

HOMELESS VETS VETERANS ON THE STREETS OF NEW YORK

It is no secret that homelessness is one of America's most shameful and persistent problems. In the most affluent country in the world, such a problem (in my humble opinion) would not exist if the government had not so burdened its people with exorbitant taxes that are subsequently squandered on pork-barrel projects and used to send our young men and women to fight contrived, illegal, immoral, and unjustified wars in sovereign countries where we have no business. I do not want to get too far off-topic here, but these issues are inextricably linked, and one cannot hope to understand the etiology of one, without being familiar with the reasons for the others.

In no other country in the world has the problem of homelessness affected former members of the military; indeed, in third-world nations, the country's fighting men and women are treated like royalty compared to the way veterans of the US Military are treated here. Oh, yes, there are a few things that veterans have access to that are coveted by the non-veteran citizenry – such as street vendor licenses. However, most of the veterans who hawk wares on the streets of New York do not own the businesses or the inventory, but rather are working on as little as 5% commission for the “bosses” who are all foreign nationals.

Many of these veterans have incredible talents and skills; however, it is difficult – if not impossible to make use of those abilities if one is homeless and has to beg on the streets for survival. We at Net4TruthUSA propose that the only way this problem can be solved is for people to do it one-on-one, without the aid (and the meddling that comes with it) of the government. We ask for your assistance in any way you can. If you have a piece of property in the New York area that you would like to see put to good use, please contact us. If you would like to make a contribution to this ministry, please do so.

The photos below are just the tip of the iceberg in New York where there are an estimated 100,000 homeless veterans. Of course there are “shelters” run by the government (Department of Homeless Services), and referrals made by the Coalition for the Homeless, but with housing at a premium; prices artificially inflated by the devaluation of US Currency and the influx of wealthy foreign nationals from the Middle-East, the problem is worse, and more intractable than it has ever been.

Agencies and organizations working within the auspices of the government have done little to alleviate the problem, and have only complicated the issue with mountains of paperwork and procedural hurdles that consume the majority of the public funding allocated to “solve” the problem. What are needed are private citizens to take these matters into their own hands – completely divorcing themselves from any government influence whatsoever. Indeed, that is what this ministry has done; we are NOT a 301(c) [tax-exempt] corporation for several reasons. The most important reason is that like BAVR (see below) accepting government funding and tax-exempt status brings an organization under the “thumb” of the government, which – as we see with BAVR – will eventually complicate the operation so much that the mission fails. Secondly, we believe that people are inherently generous, and that accepting an incentive from the government to be charitable (a tax-deduction) robs the giver of intangible but nonetheless infinitely more valuable blessings that are promised from the Lord:

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it”. – Malachi 3:10

“Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward”. – Matthew 6:2

What we propose is a return to the “old-time” Christian values; where generosity and charity do not have to be subsidized by the government in order to happen.

I am a veteran; I have spoken to veterans living on the streets, sleeping in subways, and eating out of Times Square garbage cans. I have bought them meals, shared “war stories” with some of them, and expressed my gratitude for their service to this country on my behalf... young men, mostly... some freshly back from the Iraq wars... sleeping on the streets! It’s a shame! It breaks my heart that our American Heroes have to live this way... after all; they are my brothers and my sisters – not only by our common bond of service to this country, but by the Word of the living God.

“If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works”. – James 2:15 – 18

To that end, I have devoted much of my time and effort to this Web site – a continuing work intended to bring the light of truth of the Veteran’s plight to the forefront of American consciousness. But that is not enough. What needs to be done MUST be done, and even though this little ministry probably won’t change the *status quo*, we intend to make a difference in the few lives our ability and resources permit. We implore your assistance in whatever way you can – in order to accomplish whatever we can achieve with the Lord’s blessing on behalf of these forgotten heroes.

The following article, written in 2006, illustrates an example of what can be done, and what can be ruined by the meddling of the government in what should not be the government’s concern. It illustrates the exploitation of veterans by a “charitable” organization capitalizing on government funding. Although the Borden Avenue Veteran’s Residence was a good idea; it was too little, too late, and failed miserably in the end, because the men sheltered there did not have a personal stake in the operation; had no say in the administration of the facility, and were merely being “warehoused” in an old warehouse with no privacy, no personal space, no privacy, too many restrictions, and no means by which to end their plight. The place has changed – it has recently been remodeled, housing a fraction of the former residents, but each now has a “room” within the facility, and I suppose that’s a step in the right direction – we propose, with your assistance – to take this another step further... to give veterans their own property, in which they will share ownership and responsibilities with other residents, with the ultimate goal of having each veteran achieve financial independence for him / herself. We pray that many of you reading this share those aspirations, and will help us to achieve those ends.



