



Glimpses of Artisans of Change

On February 19, 2020 I had the opportunity to attend an event that was part of the Commission for Social Development at the UN entitled “Youth Homelessness: Interrogating Policy Gaps and Legislative Vacuum”. The panelists from the USA, India, and Slovenia were moderated by Anita Thomas, Chair of the NGO Committee on Financing for Development. She spoke of the increasing incidence of homeless as a global phenomenon. Young people moving to urban areas for educational pursuits and in search of job opportunities have difficulty finding suitable affordable housing. Those who have to leave state institutions on reaching 18 years add to the growing homelessness in young adults. Young people without shelter are vulnerable to human traffickers and producers of online sexual abuse material.

The speakers from John Bosco International, Malta, India and Slovenia as well as the Executive Director of Covenant House spoke of the good practices in the different countries and the need for advocacy and lobbying to plug policy gaps and legislative vacuum.

Two young American women shared their experiences of homelessness and the help they received from various agencies.

One is 23 years old. She graduated from college with the help of the foster family who encouraged her education, has an apartment of her own and works 2 jobs. She hopes to become a lawyer and social activist.

The other, an immigrant of an Asian country, who with her mother was taken in by relatives eventually had to leave and find lodging. Her mother was mental and wanted her out. She is an undergraduate student at Marymount Manhattan College and is interested in law school and eventually becoming a judge to address and search for solutions of homelessness

The description of the needs in Eastern European countries including Russia was impressive. One panelist has been Director of Youth Services in Slovenia for 20 years. In India the Navajeevan Bala Bhaven founded by Thomas Koshy has rescued, rehabilitated and reintegrated over a thousand children on the street.

I came away from this presentation with the appreciation of the extensive of “homelessness” in the world! Not only do we in the USA but it seems to me that our entire world needs to find ways to reduce the number of homeless children and adults. We need to find solutions to help them to have a life!

Jacqueline da Silva, o.s.u. New Rochelle, New York

Two of us go to McDonalds on Saturday for dinner and we have many friends there who often share free coupons to use on the food sold at McDonalds. We look forward to greeting our friends and making new ones. Our Saturday outing also takes in a weekly visit to the Dollar Tree Store, where we have become on first name basis with the Boss and the clerks. This may not sound too exciting but surprisingly so people miss our presence when we are not able to meet with them.

Marcella Savoie, osu and Maria Goretti, osu Lewiston, Maine

Mrs. Ellette Gibson, ACTII member and Corporate Treasurer for the Central Province reflects about the ways in which her daily responsibilities allow for quiet work at systemic change.

For many years, the Ursuline Sisters have been members of the Midwest Coalition for Responsible Investing (MCRI that is a member of the ICCR the national interfaith coalition for responsible investment). We actively engage businesses on areas of social, environmental and governance issues. The members purchase shares of stock in companies which allow a voice at the table either through corporate engagements or by filing resolutions for vote at shareholder meetings. Recently the MCRI group merged with Seventh Generation Interfaith Coalition for Responsible Investing (SGI) who as of this writing have 25 members in the mid-western United States.



We actively engage with local companies on the following issues:

- Ameren – the disposal of coal ash and groundwater contamination from the coal ash ponds
- Boeing – a request for a report on their supply chains for possible labor or sex trafficking violations
- Bayer (formerly Monsanto) – Water accessibility and sanitation including the use of more drip irrigation.

It is slow work and requires attention and can bring about changes in areas other than our own backyards.

Ellette Gibson, St Louis, Missouri

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One of the ways that our Peace and Justice Ministry at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish has reached out to the local community is by hosting a health fair each of the last four years. Between 30 – 40 agencies participate as volunteer vendors and approximately 300 people attend, receiving much information as well as such things as free flu shots, blood tests, and eye exams if low income. This year the blood screening even caught someone with extremely low blood sugar who was rushed to the hospital.

Since immigration status is a vital issue in our community, there are various information vendors providing help. This annual community event is an example of collaboration at it's finest with the involvement and support our local Knights of Columbus, the Madonna Sodality, Spanish Young Adults group, as well as Catholic Charities.

Joe Tembrock Windsor, Ca.



What can you do?