

THE HOMELESS CONUNDRUM

When I first faced trying to help a homeless person, their food, shelter and medical needs flashed red in my mind as top priorities.

Indeed, while those essential human needs are important, I contend the top priority is to establish a **PERMANENT RESIDENT ADDRESS** and have the **NECESSARY SUPPORTING IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS**.

Before meeting Bob Shiles four years ago, I never understood the insanity of the Homeless Conundrum – the lack of a Permanent Resident Address.

Bob worked his entire life and paid taxes, social security, Medicare etc. He has a Social Security Card and valid Drivers License, but no Birth Certificate.

However, I quickly discovered Bob **COULD NOT FILE** for Social Security, get a Post Office Box, or a Bank Checking Account, much less rent a room or apartment unless he had real estate tax receipts, utility bills or bank statements that were required as evidentiary documents.

Social Security will not mail a check to a Post Office Box and prefers Electronic Direct Deposit to a Bank Account; however, other notices may be received at a PO Box.

The Post Office no longer has General Delivery, and requires proof of a Permanent Resident Address to rent a PO Box.

Banking Institutions require proof of a Resident Permanent Address to open an Account. They will not mail Bank Cards (Debit/Credit) to a PO Box.

It is **IMPOSSIBLE** for a Homeless Person to resume mainstream American life without a Permanent Resident Address and the help of another individual willing to intervene and act on their behalf. I did this for Bob.

I allowed Bob to use my resident address and identified myself as the individual who assisted in the completion of his online Application for Social Security. His lack of a Birth Certificate required a special telephone interrogation to answer detailed questions Social Security Administration agents were privy to about his work history over his lifetime.

I opened a PO Box using my credentials, and listed Bob as an alternate recipient and gave him my key. This was done under the advice of the local postmaster.

I similarly established an online Bank Account with CHIME to receive his monthly SSN payment (and 3-years later Medicare). When other mail was delivered to my Resident Address, I deposited it in the PO Box for Bob's retrieval.

It became apparent to me that without a Permanent Resident Address and the necessary evidentiary documents, Homeless Individuals immediately encounter the Homeless Conundrum – which makes them powerless to proceed on their own. Society readily blames them for a lack of initiative (or cooperation) if they remain homeless.

Society is not asking the homeless to do something that is difficult, but simply IMPOSSIBLE.

Can we not find a way to establish a Legal Address Registry to bypass this ridiculous road block? Most Homeless are citizens and many are Veterans who continue to have their access blocked to benefits they have earned and are entitled to receive.

The USA finds ways to integrate immigrants and refugees into our society who are NOT Citizens. Can we not find a way to treat the homeless in an equal manner?

Bob Radcliffe