

The Homeless Union and its Winter Offensives to Organize the Poor and Dispossessed

By Savina Martin and Willie Baptist

“The dispossessed of this nation -- the poor, both white and Negro -- live in a cruelly unjust society. They must organize a revolution against the injustice, not against the lives of the persons who are their fellow citizens, but against the structures through which the society is refusing to take means which have been called for, and which are at hand, to lift the load of poverty. There are millions of poor people in this country who have very little, or even nothing, to lose. If they can be helped to take action together, they will do so with a freedom and a power that will be a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life. ...this nonviolent army, this "freedom church" of the poor...

- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The National Council to Reestablish the **National Union of the Homeless** was formed during the Poor People’s Moral Action Congress, convened by the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revival in Washington, D.C. from June 17-19, 2019. At that same meeting, the National Council made a call for preparation for a **Winter Offensive** during the upcoming Christmas Season.

The winter season covers a period of the highest celebration in the religious culture and civic life of the United States. Besides being a period of time when the poor and homeless experience the most deadly conditions and the highest rates of suicide, it’s a season when capitalist commercialism and cultural ritualism combines with an intense public pretense of charity toward the poor and homeless. This very harsh time for the impoverished is thinly covered over with Christmas carols, church services, and crocodile tears. Nonetheless, this period regularly generates possibilities for greater public attention and broader platforms for the independent messages of a mass organizing drive of the poor and dispossessed as a powerful and revolutionary class force. The Homeless Union has therefore tactically taken advantage of this political opportunity to creatively advance its organization and sustained message against the false narratives and stereotypes about the causes of poverty and homelessness. The Homeless Union’s Winter Offensives have been a series of synchronized actions and protests, which serve as schools for the identification, education, and

training of leaders from the ranks of the poor and homeless through their struggles for survival and mass organizing.

The operations of the Homeless Union's winter offensives have covered the period of the Christmas season, from Thanksgiving through Christmas and New Year's Day, to the birthday of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on January 15th. The newly revived Homeless Union began preparations for this tactical offensive by asking all other organizing efforts of the poor and dispossessed if they want to join: The preparation has included a series of meetings with different organizations, churches, and leaders of the Poor People's Campaign: National Call for Moral Revival. The Winter Offensive has provided the ways and means for the Homeless Union to break through political isolation by promoting 'mutual support networks' and 'lines of communication' between the different struggles and protests in the poor organizing themselves. It has helped facilitate the carrying out of the Reverend Dr. King's original vision for and objective of the 1967-68 Poor People's Campaign, which was to unite poor and dispossessed masses into a "new and unsettling force" to be politically reckoned with. In other words: To encourage and facilitate the coordination of various organizing drives to build sustained and united actions of the poor and dispossessed masses across color lines and all lines of division.

The re-launching of the Homeless Union's National Organizing Drive and its Winter Offensives has fundamental, revolutionary, and strategic significance.

This significance lies, firstly, in the fact that homelessness has become much more structural than in the past, inflicting misery not only on so-called "skid row," "unfortunate" individuals. Today, whole families with their children are being thrown down into the same lot. Homelessness now embodies every major economic and social ill in capitalist society, all the manifestations of exploitation, poverty, racial and gender inequalities, ecological devastation, war and police repression. The fact that this is occurring in the most economically developed and richest capitalist country in the world, the United States of North America, further underscores the importance of this new chronic phenomenon. Despite the prevailing misconceptions and stereotypes, the conditions of homelessness are varied, ranging from unemployment and underemployment, to the growth of forced migration and refugee encampments, to the increasing homeless population of students at all ages and education levels. It is a product of basic shifts in the world economy caused by the unprecedented, comprehensive, worldwide and rapidly developing microelectronics technological revolution. This is due to the fact that this revolution is bringing about labor-replacing technology affecting all major facets of social life. This technological revolution is unlike previous labor-saving revolutions in world history, in that it has the potential to eliminate human labor not just from one industry or occupation, but from every sector of the economy. It is giving rise to an unheard of accumulation and centralization of capital and wealth in the hands of a tiny few while at the same

time generating untold and unnecessary poverty, misery, and death domestically and globally. Many of the impacts of this inhumane insanity, this abandonment in the midst of unprecedented production of wealth and abundance, are most sorely felt during the winter seasons.

