

## KIP TIERNAN IN HER OWN WORDS



Advocating for poor women is apparently a revolutionary act. When we were arrested you have thought we were serial killers ... leg shackles and handcuffs ... helping the poor is apparently an act of subversion ... but making them homeless and hungry is not. What's wrong with this picture, sisters and brothers?



It would be wonderful having a national standard of living where we could all put our key in the door and go home at night.

The difference between charity and justice is that charity is scraps from the table, while justice is being invited to the table itself.

To blame those already on their knees says something about us and not them.

Homelessness is not an emergency; it is a chronically imposed economic condition.

Unconditional love is the framework, the base, the rock on which we stand.

But they cannot forget the love we chose to give them, while the rest of the world would deny their reality and indeed their very lives.

I have this hope. I have this rage. I have this dream that somehow we are going to make it together, you and I; that we will transform society – that we will turn it around – that we will struggle to stay in the struggle.

Community and democracy must work hand in hand, otherwise we have neither.

...we invite you to walk the journey to justice with us, so that no child will be hungry, no mother will be turned away.

Random acts of kindness are not enough for us. We demand to be invited to the table.

Shelter, we all know by now, is not answer to homelessness. Having your own home, with the wherewithal to secure and protect it, is an answer.

We can never make the denial of compassion respectable...We cannot elevate cruelty to a virtue by the denial of help to our own hungry citizens. We are here to do what must be done.

Charity promises the substitution of gifts for rights, actually making it easier for the government to shed its responsibility for the poor.

But we will stand in the streets and the suites of power, to demand justice for ourselves and for each other. This is what independence means to me: the right to fight for what is right. To change the law if the law is bad, to help create the laws that set us free.

We try to help change the system one day at a time, one policy at a time, and sometimes it works. This is the beauty of hope in a hopeless world of indifference and fear.

All of us need a Rosie in our lives. She is the hope we all have, that lets us know that everything is going to be all right, in our darkest hour. Rosie's Place has provided the base from which many women can again build shattered lives. It is the place we can dream our dreams and know somehow that everything is going to turn around now that a friend has stepped into the void and found us.

...the journey to justice can only be made in the company of others.

A reordering of priorities is essential to survival if we are to continue as part of the human race. Change must take place.

Together we can make change. We can find that common vision. And we can find that passionate critical voice. You too can make a difference for someone today.

...I believe that indifference is a weapon of mass destruction, and we have done our damndest to prove that love will conquer all, if we only allow ourselves the luxury of being human.

I think the time is ripe for all of us who are disillusioned and who feel powerless to renew our spiritual values and come together in some kind of community of resistance, with a clear vision of how things might yet be.

And so, dearest healers of the universe, I tenderly place this broken, suffering, pitiful world in your capable, loving hands, as I recall the ancient Hebrew prayer that goes like this: "Hold our hand in yours, oh Lord that those who hold our loving hands may find you there."

Little dreams become realities, and continue to because we dare to dream. We walk on the beaches of life, throwing starfish back into the ocean and soon they learn to swim again on their own.

We have the power. We have the strength to survive, if we only look to each other for support.

Don't be afraid. Take the risk, to hope, to dare, to be human.

Cui' Bono? Who benefits? Who sets the terms of the debate around poverty and homelessness?

Charity aims at alleviating the suffering. Justice calls for eliminating the causes of the suffering.

It is up to us to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

How dare we not care! How dare we not stand up for our sisters and brothers in agony. How dare we deny the reality of what is happening to all of us.

Compassion is a discipline that is meant to evoke truth. Do our daily lives reflect compassion and truth?

We are accountable to and for each other...We must find a way to make a difference in somebody's life today.

Charity is just scraps from the table. Justice means being invited to the table itself. That's the difference at Rosie's Place. We offer justice.

#### **April 11, 2000**

These are terribly dangerous times. What would Amos and Jeremiah say about our society, about our presidential candidates? As in their time, we too are in a time of transition. Our world is dying. Our grief is poignant because we are all too busy, too sure, too invested, too committed ideologically to the political form and the economic models of the past which are increasingly ineffective. I see revisionist history being written on the spot. There are those who claim there was no holocaust. The media tells us the economy has never been better, when we all know better. There are those who feel women are getting uppity again. What are our values anyway?

I wish we had more time here tonight to discuss radical inequality for it is right in our faces and we had damn well better do something about it.

...I cannot believe that there will not be a New Day of Reckoning, but only we can make that happen. We used to have a moral vision but we have become alienated from one another-fax me, e-mail me. Whatever happened to 'hello' in this alienation? We have let our heroes become outcast and we have let them go.

We used to have a vision and now we have an agenda-they are not the same. Today, the fax has replaced the personal fury. The press release has replaced the passion. The company retreat has replaced the rage. The computer has replaced the confrontation, and we don't have to take any personal responsibility for anything. If American theology is ever to recover its true voice, we must find a way to debate the questions we have forgotten to ask.

