare Change Community**

November/December 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It's autumn and the presidential candidates are all lining up to tell us why we should vote for them. And quite frankly we've got to the point where we don't really believe in any of 'em anymore! We'd hate to think it was because we have become jaded- but then maybe it's them who've become so cynical and it rubbed off on all of us!



*Comedian, Paula Poundstone & Kip trading their recently published books at Rosie's Place Luncheon*

The other thing that "gets our goat", to revert to an old phrase, are the comings and the goings of Parris, Britney, and Lindsey- for God's sake give it up girls or you will be sent to your room with out pie. Can you believe the crap the American public is being covered with? The antics of the rich spoiled untalented children is beginning to get to us. Isn't there any good news out there anymore?

We found some very nice bits in, of all places, this month's Vanity Fair! It was a Q & A from

Desmond Tutu, the beloved radical Bishop and of all people Brad Pitt!! Toward the end of the interview Bishop Tutu had this to say, "We have the capacity to feed everyone on the planet. We have the capacity to ensure that every child gets the inoculations they ought to have as children. We can prevent many of the diseases to which our children in the poorer parts of the world succumb. For God's sake why don't we wake up to the fact that you can't have an apartheid security – it's going to be security for all. If you are going to have prosperity, it's going to be prosperity for all. If you want to be free, you can't have a quarantined freedom. It's going to be freedom for all. And if you want to be human, we are not going to be human in isolation. It will be that we are human together." Even Brad Pitt said, "Certainly an order based on fairness instead of the guys who get to the table first...:You said this about apartheid that it was operated on the principles of exclusion. I can't help but think the same thing is going on with our trade rules ..." I can't believe the sauciest elegant magazine on the stands to make us feel better — but it did!

The Globe ran an editorial recently about the 35 million dollar capital campaign for the Greater Boston Food Bank (which I started in 1979) ... here is the last part of he editorial: " No single law or

policy will end hunger. Rather, it will take a dramatically rebuilt public system, not just distributing more food stamps, but building a broader infrastructure that promotes well-being. That would include more affordable housing, so people could spend less on rent and more on food as well as better schools that send more students to college and a chance to increase their lifetime earnings ... but since a surge of public energy is not immanent, the local food bank marches on. While it is running a thirty five million capital campaign to pay for a new building, it is also preaching that just increasing calorie consumption isn't enough. People also need nutrient-rich foods or else they risk what could be called the American Paradox; becoming both obese and malnourished.

So as the food bank's new building rises, it should be seen as both a step forward and a rebuke, a place that might have this sign, "Welcome to the Greater Boston Food Bank, we wish we weren't here. (But what would they do without us.)

Sadly, we must agree and sadly the politics of compassion is lacking in Boston and indeed throughout the nation. This nation lacks the political will to make justice happen.

We want to thank all of you for hanging in there with us for so long —over 25 years and still counting! We never thought it would be easy when we started the Poor People's United Fund, but we never thought it would be so hard! This economic ministry we began a quarter century ago still relies upon the kindness of strangers — although many of you have been friends for years and we value that friendship!

One of our best friends is the great Jazz group Aardvark with Mark Harvey its long time leader. Mark, who now teaches at MIT is hosting a benefit concert for our sister organization, Community Works on December 16<sup>th</sup>. More on that elsewhere in this newsletter. We wanted to end with the concert announcement because we wanted to end on a great note.

***In Struggle and Hope,***

***Kip, Fran and Georgia***

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## Join Our Spare Change Drive!

Some time ago we distributed cans (8 inches by 4 inches) marked for the *Poor People's United Fund*. The cans are really cute and have graffiti on them that says things like: "Change is good!



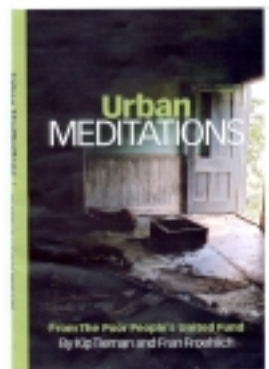
How about a little?...We knew we could count on you!.... Givin' is easy-it's livin' that's tough!....A little change doesn't hurt anyone!....Give a little so others can live a little!....The artwork shows urban apartments and it's a really easy way to get rid of your spare change!....Fill em up, let us know and we'll pick em up! The cans hold probably thirty to fifty bucks....but it all adds up....So write to us and let us know,...We'll all be richer for it!

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## Our book, *Urban Meditations* has sold over 1,000!!!!

They make great holiday Gifts!