And secondly, the significance of the Homeless Union's Winter Offensives lies in the fact that the struggles of homeless people have to be part of the overall struggle to abolish the existing poverty- and homelessness-producing economic system of capitalism, along with the US state apparatus that protects that system. The major lesson of the tactical initiatives taken up by the Winter Offensives of the Homeless Union is the strategic necessity of contributing to the establishment of a politically independent voice for and organization of the poor and dispossessed as a whole class: Independent of and in opposition to its class enemy, the Wall Street-centered ruling class of big, global capital. These offensives as well as the homeless union organizing drives as a whole have proved that the poor can think, speak, fight, and organize for themselves. With these capabilities, the poor can lead not only themselves but a broad movement to immediately abolish all poverty.

POLITICAL ORGANIZING OF THE POOR

The homeless and the other most impoverished sections of the class of the dispossessed or property-less masses are locked in a life and death struggle with the organized violence and coercive force of the various agencies of the state apparatus. By definition this state apparatus represents the control and organization of the capitalist exploiters and oppressors as the ruling class. This extreme condition of class struggle necessarily gives the missions and organizations of the poor and dispossessed a political character. The Homeless Union is constructing itself as essentially a political union, unlike a trade union directed at a single capitalist employer or industry. This means that political education, theoretical and practical, about the meaning and implementation of its political mission must be at the very center of this organizing. The content of this political education must be as Diane Bernard, the former President of the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, once elegantly and militantly explained at a Malcolm X Conference:

[I happened to be a poor black mother.] Don't tell me that a white mother who witnessed her three children burned up in a house fire is unfit to lead this struggle. She has a personal vendetta against the government. She'll fight harder than anybody who's out here just reading books and talking a bunch of bullcrap because it sounds good and feels good. She will fight because she has a personal stake, because they hurt her. Those are the kind of fighters we need and I'll follow her anywhere, anytime. We have to embrace those mothers. Take them under our wings and give them the

ammo they need to fight. That is, a proper education about who the enemy is and where this enemy is and how we go about destroying this enemy. And restructuring a society that could allow... children to burn up because you don't have money to pay for gas. And natural gas is so plentiful in this country that nobody should have to pay for it.

The Homeless Union organizing drives and its winter, spring, summer, and fall offensives open up a front of struggle of the poor and dispossessed that, in concert with the other fronts, can powerfully unsettle and move the masses of the people out of their current political complacency and ideological stupor. The homeless population by itself cannot abolish capitalism and poverty, the root cause of homelessness. This is similar to the situation of the black poor slaves. They could not abolish the entire American capitalist slave economic and social system by themselves. However, the mass rebellions and the protracted, brave, clever, illegal operations of the runaway slaves of the Underground Railroad had the ideological and political impact of igniting the entire country, leading to the massive social convulsion of a civil war and economic and political reconstruction. This drive of the homeless poor today parallels that of the concerted and covert operations of the Underground Railroad.

Looking at the Winter Offensives of the past, another lesson comes from the strategic choice of the timing for initiating this tactical offensive. It is a period of the year when the country focuses a little more attention on concern for the poor and homeless, and pays much lip-serve to them as a civic-religious ritual. It is a time when capitalist retail businesses have to sell a great amount of their commodities to make sure their overall profit goals for the year are met. This is the primary reason for their widespread appeal to the prominent Judeo-Christian religious belief system of their prospective customers. The specific reference to the Biblical concern for “least of these” amounts to avaricious, empty “crying of crocodile tears”, or a distorted type of “compassionate” charity for the poor and homeless. A commercialized heartfelt guilt to “help” the poor and “needy.” The Winter Offensives have helped to politically expose this irreligious and inhumane hypocrisy. This is especially underscored by these current times of increasingly excruciating economic distress and human misery worldwide.

