

FOREWORD

Washington State Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos

We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly (The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from a Birmingham Jail)

People in Purple presents powerful testimony about one of the most persistent and pervasive problems in human history: homelessness. Volume 1 outlines who is affected by homelessness and why. In fact, homelessness leaves no demographic untouched: the working poor, the mentally ill, the young, the old, and people of every race, culture, and identity. The problem of homelessness is ubiquitous, present in communities small and large, urban, suburban and rural, all across America. The question and challenge we collectively face is what can and what should we do to solve this problem?

Homelessness is a complex and complicated condition. Our response to it must be similarly comprehensive, sustainable, and transformative; there are no *easy* solutions. Indeed, just trying to *define* homelessness is fraught with difficulty.

But by improving our understanding about the root causes of homelessness, we can better halt the expansion of the homeless population AND we can better serve those who currently experience homelessness or who are at risk of becoming homeless.

The Rev. Dr. Jean Kim is the right person to help us understand and confront the problems of homelessness and to tell the stories of the men, women, youth and children who live with the consequence of inadequate affordable housing. For more than 4 decades, she has worked to confront and eradicate poverty and homelessness as a state-certified social worker and mental health counselor as well as the founder of the Church of Mary Magdalene, an urban ministry for homeless women in Seattle. She is a passionate crusader for “Ending Homelessness” wherever and however it exists.

People in Purple is the *magnum opus* in which the Rev. Dr. Kim makes the Gospel concrete and relevant while dispensing insight and wisdom accumulated through a lifetime commitment to serving homeless people and to solving the problem of homelessness. Her faith is deeply pragmatic and simple as so plainly framed in her “lingerie theology,” a belief in every woman’s entitlement to personal dignity symbolized through the collection and distribution of unused undergarments for homeless women. In this way, she personifies the words of Helen Keller who noted, “I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble.” In writing *People in Purple*, I think Rev. Kim accomplishes a task both great and noble.

If asked, most of us would affirm that we want to and should do more to solve the problem of homelessness. Yet, in sharing the parable of the homeless woman who is unwelcomed at worship service because her presence offends the sensibilities of the congregation, the Rev. Dr. Kim reminds us that homelessness is not merely the absence of a permanent roof over one’s head. In these volumes, she helps us see the faces of all of the homeless . . . and it is like looking in a mirror.

People in Purple is a relevant and timely resource for policymakers, pastors, providers, and the public at large. Read it. Share it. Above all, act upon it.

Sharon Tomiko Santos, Representative
The Washington State House of Representatives
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504
February 9, 2015