We have received lots of calls and letters from folks as far away as Australia and Great Britain for copies of our reflective meditation, a forty year tribute to poor people... We had no idea it would prove to be so popular. Allan Rohan Crite, the late great black artist gave us copies of his Stations of the Cross, which are liberally alive on the pages. We urge you to get your copy now, or copies (they make great Christmas gifts!) Here's what a couple of folks have said about *Urban Meditations*: "Kip Tiernan writes from the margins of power. These meditations hold up the prophet's dangerous weapon- a mirror. They offer too, hope: a vision of a new earth where all are at the table. This is outcast theology from a wisdom teacher. Eighty one, Kippy is still flipping over the money tables where we left our hearts. She invites us, too, to do some upsetting of the imperial tables where we left our hearts. She invites us, too, to do some upsetting of the imperial furniture that keeps us comfortable:" ...From Renny Golden, author of *War on Families: Imprisoned Mothers and the Children They leave behind*. Renny also co-authored *Oscar Romero: His Life and Writings*. And another- "Kip Tiernan's *Urban Meditations* are illuminated manuscripts for these Dark Ages. This is "religion" brought back to the dirty streets that humanity's greatest prophets have walked side by side with "the least of us." These meditations light a better way through a period of history, when words like "truth," "democracy" and, yes, even "Jesus," have been hijacked. Read this book and know the brightness of humanity's truer nature, which is to care about the well-being that is the birth right of all God's children."



-Michael Patrick MacDonald, author: *All Souls, A Family Story from Southie, and Easter Rising*. Do yourself a favor. Buy this book! It's \$20.00! (including postage)

# A Look at Economic Stability

Georgia Mattison

The current economic reality has become one of dangerous instability in terms of housing, health care, income/jobs, and social services/food.

**Housing:** Unregulated mortgage companies, unlike banks who are highly regulated, have given out loans to people without telling them the hidden future higher payment resulting in foreclosures linked to a depression in the global economy. One in over 500 hundred homeowners is now in foreclosure and that number is expected to rise. (NY Times, September 25, 2007) The increased size of the monthly rent or mortgage check represents the “increasing economic risk people are assuming as housing comes to represent more and more of the typical household budget.” (Jacob S. Hacker, “The Great Risk Shift”)

“Housing is insurmountable for most of our shelter residents. We are building our own affordable housing as the available stock is pretty minimal,” reports Stasia Lopopolo, Director, Sojourner House in Roxbury. Original centers of large scale affordable housing like Columbia Point in Dorchester are changing the rules little by little to exclude low-income families according to Sister Joyce McMullen of Project Care and Concern.

*“Love Rejected Condemns”, 1954 c. Allan Rohan Crite*  
From our recent book *Urban Meditations*

**Healthcare:** Employer- based health insurance and employer-based pensions are now part of a “bygone” era according to

Andrew Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union (NY TIMES, 8/1/07) Not surprisingly the number of uninsured has reached 47 million in the US. (NY Times, 7/29/07) The American Cancer Society now says the primary cause for the lack of progress in cancer cessation is “inadequate health coverage.” Much of this health care coverage that must be covered more and more by the individual remains inadequate.

**Income/Jobs:** “The increase in costs for utilities, rent, transportation, communication (phone, internet) child care cannot be covered with incomes of unskilled or minimally skilled work. There are few labor unions, few factories, just extreme low level skilled jobs and now even the military is not an option for unskilled workers.” (Stasia Lopopolo, Sojourner House) The median income is less than it was in 2000. While wages are up slightly it is because Americans are working more hours, not because of wage increases. (NY Times, 7/29/07)

Stasia Lopopolo's agency, because of the paucity of publicly funded job training and job readiness programs, has made its own job training alliances with local health centers. Sojourner House must work to overcome shelter residents lack of work experience and on the job skills. The vulnerability from lack of work experience extends also into the middle class. Stasia Lopopolo comments: "A lot of young men and women don't have a skill base. It's becoming a more and more difficult environment to have no skill base."

The Criminal Offenders Record Information CORI is required for all formal employment and for benefit eligibility. As the CORI records all contact with the criminal justice system no matter how serious or benign and is never expunged, job opportunities are limited to family businesses or "under the table" employment. The 1 out of 236 Americans who are currently incarcerated is the highest rate in the western world. (NY Times, 5/22/06)

**Social services/food:** Social Services are becoming more and more limited from the public sector and private agencies are scrambling to fill in the gaps. Welfare ceased to be an entitlement program in 1996. Eligibility is now for only two years.

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Other services meet clients with even less accessibility. The Boston Food Bank is building a new warehouse to double their private food distribution from 26 million to 50 million pounds a year (Boston Globe 8/20/07) as the commonwealth of Massachusetts continues to dig out from an ignominious 51<sup>st</sup> in the country in Food Stamp participation. At a recent Food Stamp Improvement Coalition meeting advocates were reporting on the almost criminal examples of illegal denials of food stamp benefits. For example military families who get paid so little that they are eligible for food stamps were being dumped off the program if a spouse were getting combat pay in Iraq. This contravenes a widely known law that says combat pay is not counted as income for benefits or taxes.

One of the terrible exclusions in the Welfare Reform Act of 1996 was the elimination of welfare and other benefits for LEGAL immigrants. States can fund welfare and food stamps out of their own funds. The advocacy community is in currently another difficult restoration campaign to make legal immigrants eligible for welfare and food stamp benefits. This effort is prodded by the fact that private agencies cannot cope with the great need crisis that this exclusion causes.

Stasia Lopopolo and Sister Joyce McMullen of Sojourner House and Project Care and Concern respectively have been reporting at PPUF Board of Directors meetings the increasing violence and homicide rates where their agencies are located. Lack of safety interferes with the accomplishment of their agencies' missions. The economic instability caused by safety problems, continuing inadequate government assistance, monitoring and accessibility, and the increasing lack employer participation in benefits and job security have put impossible pressures from families in more and more urgent need on non-profit agencies.