POWER NOT PITY

Power grows out of organization. Political Power grows out of political organization. The poor organizing and uniting the poor is essentially and strategically about the poor and dispossessed masses gaining power so as to abolish all poverty. Under the current conditions of capitalist economic exploitation and political oppression, this power has to be political. That is to say, the impoverished masses must attain mass influence to isolate and defeat our enemy, the ruling capitalist class, and achieve economic emancipation from

capitalist exploitation and oppression. History teaches that this kind of power is not given. As the first President of the National Union of the Homeless once stated, "What's given to you can easily be taken. Freedom is not free, we only get what we are organized to take!"

Pity is the exact opposite of power. It is simply a plea for the unjust morality of the capitalist class who are currently in power. And that power is not only exploiting and oppressing us: It is killing us. Pity is the ultimate acceptance of that human indignity and death warrant.

Pity can be very active and self-sacrificing but it remains effectively "militant do-gooderism." "Do-gooderism," or bourgeois charity, militant or not, has a long history. It seeks only temporary concessions or crumbs off the table but not fundamental reconstruction. The famous Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy, once stated:

"I sit on a person's back and persuade myself and him that I will do everything necessary to alleviate his condition except get off his back."

The sorrowful pity, part of the unjust morality of the capitalist exploiters, cries crocodile tears while reinforcing the prevailing misconception that the homeless are indeed helpless and that the poor generally should be blamed for their own poverty, hiding the real cause: The profit-making and poverty-producing system of capitalism. This pity-morality is not true compassion. In 1967, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. correctly admonished:

"True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice, which produces beggars needs restructuring. A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth."

It is particularly during the winter Christmas season that pity, charity, and false compassion run amuck. Poverty-pimping NGOs, especially religious and big business operations such as the Salvation Army, all come out in full force. Their Christmas fund-raising and philanthropy operations promote pity and not the power that develops through the mass political organizing of the poor. The message of the Salvation Army is not what Dr. King described as "the Nonviolent Army of the Poor" or the "Freedom Church of the Poor." It is a message of false Christian charity, which promotes the prevailing stereotypes and misconceptions of poverty and homelessness being the fault of the helplessness and criminality of the poor and homeless themselves. In other words, it is essentially the message that the cause of these human-devaluing injustices is not the present poverty-producing and profit-making exploitative system of capitalism.

It is precisely this message that the Homeless Union's Winter Offensives seek to expose and oppose. They do this by loudly and constantly promulgating the message of Dr. King's nonviolent army of the poor, that is, the message of ending poverty altogether and once and for all. This clash between two antagonistic notions, symbolized by the conflict between the Salvation Army and the multi-racial nonviolent army of the poor, is the defining clash of our times. It is the clash of opposing class economic interests and clash of theologies.

Above all, tactically, these winter offensives have historically served as a favorable moment and means for the Homeless Union to get out its message as expressed in its Mission statement, that is, **ending Homelessness and poverty and economic and social justice for all with universal human rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.** They are a time when the homeless union is able to exert a lot of ideological and political influence on the masses of the American people and build the influence and reach of its organization.

The **central themes** of the Winter Offensives have been:

- "Right to Housing, Not Death in the Street!"
- "Power Not Pity, Change Not Charity!"
- "We are homeless but not helpless!"
- "You Only Get What You Are Organized to Take!"

In light of the considerations above, this upcoming 2021-2022 Winter Offensive includes the following **major goals**:

- This Winter Offensive of the Homeless Union Organizing Drive will help give more strength to the political work and influence of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revisal as it reaches other sections of the class of the poor and dispossessed and those elements of advanced social conscience.
- We strive for the political educational aspect of the Offensive to be much more systematic and central to the overall political organizing drive to build a political union by carrying out our plans for ongoing Officer training, membership consolidation, and recruitment expansion, turning the whole experience of the winter series of operations into schools of struggle.

Immediate Objectives of the Offensive for the National Union of the Homeless: Establish the Three-pronged National Organizing Drive, 1) Local Unions or Local Organizing Committees, 2) Clergy Council Committee, 3) Legal Department committee.

