

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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EL NINO WEATHER WATCH

What's being done to protect Monterey's houseless population?

Part 1: Reggae to the Rescue

By Wanda Sue Parrott

(Weather forecasts predict the Monterey Peninsula will be hard hit by El Niño conditions this winter, with potential flooding and freezing that could be deadly for unsheltered persons. What is being done to provide shelter and service if dire predictions materialize? This series explores foul-weather aid for the homeless.)

Reggae To The Rescue Of Houseless Women

FOLLOWING the hugely successful fundraiser at Montrio Bistro in Monterey on Thurs., Oct. 1, at which \$20,000 was raised to benefit the Fund for Homeless Women, a local realtor was inspired to also sponsor an event.

If her last name is fortuitous, Carmel realtor Gin Weathers is helping to kick off a round of events unlike the fall-winter social seasons of bygone years when homelessness was a mere blip, not a blight, on the U.S. map, and most homeless persons were men.

Not so now, which is why Gin was moved to support the “Hot Beds and Warm Baths” campaign to benefit the Fund for Homeless Women, a field fund of the Community Foundation for Monterey County.

Hot Beds And Warm Baths

According to the 2015 Point-in-Time Homeless Census, 413 homeless women lived on the Monterey Peninsula last spring. While that number has dropped due to expansion of the One Starfish Safe Parking Program that allows women to sleep in their cars in designated parking lots, and the forthcoming Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program (I-HELP) for Women, slated to kick off this month, there are still more than 300 women estimated to be without adequate shelter on the Monterey Peninsula.

Statistics from The Gathering Place indicate a couple of homeless women are in their eighties and at least one is in her nineties.

Jonah And The Whalewatchers



To help reduce these statistics, the Weathers Real Estate Group of Carmel, an affiliate of Sotheby's International, is sponsoring "A Night of Music & Dancing" featuring local reggae band Jonah and The Whalewatchers, who have been performing around the area since the 1990s.

Gin Weathers says she ran into band founder Alex Shirley recently and proposed hiring the band after a venue was located; she soon committed to renting the Museum of Monterey, and the event, thanks to her generous donation, was set; several friends joined Gin to underwrite the event, so every dollar raised will go to the beneficiaries.

I've seen the band, heard it, danced to its phenomenal music, and highly recommend that you mark your calendar in huge red, yellow, and green Reggae letters: "Benefit Dance," lucky Fri., Nov. 13, 7 p.m., Museum of Monterey, 5 Custom House Plaza, Monterey.

Proceeds from ticket sales and door prize items will benefit the Fund for Homeless Women and the gala event will benefit all who attend.

In other words, put on your dancing shoes and come to the dance. Or as reggae singer Bob Marley, who popularized dreadlocks, might have said in his Jamaican accent:

Hey mon, cum to da dance!

So, what will you get for your \$25 admission fee that includes a ticket for one free beverage? The chance to purchase food from local vendors while listening to Jonah and the Whalewatchers spread the message of peace and love for humanity through their own special local brand of reggae that also includes touches of jazz, the blues and even country western.

I've been captivated by their beat and can assure you I wasn't the only old person marching alongside sparkling youngsters through Sand City as if transported by music to the streets of New Orleans during Mardi Gras.

Besides the potential for a similar transcendental experience, you'll get satisfaction from knowing you're helping a great cause. Women should not be forced to live on the streets anywhere—especially not in this area that's known internationally as "Paradise."

Even if you don't dance, you'll be treated to music I define as "protest music with heart and soul." Remember "I shot the sheriff" and how everyone loved it? What made it so special?

What Makes Reggae Special?

These excerpts from Wikipedia shed light on the music genre that originated in Jamaica in the late 1960s and was popularized worldwide by Bob Marley, a Jamaican-born Catholic who was later baptized in the Rastafari religion, then converted to Ethiopian Orthodoxy a year before his death from cancer in Miami, Fla. in 1981 at age 36.

While sometimes used to refer to most types of popular Jamaican dance music, the term reggae more properly denotes a style strongly influenced by traditional mento and calypso music, as well as American jazz and rhythm and blues. . . and evolved out of the earlier genres ska and rocksteady. . . The concept of "call and response" can be found throughout reggae music.

It is common for reggae to be sung in Jamaican Patois. . . noted for its tradition of social criticism and religion as themes in its lyrics.

Reggae's Religious Roots

Reggae evolved from Rastafari, a Jamaican-based Abrahamic new religious movement that accepts Haile Selassie I, the Ethiopian emperor from 1930 to 1974, as God incarnate and the Messiah who will deliver believers to the Promised Land, identified by Rastas as Ethiopia.



Prior to his coronation, Selassie was named Ras Tafari Makonnen. . . Rastas commonly hold the black race as one of the tribes of Israel. . . They also accept many of the Old Testament injunctions, such as forbiddance of cutting one's hair (which leads to the dreadlocks commonly associated with the movement) . . . Rastafari's origins are strongly rooted in black empowerment movements. "Babylon" refers to whites.

Best-known Rasta was Bob Marley, who gave this response during an interview:

Interviewer: "Can you tell the people what it means being a Rastafarian?"

Marley: "I would say to the people, Be still, and know that His Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia is the Almighty. Now, the Bible seh so, Babylon newspaper seh so, and I and the children seh so. Yunno? So, I don't see how much more reveal our people want. Wha' dem want? a white God, well God come black. True true."

Marley won't be at the party in person, but there's a pretty good chance you'll sense him in spirit.

You can check out the band, Jonah and the Whalewatchers, at www.jonahreggae.com. For event information or to donate door prizes, contact sponsor Gin Weathers at www.weathersrealestate.us. Purchase tickets at <http://eventbrite.com/e/community-concert-benefitting-homeless-women-of-monterey-county-tickets-19071953727>. (Next week: Emergency preparedness in Seaside, Sand City and Marina.)

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Photo – Bob Marley album cover from Amazon.com; Jonah and the Whalewatchers from oldmonterey.org; reggae dancers clipart from Google images online; all images used for educational/illustrative purposes; no copyright infringement intended.

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