## **Allan Rohan Crite, Dean of African American Artists Dies at 97**

He was no ordinary painter. His lasting contribution in the massive collection of his art is what he saw on the city streets of Boston is an affront to popular trends, present and past, and an elevation of daily life. One of the last contributions he made, was to the Poor People's United Fund. Our *Urban Meditations* is profusely scattered with Allan's exquisite art .

His collection of urban blacks was all part and parcel of his Stations of the Cross, which illuminate the pages of Urban Meditations. We are profoundly grateful to his wife, and to the artist himself for giving us an opportunity to show his depictions of Christ on the streets of Boston. Perhaps his art reflected in the faces of urban blacks is one of the most profound messages he has left with us. Perhaps the road to Calvary began on Blue hill Avenue and ended on Columbus Avenue, Boston. Crite's portraits of the ordinary, as they walk the last miles with Jesus Christ is one of the most lasting things about his view of the world.

A scholar, an urban meditator, a world famous artist he constantly spoke of the holy aspects of urban life, as indeed his artwork shows in the book. Although Allan Crite died, his painted people march on, silently, and echoes of their world, and his, persist.

Fortunately, his art hangs in major museums all over this country and Europe. His lasting contribution gives a nobility to the most humble citizens and we are proud to have his represented in Urban Meditations, particularly his Stations of the Cross. His work was exhibited in New York's Museum of Modern Art as early as 1936 and is in a permanent collection of several museums, including the Museum of Fine Arts, the Boston Athenaeum, Harvard Fogg Museum, the Boston Public Library, the Museum of the National Afro-American Art, the Addison Gallery, the Smithsonian Institution and many many galleries on the East and West Coast.

He may not be with us, but his art will live on, forever.

## **In Memoriam: True Legend of Boston Jazz Man Herb Pomeroy**

A memorial service was held at the Church of Emmanuel a few weeks ago. Herb passed away in August and was one of the true legends of Boston Jazz, with a national and international reputation as a brilliant trumpeter and big band leader, working with Bird, Duke, Hamp and Stan Keaton. He performed on the MIT Wind Ensemble premier of Mark Harvey's piece, Beyond, as one of the improvisational soloists, along with Ran Blake, Arni Cheatam and John Funkhouser. Beyond has become part of Aardvarks' repertory, featuring Arni and John, and Always with an echo of Herb's warm, expressive lyricism in our hearts. (In the early 50's, Herb played at an early jazz spot called The Stables. Hew was particularly kind and generous to a young wannabe musician, Kip Tiernan (!) whom he allowed to play the piano in the evening when the band took five.

## ***LETTERS***

Meet Reflect and Strengthen,  
Our Newest Member of PPUF!

We told you about this wonderful self help group a few issues back, working with young women with problems. A recent letter from them had this to offer: "On behalf of Reflect and Strengthen, I would like to express our humble appreciation for your donation in the amount of \$500. Are truly thankful for your support. It will greatly contribute to our work and to the growth of our organization. We are grateful to know that not only do you believe in Reflect and Strengthen's mission, but also you are invested in bettering the lives of young, working-class women from Boston's inner city. In hopes to further a relationship between Reflect and Strengthen and Poor People's United Fund, we will keep you informed on our development and upcoming events. Also, we are always working to nurture our relationships with community members, foundations, organizations and businesses. Please contact us if you are interested in meeting with us to talk about ways that we can build together.

Again, thank you for your support and if you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us.

In Strength and Struggle  
Roselyn Berry  
Lead Organizer  
Reflect and Strengthen

***Keeping Our Wits .....***



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## EVENTS

### 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Aardvark Concert to Benefit Community Works



Aardvark's Annual Christmas concert, headed by Mark Harvey, will once again blow the top off Newbury Street at 7:30, **Sunday, December 16<sup>th</sup> at Emmanuel Church** at 15 Newbury Street. The group, which is nationally and internationally known, has been around these parts for over 30 years. This year will benefit the church and Community Works, (a group Fran and Kip began also more than 25 years ago!) Mark Harvey, a Methodist minister and musicologist, started the old all night jazz concerts at the Arlington Street Church close to 35 years ago.

It literally went from 4 P.M. to am the next morning! Every really great musician in Boston has played there. Interestingly enough, it still boasts the same great musicians, including Arni Cheatham. Harvey, a master trumpet-man is also an extraordinary composer. This year's concert will feature vocalist Grace Hughes and Jerry Edwards. Also being celebrated at this concert is the release of Aardvark's 9<sup>th</sup> CD, No Walls/ A Christmas Concert, which will contain holiday selections from American, France and Germany.

No Walls, by Harvey will also be on CD and we guarantee all of you a really spectacular evening. So don't forget to show at the Church of the Emmanuel on Sunday, **December 16. Tickets are \$15/ \$10 for students and seniors. Call 617-423-9555 or email [admin@communityworks.com](mailto:admin@communityworks.com) for tickets.**