To meet these objectives, the Offensive will include a series of nationally coordinated **synchronized local actions** of the different local homeless unions

in coalitions with other fighting organizations. In between these actions the Homeless Union will seek to hold education and training courses centered around its Mission Statement, including **Ron Casanova Officer Training Courses**, for local leaders and other invited students from other organizations. We are asking each local and the different organizations of the poor and dispossessed who have united with us to decide on specific protest activities to be synchronized, at least on the important designated days of the Winter Offensive. The main objective here is to help strengthen mutual support relations between us and amplify our joint messages of ending poverty and homelessness.

Main slogans to be used and promoted in the synchronized actions:

- You are only one paycheck or healthcare crisis away from poverty and homelessness!
- Putting Christ back into Christmas!: No Room at the Inn! Jesus was Homeless! How Can You Worship a Homeless Man on Sunday and Ignore One on Monday?!
- Homeless not Helpless!
- You Only Get What You Are Organized to Take!
- Build the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival!

Specific slogans and demands will be added to these main national slogans, depending on the specific situations of the different local homeless unions and other partner organizations in the offensive.

Important Winter Days around which actions and protests will take place:

1. **December 10th** – Anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) particularly Article 23: Right to a Living Wage Job; Article 25: Right to Housing and Health Care; and Article 26: Right to Education. And we also take this day to acknowledge the inspiration and legitimation that the internationally recognized UDHR provides for the National Union of the Homeless and its Mission Statement.
2. **December 21st** – Annual National Homeless Memorial Day and condemnation of mass graves of unnamed poor and homeless men, women, and children in potters' fields around the country and internationally.
3. **December 25th** - Birth of Jesus Christ – We commemorate his Ministry, which was a Poor People's Campaign that included healthcare without co-pays. He educated and trained disciples, making "fishers of men" who built a powerful social movement.

4. **New Year** and the making of Resolutions or Recommitments for next year work of the National Homeless Union and its locals.
5. **January 15th** – Birthday of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorating the Last Week of Jesus Christ and the Last Year of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

THE OFFENSIVE AND THE DEFENSIVE AND REAL VICTORIES

“Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers.”

- Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848)

“... the general tendency of capitalistic production is not to raise, but to sink the average standard of wages, or to push the value of labor more or less to its minimum limit. Such being the tendency of things in this system, is this saying that the working class ought to renounce their resistance against the encroachments of capital, and abandon their attempts at making the best of the occasional chances for their temporary improvement? If they did, they would be degraded to one level mass of broken wretches past salvation. I think I have shown that their struggles for the standard of wages are incidents inseparable from the whole wages system, that in 99 cases out of 100 their efforts at raising wages are only efforts at maintaining the given value of labor, and that the necessity of debating their price with the capitalist is inherent to their condition of having to sell themselves as commodities. By cowardly giving way in their everyday conflict with capital, they would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement.

“At the same time, and quite apart from the general servitude involved in the wages system, the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these everyday struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady. They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla fights incessantly springing up from the never ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social

forms necessary for an economical reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!" they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wages system!'"

- *Value, Prices, and Profit by K. Marx 1865*

Whatever the course or the outcome the revolution may be, however early it may be checked by one or other circumstance all its real gains will be rendered secure and reliable only insofar as the proletariat is organized.

- *V. I. Lenin, New Tasks and New Forces (1905)*

Still another major lesson of the Homeless Union's past Winter Offensives was the need for the newly emerging leaders of the struggles of the poor and dispossessed to grasp the distinction and interrelationship of the principles of the offensive and the defensive, of attack and retreat, in political conflicts. The first point is to master the basic principle of strategy and tactics laid out in the time-tested 2,500 year-old classic, Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. That principle is "If you *know the enemy and know yourself*, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles." Concretely, that means a firm analytical grasp of the fundamental reality of the increasing political polarities that are symptomatic of the breaking down of today's economic and political situation into two hostile class camps globally. That is, the intensification of the class struggle between the ruling class of big and increasingly global and mobile capital deployed via Wall Street and the other financial centers throughout the world on the one hand, and the new poor and dispossessed section of the working class on the other.

