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**Homelessness in America**

**By Gerald L. Campbell**

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Homelessness In America

Part One

.....With the collapse of the Soviet Union and its East European empire, the United States has become the undisputed economic, political, and military power in the world. Abroad, America inspires a commitment to economic progress, individual freedom, democratic values, and peace that is shared in varying degrees by nearly all the peoples and nations of the world. At home, America's economy continues to be an engine of opportunity and her technological inventiveness keeps on igniting dreams for countless dreamers. Clearly, it would seem that the United States stands poised for a new and dynamic 'golden age' full of opportunity, prosperity, and peace.

.....Nevertheless, the long-term prospects for a bright and auspicious future in America are far from guaranteed. In what follows, I intend to paint a portrait of America's social and spiritual predicament and highlight the central national security challenge that threatens America's leadership in the world. Once this portrait is completed, the pivotal role played by the spectacle of homelessness in America will be better appreciated.

**America's Social and Spiritual Predicament**

.....Who is not aware that dramatic changes in America have begun to seriously threaten our social fabric? Indeed, over the past four decades, the U.S. has become the world's leader in most categories of social pathology. Violent crime has increased sixfold since 1960. Over one hundred fifty thousand Americans have been murdered in the U.S. since 1990 — almost three times the number killed in the Vietnam War. Thirty-five percent of all births in the U.S. are illegitimate and nearly half of all marriages end in divorce. The chance that a child in America will live with both parents until age eighteen is now less than thirty percent. Even suicide rates among teenagers have tripled since 1960. Suicide now ranks as the leading cause of teenage death and for every teenage suicide there are fifty to one hundred suicide attempts that have failed .

.....Our schools reflect this social turbulence. In 1940, America's teachers were asked to identify the major problems in public schools. They replied: chewing gum, making noise, talking out of turn, running in halls, cutting in line, dress code infractions, and littering. In 1990, the answer was: drug and alcohol

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abuse, pregnancy, suicide, rape, robbery, assault, and homicide.

This description is disturbing, but incomplete. For there are profound spiritual trends in our lives that should cause even greater concern. Reflect for a moment. Try to visualize how the dynamics of spiritual alienation have been shaping American society.

....Personal relationships — whether within a family, among friends, at work, or with strangers — have become increasingly self-centered. The family today resembles more a collection of detached individuals than a community of love.

....Democratic atomism is on the rise. The nation's legal system has become excessively, and even ritualistically, litigious.

....Our national language has become disturbingly shrill, self-righteous, and judgmental. Too many Americans feel abandoned and alone. Competition has taken precedence over cooperation.

Bureaucratic control has triumphed over genuine human interaction in both the public and private

sectors. Like it or not, there exists deep within the American consciousness an existential apprehension about the aimless and self-destructive fragmentation that characterizes so much of our social, economic, legal, political, educational, cultural, and even religious life. Try as one might, the simple, but unyielding truth is that no individual today can escape the ubiquitous impact of cynicism and distrust, violence and fear, intemperance and injustice, isolation and aloneness, spiritual emptiness and, most disturbing of all, the absence of mercy.

....Clearly, there is a profound 'spiritual restlessness' across the land and the quiet voices of the soul are beginning to 'cry out' in open rebellion against the dehumanizing structures and alienating dynamics of daily life.

....This drama — which is truly a tragedy of American individualism — carries with it great dangers. For if the spiritual forces of alienation are allowed to gain ascendancy over the spiritual forces of community — and if they are able to generate a profound and uncontrollable fear of all others by each member of society — a repressive political regime will slowly emerge as a practical necessity to protect freedom. Free individuals — acting from fear — will rush to embrace this regime as the most practical means of securing their person and property. To be sure, many would resist. But, resistance itself would occasion further discord and the need for more control.

....Already, the 'fear of others' has begun to seep into the American character. The freedom to go where you want, the freedom to associate with whom you care, the freedom to say what you believe, and the freedom to be free of fear have all been marginalized. Indeed, if anyone were to analyze ordinary human relationships today they would detect the contaminating influence of distrust and fear.

....Let's not forget: freedom depends upon the quality of relationships that individuals have with one another. Wherever spiritual alienation exists, freedom has already been diminished!

### America's National Security Challenge

....This drama of spiritual alienation also has grave national security implications. Since the collapse of the Berlin Wall, American foreign policy has become confused and uncertain. And yet, is this merely a natural period of reassessment and readjustment in the post-Cold War world? Or is something more profound taking place? Are new moral imperatives beginning to unfold in the very bowels of history itself which even now are challenging the basic assumptions that have guided American foreign policy for over two centuries? Indeed, is it possible that the *raison d'être* of American foreign policy — freedom from political oppression — is slowly being disengaged from the central dynamics of

international politics? Is America losing her unique capacity to exercise moral leadership in this new era where the forces of diversity are in the ascendancy and where confusion, uncertainty, and social strife follow as its primary attendants?

.....During the Cold War, one of the most powerful weapons in America's strategic arsenal was the language of freedom which, since the Pilgrims first landed at Plymouth Rock, had been forged from the essential dynamics of American life. This language, however, was not merely a body of words or a method of combining words; nor was it simply a set of principles and documents. Quite the contrary! This language was a complex set of 'living metaphors' about America whose imagery conveyed a portrait of human life as it exists when individuals are free from every vestige of political oppression. Indeed, it is a language which truly 'tells the story of America' because it radiates from the very being of every American and its utterances flow from whatever any American says, does, or creates.