The Salvation Army Borden Avenue Veteran's Residence (BAVR)

21-10 Borden Avenue, Long Island City, NY, 11101 Phone: 718-784-5690
CLOSED AS OF AUGUST 14, 2007

Arguably "one of the best shelters in the city", was the Salvation Army Veteran's Residence in Long Island City (now closed - see below), but it was a far cry from the comforts of home. The photos do not do justice to the place - there was no privacy, virtually no space to store belongings (each man had a 4-foot high x 4-foot wide locker and a bunk bed), and no room to be the independent individual it takes to make a human being unique.

The social workers and "housing specialists" did virtually nothing to help these men, except to call them into "Independent Living Plan" meetings and draft for them "independent living plans" or schedules, which I would defy ANYONE to follow. They have also been known to refer vets to people who have "rooms for rent", but are not actually the landlords, or are not legally entitled to rent the rooms. If they DARE to challenge me on this latter statement, I will post IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE to prove my statement.... but for now, my WORD should suffice; if they call me a LIAR, I'll make them look like FOOLS. There was no place at BAVR to charge a cell phone or a computer - except for the "library", which had a only dozen outlets available- but only when the library was open - for over 400 men.

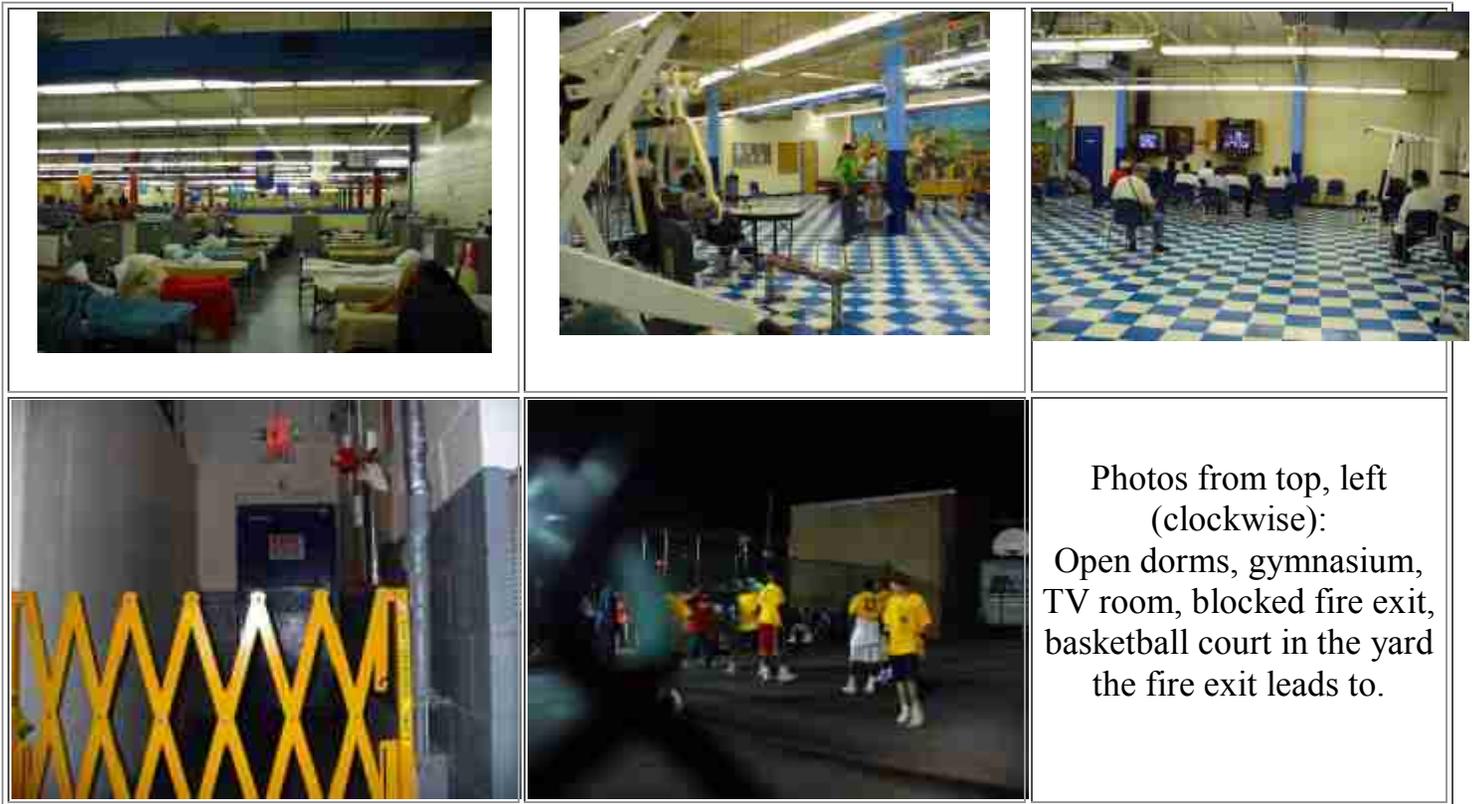
Many of the men who stayed there had drug and alcohol problems, and the bathrooms at night reeked of crack smoke. The 104th Precinct made almost daily arrests for drug possession there.... again, you don't have to take MY word for it - it's a matter of public record.

