



CFH Participates in 50th Anniversary March on Washington



On the 50th anniversary of the historic March on Washington that featured Martin Luther King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech, ten Care for the Homeless client leaders participated in the 2013 March for Jobs and Freedom on August 24th. The ten, all members of a CFH Advisory Board, included Calvin Alston, Bill Bryant, David Broxton, Ava Connor, Johnny Hernandez, Philip Malebranche, Garrett McMahon, Vilna Miller, Raymond West and Anthony Williams.

"With a half-century view, we've accomplished a lot, but still have a long way to go," Williams said. "Fifty years later we're still marching for jobs, for affordable housing and to end homelessness and discrimination."

"...this was special."
- Care for the Homeless
Advisory Board member
Johnny Hernandez

Hernandez. He's lobbied members of Congress in Washington with CFH in the past. "But this was special."

The 50th Anniversary March featured speeches by Martin Luther King, III; Reverend Al Sharpton and Congressman

(Continued on page 2)

CFH Clients Report Record Voter Registration Drive

The client leaders of Care for the Homeless completed their most recent nonpartisan voter registration drive in August, achieving the best results in the history of that effort. They turned 247 completed new registration forms over to the New York City Board of Elections in time for those new voters to be eligible to vote in New York City's coming primary election on September 10. They also handed out more than 1,250 additional voter registration applications.

The clients' voter registration drive included 14 specific outreach activities at CFH sites in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens, aimed at registering homeless or formerly homeless people. Outreach activities were held at homeless shelters, soup kitchens, drop-in centers and places where people experiencing homelessness gather.

"The most exciting thing," according to longtime Care for the Homeless client leader David Broxton, "is that we registered a number of people who thought they weren't eligible to vote." He said that happens because "some people without permanent housing think they lose the right to vote if they live in a shelter or on the street, and of course they don't."

"People with criminal records often think they've lost their right to vote forever," according to another CFH client leader, Ava Connor, "but someone with a criminal record who has served their sentence, and is no longer incarcerated or on parole, does have the right to vote."

Those who registered in the CFH voter registration project will now receive a follow up reminder about voting before the election, including the address of their polling place. CFH does not participate in partisan activities, or endorse any party or candidate. We do encourage everyone eligible to register and vote.

Become an advocate today! Join us on Facebook and on Twitter for up-to-the-minute info.



A Choice: Jails or Homes

Bobby Watts, Executive Director

A few months ago, inspired by a night sleeping out in the park with the Interfaith Assembly on Housing and Homelessness, my letter in this space focused on the importance of choices, anchored in a quote by President Dwight Eisenhower which goes in part, "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed... We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people..."

Shortly before heading to Washington, D.C. with several CFH consumers and 100,000 other friends for the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, I engaged in an email exchange with staff from the NYC Independent Budget Office. I was sure that a figure in their recently-released report was incorrect. **But it wasn't a typo - the annualized cost of an inmate in NYC jails is \$167,731 per year.** On a given night, 70% of the inmates (and therefore 70% of the expenses) are for those who have been arrested and awaiting trial, many of them for non-violent drug-related offenses. The drug usage rates in the U.S. is very similar to other industrialized nations, but this country decided to undertake a war of choice beginning in the 1980s, the "war on drugs"—not by directing most of the efforts to drug treatment and prevention, but on criminalization policies that resulted in incarceration rates far beyond any other nation on earth.

The human costs are that disease is not only criminalized, but remains untreated, and becomes a driver of homelessness – not only because some people do not receive the help they need to right their lives, but because a drug felony will make someone ineligible for basic life supports: food stamps, welfare, even the ability to live in public housing projects.

To put our choices in perspective through other lenses: The cost to incarcerate someone in NYC jails for a year dwarfs what drug treatment costs, what shelter costs, and certainly what

Lawyers Say Housing is a "Basic Human Right" to Housing

America's lawyers recognize housing as a basic human right! The American BAR Association, the organization representing lawyers in America, adopted a resolution at their annual convention in August urging recognition of "the human right to adequate housing for all through increased funding, development and implementation of affordable housing strategies."

They went to urge local, state and federal governments to "implement policies promoting the human right to adequate housing for all, including affordability, habitability and accessibility" and "security of tenure [and] access to services" in areas that don't threaten occupants' health or safety. The resolution specifically recognizes adequate housing as more than a goal – as a basic human right.

housing would cost. Under the Advantage rental subsidy program for families leaving the shelter system, which was discontinued for lack of funds, 23 families would have been housed for a year with this amount of money. Put another way, it is three times the cost of putting someone through Harvard for a year.

Do we really feel that incarceration and causing homelessness at this cost is the best choice we can make?

It certainly isn't better for the individual, and it isn't better for society. According to The Blinker, NYC will spend over five times more next year on housing drug offenders in jail, than it will on housing low-income New Yorkers in NYCHA. The city will spend almost 50% more on housing drug offenders in jail than it will on making NYC storm resistant next year. And the city will spend 50% more next year housing drug offenders in jail than it will on CUNY.

If we feel we don't have the money to address homelessness, we only need to see what different choices we need to make. Deciding to no longer criminalize health problems is an easy, moral, economical, and sensible choice to make.

March on Washington ...

John Lewis, who spoke at the event 50 years ago. It was sponsored by the NAACP, the National Action League, and numerous labor organizations, faith communities and social justice groups.

Last week's demonstration, like the one a half century ago, was very much designed to raise the economic issues that CFH deals with daily. Those issues include lack of access to high-quality and client-centered health care for vulnerable populations, lack of affordable housing for far too many, lack of living wage jobs and discrimination.

Care for the Homeless Executive Director Bobby Watts and several CFH staffers participated, too.

First Class of "Certified CFH Advocates" Heading for Graduation

After completing a ten-week course on speaking techniques, public policy on homelessness and advocacy training, the first class of graduates will become certified as Care for the Homeless Advocates on Thursday, September 26th, at 2 p.m., in a ceremony at --. The certified advocate graduates will each speak at the ceremony.

The training, which will be offered by CFH at least annually, is part of CFH's launch of a Speakers' Bureau, offering public education presentations on public policy related to homelessness in New York City to any interested group, including classes, neighborhood organizations, religious congregations and others. Any group interested in having a presentation by CFH clients and staff or Board members should contact Policy Director Jeff Foreman at 212-366-4459.

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