.....Whenever people in other lands, for instance, hear about events like a New England town meeting, an American election campaign, a Texas barbecue, a pro football game, a rock concert, and so forth, they hear this language. Through it they get a taste of the freedom, the diversity, and the energy that a free society generates.

.....Whenever they hear about the Civil Rights movement, the Watergate scandal, or the Iran–Contra debacle, they listen to Americans struggling among themselves about the meaning and future of

freedom.

Whenever they see pictures, or hear about the social, economic, and political dynamics of free men and women, they come to understand that democracy is less a system of government than it is a system of constraints on government. And they understand even further that it is less a way of controlling people than it is a way of keeping government from intruding on the sacred things in human life.

### The Language of Freedom

....This language of freedom, when magnified to the world, has traditionally been a key weapon in America's public diplomacy arsenal and it was exploited beginning in 1985 through the use of modern communications technology on a scale hitherto not possible.

.....Complementing this language of freedom was another weapon in America's public diplomacy arsenal that is rarely discussed, particularly in recent times. Even when it is acknowledged, it is done so grudgingly and with a tinge of cynicism. And yet, without it, no amount of diplomatic persuasion, economic or military capability, communications technology, or international exchange programs could have brought the Cold War to its final 'bloodless' disposition.

.....Ironically, this ultimate weapon was nothing more than a Fifth Column of freedom-loving individuals, unorganized and undisciplined, but waiting patiently for the 'trumpets to call.' They manned their posts in every farm, town, and city and in every family, school, and place of worship throughout the Soviet Empire. Each of them, young and old, were waiting for the historically appointed moment to answer the call that was 'crying out' from the depths of their souls — to be free from political oppression. And when the appointed time did come, they acted in spontaneous unison — as though guided from above — formed a community of noble purpose, and decisively challenged the evil that for too long had poisoned their souls. This Fifth Column — the forgotten heroes of the Cold War — dramatically reshaped the social, economic, political, moral and spiritual dynamics of an entire world.

.....For these reasons alone, no one can rightfully deny the success of American foreign policy; it has

transformed the world in every conceivable way and it has done so for the better. But, success always cuts in two directions. In one sense, it signifies an ending; in another, it constitutes a beginning.

.....The swift collapse of the Berlin Wall in late 1989 signified the final outcome of one of the most tragic periods in human history. And, individuals from all corners of the globe rejoiced in wonderment as the human spirit emerged triumphant over the forces of oppression. Yet, more than mere celebration, this victory also marked a period of closure. For despite the existence of such incorrigible tyrannies as China, North Korea, and Cuba, it now appears certain that oppressive regimes are becoming an endangered species in international politics. Indeed, hundreds of millions of individuals `yearning to be free' — and inspired by America's moral leadership — have already acted to become free and history has made clear that those still oppressed will soon be liberated.

.....This is a cause for optimism. And yet, the fundamental challenge that increasingly confronts America stems not from the fact of political oppression — although that struggle will continue — but from the alienating dynamics of nationalism, tribalism, terrorism, racism, ethnic hatreds, religious conflict, ideological politics, separatism, national self-interest, and unfettered competition across the broad spectrum of human interchange. These dynamics, more than any others, denote the substance of international political life today.

CONTINUE TO PART TWO

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Gerald L. Campbell served as senior staff to Members of the U.S. House of Representatives for nine years. He became Senior Advisor to the Director of the United States Information Agency (USIA) under President Ronald Reagan and President George Bush. Campbell went on to serve the administration of President George Bush and later, he served Texas Governor Bush as Senior Advisor to the Commissioner of Health at the Texas Department of Health in Austin.

## **AMERICA NEEDS THE LORD**

**By Irvin L. Rozier**

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Lord you spoke into existence the heavens and the earth  
Created nations, people and gave America birth  
Since 1776 America has been a free land  
Our forefathers recognized the creation of Your hand  
Many prayers for America have reached your ears  
You have kept her safe throughout the years  
You have raised up leaders for our nation  
For a season and a time them You did station  
Now it is the year two thousand and four  
America needs your presence even more

America needs the Lord to heal our land

## Homelessness in America

Please, O Lord, stretch out Your healing hand  
Without Your presence America would fall  
Because of this unto You we do call

Since America's beginning, we have had many wars  
We have lost many Americans, boys and girls  
O Lord, don't let those deaths be in vain  
Comfort their loved ones and heal their pain  
From Massachusetts to Oregon state  
Upon the prayers of Your people You do wait  
Your eyes roam to and fro throughout the country  
To show Yourself strong to those who pray to thee

You said if you shall ask you shall receive  
Deliver America, O Lord, from those who do deceive  
In the troublesome days that lie ahead  
Give us day by day our daily bread  
America is still under Your amazing grace  
Let us not forsake to seek Your face  
A great awakening is what we need  
To Your Word, O Lord, America must heed  
Greed and strife has a strong hold  
In the land of the free and the home of the bold

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