This latter camp includes the increasingly deindustrialized and globalized proletariat, and in the United States continues to be the most disunited, racially segregated, and disorganized segment of the population. This current social and political position of the poor and dispossessed places them in an inferior position, the position of the strategic defensive. Given this overall situation, our Winter Offensives in this period are tactical, aimed at building up the mass nonviolent army of the poor into a "new and unsettling force" to be reckoned with. As in the past, the momentum gathered during these offensives can set stages for Spring, Summer, and Fall offensives of mass organizing of the poor and dispossessed into a powerful united class force.

Just as battles (or campaigns, that is, series of battles) are part of the overall war, tactics to fight battles are a part of the overall strategy to win the war. The principles of the offensive and the defensive, of attack and retreat, are aspects of both the strategic and tactical levels of the conduct of war. The same is true for political strategy and tactics in political conflicts generally. Mastering these

principles means mastering the central problem of class power and class strategy to attain power. V.I. Lenin was a leader and teacher of a revolutionary process in the Tsarist Russian Empire, which was the first social movement of the poor to defeat the power and greed of the rich ruling classes. He explains one of the main lessons of that revolution:

People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the interests of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises. Champions of reforms and improvements will always be fooled by the defenders of the old order until they realize that every old institution, however barbarous and rotten it may appear to be, is kept going by the forces of certain ruling classes. And there is only one way of smashing the resistance of those classes, and that is to find, in the very society, which surrounds us, the forces, which can—and, owing to their social position, must—constitute the power capable of sweeping away the old and creating the new, and to enlighten and organize those forces for the struggle.

The history of class conflicts and national wars teaches that a newly emerging oppositional social force starts on the strategic defensive while their historic enemy holds the superior position of the strategic initiative and offensive. The ruling class or so-called “Powers That Be” are by definition that section of the population that holds state power: The governmental apparatus of organized violence and control. In other words, history teaches and current political reality confirms that the ruling class is the most organized and powerful of all the other classes or social-economic groups in society. That class organization places them in a superior political position with regard to the poor and dispossessed classes, which are the most disorganized and therefore occupy for a time an inferior position in the class conflict. And as long as the poor and dispossessed class is disunited and disorganized they remain in an inferior, defensive strategic position in relation to the Powers That Be.

In a conflict, the side that is in a superior and organizationally stronger position initially defines overall the terms of the conflict, and sets the debates in ways that are favorable to them. That is why historically the successful struggles and protests of oppressed classes or nations have picked their battles smartly and chosen their times to go on tactical offensives, within the period of their being on the strategic defensive. Those battles and times chosen must target the adversary where they are the most vulnerable. These tactical choices will enable them to define the issues and terms of the debate in ways that are most favorable to their side of the conflict.

Today capitalist society is in the midst of profound and prolonged systemic economic crises. This has meant that while on one hand the rich ruling class has exhibited much strength around its political use of racial questions, on the other hand their political vulnerability is being exposed around questions of basic economic necessities: Such issues as healthcare, housing, and hunger. Here we must be guided by the time-tested strategic principle of Sun Tzu that is, "Avoid the enemy's strengths, and attack the enemy's weak points." In other words, if we are to win we must concentrate our energies and efforts on our common economic needs, and on that basis carry out a mass organizing drive to unite the poor and dispossessed as a powerful and revolutionary class force. This strategic objective and operation must include the intelligent use of tactical offensives within the present period of our strategic defensive, to over time build a broad mass movement to abolish all capitalist poverty.

Ultimately, this approach will enable oppressed forces to arise and go on the strategic offensive with overwhelming attacks to accomplish our overall and final victory. Understanding and sticking and staying the strategic course to attain real victory is our overall concern here. Understanding the real and strategic victories that are accomplished through and beyond the daily fights for immediate concessions is indispensable to mastering the strategic and tactical principles of the Offensive and the Defensive. They must guide our choosing of battles and taking up of well-thought-out tactical offensives such as the Winter Offensives. The newly emerging leaders and teachers, as political organizers of the poor and homeless, must commit themselves to deepening their understanding of the real measurements of victories in political battles, mobilizations, campaigns, and in the overall war to end all capitalist poverty and misery.