In addition, the staff at BAVR had a tendency to lock the rear fire exit at night- substantiated by several complaints filed with the Fire Department and DHS Dept. of Buildings complaint #4202585 8-29-04 and again on 10-15-04 about locked rear fire exit door (bad lighting). They also chained an egress gate in the rear yard. The staff had been repeatedly warned about the danger of blocking the fire exit at the rear of the building (see photo below), and it is only a matter of good fortune that a tragedy never happened at BAVR.

The Salvation Army received \$450.00* PER DAY for each resident, from the New York Department of Homeless Services (DHS). These brave men - many of which are disabled mentally, physically, or spiritually because of their honorable service to their country, were not being mistreated, but WERE being little more than warehoused - and the building itself **IS** a converted warehouse.

Despite the unfortunate circumstances, the Vets at BAVR had a common bond- a love for their country. This inspired a camaraderie that is difficult to articulate. There are TWO points I wish to make here: 1) There should be NO SUCH THING in the United States of America, as a homeless Veteran, and 2) There is a much better way to help veterans than to subsidize the Salvation Army with TAX MONEY to the tune of \$450.00 a day to merely warehouse these men.

* NOTE- The figure of \$450 / per day was given to me "in confidence" by the director of Coalition for the Homeless, Fulton Street, NYC in a confidential meeting. I must violate that "confidence" (I never agreed to be silent about it) in order to bring this issue to the public's attention.



Photos from top, left (clockwise):
Open dorms, gymnasium, TV room, blocked fire exit, basketball court in the yard the fire exit leads to.

The Borden Avenue Veteran's Residence (BAVR)- formerly run by the Salvation Army in a converted warehouse at 21-10 Borden Avenue, Long Island City for many years, after coming under the control of the NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) has shut its doors permanently on / about Tuesday, August 14, 2007. The 410 veterans who formerly were housed there until they found permanent housing, have presumably been transferred to other cityrun shelters.

With the \$2-billion dollars a day being pissed-up-a- rope longer than the one in Vietnam, in Iraq, it is glaring proof that THIS GOVERNMENT DOESN'T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT ITS VETERANS.

Although not anywhere NEAR ideal, BAVR was one of the best shelters in the city. What ended up being its demise is the fact that little was done to really HELP these men- \$450 / day to house them is incentive enough to want to keep them there - and the fact that some non-vets were admitted to the shelter after DHS took over. Drug addiction among the residents - vets and non-vets alike - was a continuous problem often needing police intervention.

10PM CURFEWS for residents kept them from leading normal social lives, and veterans who have fought, and sometimes were wounded and lost limbs in defense of their "freedom", do not operate well under administrative "controls" and regulations resembling that of a minimum security prison.

Fully 1/3 of the facility was staffed with "social workers" who did little to offer real help to these men who served their country honorably.

What this city needs is a Veteran's shelter RUN by veterans. This ministry (run by vets) would like to start one, but we lack the funding to do it. If any of my readers here have any resources they would like to donate to a worthy cause something of substantial substance that would help these forgotten heroes then please do not hesitate to contact me at the phone number / e-Mail address below.

The deplorable conditions in the NY City homeless shelters BAVR was an exception - with robberies, rapes, and other types of violence- not to mention the deplorable unsanitary conditions in these places, is the reason that many of the homeless prefer to sleep on the street, on park benches, or in the subway where there is a relative degree of safety because there are always people passing by. Alcoholism and drug addiction are epidemic among homeless veterans; it is a

means of emotional escape from their seemingly hopeless condition. People walk by these unfortunate human beings sprawled out on the sidewalk, or covered in plastic garbage bags on the subway as if it were nothing out of the ordinary. Our society has a twisted sense of values. While our fellow man suffers, and is in need of a meal and a place to sleep, some of us engage in conspicuous consumption- purchasing toilet bowls fit for a King - literally! I don't know how YOU feel, but I believe that the country owes these men a better break than what they're getting.

I say

THERE SHOULD BE NO SUCH THING IN AMERICA AS A HOMELESS VETERAN.







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