

"Not All Roads Lead to Home" documentary shows homelessness in new light

By Omar Hamad
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"We used to say he was like Don Quixote ... he was fighting the unbeatable foe," said Sister Patricia Taube of the Roanoke Rescue Mission in reference to Ted Lane. Like the tragic hero of Miguel Cervantes' story, Ted struggled to retain good humor in the face of adversity. The "unbeatable foe" he faced was homelessness, a situation currently impacting 500,000 Americans.

The story of Ted, along with many other people living without the privilege of a roof over their heads, is told both bluntly and compassionately in a documentary, entitled "Not All Roads Lead to Home," produced by his daughter, Guilford College first-year Noelle Lane.

The documentary explores several aspects surrounding homelessness that are often ignored by the public. Among the most compelling of these is its analysis of the human face of homelessness in a society that tends to "other" homeless people, causing them to often be treated as somehow "less than human."

"My father got sick more than 11 times over the course of the year and was not treated the same ... because homeless people are perceived as 'sucking up' resources and not contributing anything," said Noelle of her father's treatment at the hands of health care workers.

Throughout the documentary, Ted is repeatedly seen laughing and singing despite the difficulties of survival without having a roof over his head. A major emphasis in "Not All Roads Lead to Home" is the perseverance and resilience of people forced to live on the streets.

"It's definitely a temporary thing for me ... the minute

I find a job, I'm out of here," said a homeless man named Donald in the documentary. Donald was living in an encampment in the woods behind a shopping center outside of Myrtle Beach.

The issue of alcohol and substance abuse among the homeless population is also touched on in the documentary. While the documentary asserts that it is unclear whether there is a correlation between substance abuse and homelessness, it does acknowledge that a high percentage of homeless people abuse alcohol and illicit drugs in order to cope with their situation.

"When you're on the streets, you pretty much have to drink a little bit of alcohol just to be able to pass out and get to sleep without feeling the mosquitoes," said a man in the film named Scottie, of his attempts to face the elements while homeless.

Another issue touched on by the documentary was that of the economic causes and effects of homelessness. Most of those who are homeless have been employed at some point, and some even continue to have jobs while homeless. This stands in contradiction to the perception of the homeless as lazy and unmotivated that is often used as a justification for their mistreatment by society.

In a society that tends to dehumanize and "other" homeless people, the question of how to approach encounters with the homeless in a way that acknowledges their humanity was raised.

"Have an eye (contact) exchange when you pass by someone (homeless)," said Noelle when asked by an audience member how people should react when passing by a homeless person. "Acknowledging them and their humanity is important."

The attitudes of the homeless towards their own situation and their treatment by society reflect the subtle dehumanization that they must endure daily.

"Homeless people get the blame (for societal ills) if you fit the description," said Scottie.

"I always carry a knife just in case ... and I'm not saying that to scare you but I'm just saying it to be real," said Trina, a woman in the same campsite near Myrtle Beach.

Ted's ashes were buried by his family in September 2010, five months after his death. The confrontation of Noelle with her father's struggle provided a large part of the impetus for beginning work on "Not All Roads Lead to Home."

"I remember one time when I was really excited to see him when I was around 5, and I was like 'Daddy, I wish I could stay 100 nights with you!'" recalled Noelle in an early childhood memory of her father. "And I realize now that he looked sad because he knew that it would never happen ... But I know it wouldn't worry him where he is now, so I don't beat myself up like I used to. Although I'm glad I was able to make the documentary, I would not call the experience therapeutic."

Audience reaction to the documentary was one that combined emotions of gratitude at Lane's willingness to tell the stories of this often marginalized group of people and shock at the conditions that the homeless face on a daily basis.

"I've thought about homelessness a lot," said first-year Charlie Coates. "What (this documentary) did is show me that all these stories are real. It caused me to tear up and ... made me realize we're all human. This is America, the 'Land of Opportunity.' Why do we have this problem?"

SPACE

Campus spaces not reaching their potential, say staff

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decade, there is little space left," said Vice President for Administration Jori Varnell in an email interview. "In fact, it's the reason that (the Office of) Advancement is across the street at Quaker Village."

Space is a challenge for many aspects of Guilford life. Many student organizations find difficulties in equipment storage caused by limitations of space.

"We've always been tight on space, but it's gotten even tighter," said Erin Fox, director of student leadership and engagement. "We have all these active groups. The problem is all these groups come with stuff."

Last year, Outdoors Club campaigned to purchase a storage shed for club equipment. Men's Club Soccer, Yachting Club, and both Men's and Women's Rugby joined Outdoors Club in the purchase, with a matching contribution made by Community Senate.

This solution does not work for other clubs. Fencing Club and Archery Club require more secure and climate-controlled storage space for their equipment. Yachting Club's library also requires more delicate storage, and has been housed in the SOC since the office Yachting had been using was repurposed.

"We sort of made the decision that organizations on campus that provided some sort of public service or were representative in some way would get access (to club-specific offices)," said Fox.

While space for storage and clubs is limited, space in on-campus housing is overabundant.

Housing traditional students is not as much of an issue. In stark contrast to the class of 2013, Guilford's largest incoming class, this year's first year students have left nine empty beds in

Binford, and the basement rooms in Milner are unused.

"To help fill the bed spaces we did offer single room buyouts in Bryan and anywhere there were large needs," said Kris Gray, residential living coordinator.

The empty beds in residence halls are a serious issue.

"It hurts us all, plain and simple," said Vice President for Student Affairs Aaron Fetrow in an email interview. "Empty beds (equals) lost revenue and that is lost revenue that must be made up somewhere, with the most likely source being increases in tuition."

Residence halls are not the only campus spaces not living up to their full potential. The Community Center has long been underused, but there is hope it will get the attention it should after recent renovations. Hege Library has also been identified as a space that could be used more efficiently.

"The Community Center area that was remodeled last spring was a great example of a very under-utilized space that hopefully now is better utilized," said Varnell. "I think there (are) many spaces in the library that could be better used."

Fetrow also sees lost potential in library space. "I know we have a tremendous amount of space in the basement of the library, but then again, it is the basement of the library," said Fetrow. "Not exactly a glamorous location."

While some could ask for more campus space, others have a more positive outlook.

"With renovations to Duke, King, Alumni Gym offices, Archdale, and so on, faculty spaces (and classrooms) have had a lot of investment over the past decade," said Varnell. "Folks could always say they would like more, but I think we are fine."

Students and faculty commemorate Dave Newton's life with tree planting



A tree-planting was held in front of Hege-Cox on Oct. 5 in memory of Dave Newton, an art professor who passed away last spring.



Juniors Keita Tsutsumi, Katherine Maloney and Madison Heltzel (left to right) help to dig the hole for the memorial tree.

PHOTOS BY DAVID KINCHEN/GUILFORDIAN