

Martin's Volunteers' Newsletter

January / February 2005

Through the Eyes of a 16-year-old

The following is an essay written in 1995 by a student at Lincoln High School, Janice Oloresisimo, who died tragically a few years later. Her mother Estele has given permission for us to share it with everyone who volunteers at Martin's.

Last March 28, I spent three hours volunteering at Martin's - my first time at a soup kitchen, and I really did not know what a soup kitchen was. I thought it was an institution for orphans and we were going to feed children. But as I entered the place, I was greeted by haggard looking people beaming at me. I was not really disappointed, in fact I was happy to be there and to deal with those homeless people and learn about them.

When I was still in the Philippines, I thought that in America hunger and poverty did not exist. I was impressed by the American standard of living based on the pictures and articles that I'd seen in the magazines. I said to myself that the people in America are so fortunate compared to the people in my native country and other Third World countries where most people barely eat a meal in a day. It never dawned on me that hunger and poverty are also one of the major problems that Americans are facing. I saw a lot of homeless people living on the streets. How I pity those people!



Volunteering at Martin's opened my eyes and touched my heart. I've never seen so many people very eager to eat as if they haven't eaten for days. As I watched them eating, I saw different expressions on their faces. Some looked so hopeless and desperate, others looked like they were comfortable despite their miserable and poor life, while others looked like they did not care what happened to them and they just depended on others for their food. There were also people who looked hopeful and hoped that their fate will somehow change. I've learned a lot just by watching those people. It seems to me that the America I once admired was now changing. This showed that the economy of this country is getting worse every day.

The citizens, not just the government, should help one another to resolve this crisis. The plight of these people can't be settled by just staring and blaming one another. We don't need to wait for the government to take action because there are many problems that the government is dealing with and they can't solve all those problems at one time. People should take action. I admire those hard-working people at Martin's who devote their time to serving their hapless fellow citizens. I've never seen so many people

who spend their weekend volunteering instead of shopping and having pleasure. I can see their love and dedication in their work to help those homeless people, and they truly deserve to be honored in their endeavor in helping unfortunate people and for making San Francisco a better place for the people.



Martin's Mission

We all know, in a general sense at least, what Martin's is and what we do. However, we may not have the full picture as expressed in this statement of our mission.

The Martin de Porres House of Hospitality provides aid and comfort to anyone in need, primarily, but not exclusively, through hot meals at our free kitchen. Anyone who receives assistance from us is our guest, not a client, not a customer. Since we accept no government funds, we are sometimes able to assist individuals who otherwise fall through the social system's cracks. Everything we give is free of charge.

In the spirit of welcoming guests into one's home, the large courtyard, garden, dining room, and kitchen are maintained in cleanliness and beauty. We neither preach to nor proselytize at those we serve. Martin's (as we are commonly called) is not so much a soup line as a drop-in center where people may eat, nap, use a clean restroom, smell the flowers, or meet with friends.

Martin's also has become a surrogate family for those who are distant from, or just different than, their blood relatives. As a result, we are increasingly called upon to care for the sick or dying among us. This work continues in death as in life by assisting people to reconcile with their families, providing company for homebound guests, making funeral arrangements and holding memorial services so the grieving can be together.

In early 1995, the Martin de Porres Foundation purchased a lovely home in the vicinity of the soup kitchen. It is named David House after a member of the Martin de Porres community who died of AIDS in 1984. This house serves as a residence for some of the volunteers (who receive no salaries), and includes a room for use by someone who has a terminal illness. Since 1996, four individuals have been cared for by us, in the hospice room, until they passed away. The house has also been used by people recovering from illnesses or operations while they shouldn't be alone. Martin's is a haven for the lost and outcast who most people wish would just go away.

**Alternative Views on Alternate Wednesdays
See page 2 for details**

War Resisters League West Presents:

**Alternative Views on Alternate Wednesdays
At The Kitchen, 225 Potrero Avenue,
Every other Wednesday at 7 pm**

Films that need to be seen. Most will be short features followed by a time to discuss afterwards, with "experts" on hand to answer questions. A \$5 donation is requested but no one will be turned away.

**February 16: Busted: The Citizen's Guide
to Surviving Police Encounters**

Created by Flex Your Rights and narrated by retired ACLU director Ira Glasser, BUSTED realistically depicts the pressure and confusion of common police encounters. In an entertaining and revealing manner, BUSTED illustrates the right and wrong ways to handle different police encounters and pays special attention to demonstrating how you, the viewer, can courteously and confidently refuse police searches. (2003) <http://www.flexyourrights.org/>

March 2: Military Myths

A 28 minute video that takes a critical look at the military's promises of travel, money for education and job training. It considers how media representations of war and military life compare to the reality of war told by veterans who have actually been there. In addition, interviews with activists and students are presented along with statistics from the Veterans Administration, Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, and recent Pentagon studies that lay clear the myths of military life. Co-produced by War Resisters League's ROOTS Taskforce and Paper Tiger Television. (2003) <http://warresisters.org/>

March 16: A Space for Peace

The video examines the evolution of space-based technology, and the way it is now used in a variety of settings including intelligence operations and on-the-ground military campaigns. It is an introduction to the real aims and capabilities of US space technology and the missile defense program. Film by Daniel Reilly. Produced by MacGregor Eddy. (2005) <http://www.space4peace.org>

March 30: The Wall

The Wall documents the construction of the Wall or "security fence" and the devastating impact it is having on Palestinians. Through interviews with Israeli activists it also helps to place the "separation barrier" in the context of other forms of control, including checkpoints, roadblocks and closure that the Palestinians have been increasingly subject to since 1991. Interviewees include journalist Amira Hass, photographer Miki Kratzman, attorney Danny Seidemann, and the "director" of the Separation Barrier project. (2003) mepeacesf@afsc.org



Remedy

Seek the dark cave of birth
like the animal thirsting
for rain and the river's edge
Learn from the creature
to scent the wind
and taste what it tells,
to look deep
into night hours and
hear their longings.
New life comes small,
insignificant, calling your name,
in the womb of the unexpected:
like a hawk feather fluttering
to you feet,
sun shimmer quivering on a wall,
cathedral bells telling the times,
a rag-wrapped woman lying curled
in a doorway,
headlines and breadlines shouting
war, hunger.
Something in every moment offers
birth.

Clare Morris
Volunteer

**Martin de Porres House of Hospitality
225 Potrero Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94103**

415-552-0240