The poor and homeless section of the population embodies all these major economic issues, which neither the capitalist wages and profit system nor the ruling capitalist class can solve or abolish. And for this reason our enemies' political influence and control are most vulnerable on these issues. These immediate issues of basic needs are what the poor and dispossessed have most in common and therefore provide the basis of class unity and organization. This most neglected and under-utilized fact in political education and organizing therefore poses the greatest threat to global and domestic stability as determined by the interests of big capital. Taking the tactical initiative on these issues during a tactical winter offensive is therefore of strategic importance in the fight for the unity, organization, and power of the poor and dispossessed necessary to building and giving political direction to a broad movement of the masses of people toward abolishing all poverty and human indignities. It would be the best Thanksgiving, Christmas present, Happy New Year's resolution; the best way to honor the birthday of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

CONCLUSION

In this regard and in summary, it is important to take note of the essential significance of the Mission Statement of the National Union of the Homeless. Its importance lies in its giving content and direction to the political education of the mass political organizing drive of the poor and dispossessed through ongoing winter, spring, summer, and autumn tactical offensives. The Mission of the National Union of the Homeless, what it considers its “North Star” reads:

The heart and soul of the National Union of the Homeless is to commit our lives to ending homelessness and poverty and to work tirelessly for the human right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, for social and economic justice for all. We dedicate ourselves to raising the awareness of our sisters and brothers, to planning a sustained struggle and to building an organization that can obtain freedom through revolutionary perseverance. We pledge to deepen our personal commitment to end all forms of exploitation, racism, sexism, and abuse. True solidarity demands that we create not only the new society, but also the new human being.

Below the Mission Statement is broken down in four parts, with brief explanations of the theoretical and political premises of the Homeless Union’s objectives and tasks:

1) The heart and soul of the National Union of the Homeless is to commit our lives to ending homelessness and poverty

Abolition of the capitalist economic system, which is the root cause of homelessness and poverty. This makes poverty and homelessness revolutionary questions because they cannot be ended except by a fundamental social reconstruction or revolution.

2) And to work tirelessly for the human right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, for social and economic justice for all.

The rights to the basic necessities of life such as healthcare, housing, and water, are opposed to the rights of private property. This class antagonism raises the question of the role of the capitalist state and all its agencies such as the police, border patrol and ICE, the military, the prison system, and the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government. In other words the state is composed of the governmental apparatuses of organized force and violence. The fundamental function of the capitalist state is to uphold and protect the rights of private property including the right to hire and fire. This is compelling the emerging struggles of the poor and dispossessed for their basic economic necessities to come up against the state, giving these struggles a political and

revolutionary character requiring more than reformist “victories,” partial concessions, or trade union collective bargaining with a “boss” of an company or an industry. The human rights to basic economic needs are universal, i.e., for everyone, and therefore from the viewpoint and interests of the class of the poor and property-less (dispossessed) the struggle for these rights is anti-racist and anti-white supremacy. This framework of universal human rights operates against the corporate media-created notion of “Homeless People,” which separates or isolates those who are without a home from the rest of the working class.

3) We dedicate ourselves to raising the awareness of our sisters and brothers, to planning a sustained struggle and to building an organization that can obtain freedom through revolutionary perseverance.

Political organizing centers around political education, including the ideological development of “revolutionary perseverance” or steadfast commitment to “stick and stay’ all the way to the end. This organizing seeks to build political organizations that are built on class political consciousness: In this case an organization of homeless proletarians inseparably tied to the unity and organization of the poor and dispossessed as a whole class.

4) We pledge to deepen our personal commitment to end all forms of exploitation, racism, sexism, and abuse. True solidarity demands that we create not only the new society, but also the new human being.

This means committing to countering the prevailing and ongoing campaign to dehumanize and devalue the lives of the poor and homeless, portraying them as the “walking dead,” and as worthless, less than the “Children of God.”

The revolutionary leaders, teachers and organizers of the University of the Poor must understand and politically support the Winter Offensive of the National Union of the Homeless and other such initiatives of the newly emerging struggles, campaigns, and mass organizing drives of the poor and dispossessed masses.