

Voice of the Poor

June, 2008

www.voiceofthepoor.org

www.stvincentdepaul.net

Report to Western Region

Boise, Idaho June 18-21, 2008

This report is dedicated to the memory of Don Lamb whose determination and strong voice resulted in predatory loan reform in Oregon.

Voice of the Poor has committees in CA (Bay Area, San Mateo, Orange County, Sacramento, Tehachapi, Los Angeles, and San Diego), Oregon (Portland, Eugene, Ashland, Central Oregon and Salem), Washington (Seattle, Olympia, Spokane), Montana (Billings) and Arizona (Phoenix and Flagstaff). There are currently 35 VOP committee chairs on the Western Region VOP Network communicating with Lucy.

Lucy Howell and Julie Douglas of Phoenix VOP will offer two workshops in Boise: Basic VOP and a VOP Forum.

From Jim Bloss, Seattle Council VOP, reports areas of emphasis:

(1) The need to focus on Vincentian spirituality as a means to help make the connection between charity and justice as promoted by Voice of the Poor and

(2) The very special role that Home Visits can have in forming the Vincentian understanding of the need for social justice.

(3) The need to incorporate Voice of the Poor in Ozanam Formation training so that advocacy is not seen as an afterthought by Vincentians.

From Linda Palmer, San Diego Council VOP: VOP San Diego has joined faith and community leaders in the "**United for a Hate Free San Diego**" Coalition, part of an education effort in SD County calling attention to the rise in hate crimes toward homeless, poor and undocumented. The group has come up with a covenant that all who attended the first meeting signed. It is a declaration that we, as moral people of God, cannot continue to remain silent when bigotry and intolerance appears to be condoned and are not challenged when it is evident in the media, our schools, and even in our social groups. We were reminded of the current sharp rise in Neo-Nazism in the U.S. and Europe targeting immigrants. In San Diego, there have been shocking crimes against undocumented workers and the homeless.

From Randy Heinz, Billings Council VOP: One project has us gathering information and speaking to lawmakers, business people and legal experts about **pay day loans, title loans and the pawnbrokers** and how to work with our friends who find themselves in difficulties with these industries. Another problem we encounter in Montana is the **lack of an acceptable ID when people are released from the custody of the Department of Corrections**. Many times the only form of identification they have is a **DoC ID** which is not accepted by local businesses or landlords. Parole requirements are violated because of a lack of a valid photo ID which in Montana must be based on a birth certificate. Replacement is a long process.

From Lucy Howell and Julie Douglas, Phoenix Council VOP: We will analyze the impact of the 2009 AZ State Budget on low income Arizonans and communicate to our members. Steve Jenkins' letter to the AZ Republic opposing the industry's payday loan initiative was published 6/11/08. A letter to the Catholic Sun regarding human dignity and immigration has been sent.

VOP will next meet on Wednesday, July 16 at 3:30 p.m. at Vincentian Support Services.