

Economic Profiling: Camping Becomes Elitist (or is Discrimination just OK?)

A Discourse on Economic Equality
by
Andrea L. Jansen

Updated: July 2014

To Our Legislators:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am one American who fell during hard times, but I'm climbing back up. A single account is irrelevant; however, the ever-increasing number of struggling and displaced Americans is cause for continuing concern. One step in the right direction is to address the following:

- Declare **Economic Position** and **Property** Protected Classes.

Attempting to get my small business off the ground, I found myself the target of a discriminatory practice of which I'd been unaware: economic profiling. It affects constituents of both parties, and as you will read it runs rampant throughout the country. Encouraged by Congressmen and Senators, my Governor and even the White House, the Brass Ring is to amend the law to protect the economically-challenged; at the very least, change some people's perceptions.

Race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability and familial status are all legally recognized Protected Classes in the United States. Excluded are **Economic Position** and **Property**, which, surprisingly, *are* contained in a 2003 United Nations treaty governing the rights of Migrants, including the principle of non-discrimination (excerpts, page 4). Before you brush that off, consider today's migration of Americans in search of employment, which is nothing more than a modern day Grapes of Wrath. Sadly, basic human rights afforded a Columbian or Egyptian are denied on our own soil.

Countless Americans (not just the Homeless and many of us Seniors) are being subjected to various forms of economic discrimination without recourse, and it's time for a change as inevitable as was racial equality.

"The economy's getting better; we don't need to worry about this now." So let's be proactive and it'll already be in place for our next fiscal fiasco, which hopefully won't come again during our lifetimes.

Besides, it's the right thing to do.

Thank you for your attention.

Andrea L. Jansen

Eagle Point, Oregon



Argument for Inclusion of Economic Position and Property as Protected Classes

History: During the Great Depression of the 1930's, countless families roamed the country searching for work. To combat deplorable conditions in migrant camps, President Roosevelt's administration allocated land for permanent camps, offering safe refuge for countless families down on their luck (see *Weedpatch*, page 3).

Things aren't much different today. Increasingly, discriminatory practices curtail opportunities for economical traveling. Americans moving about in RV's are not just traveling to be trendy; for many it's a necessity in their search for employment, yet they are being chased off just as Gypsies in Europe.

At odds: Due in large part to the housing market crisis, Recreational Vehicle (RV) Parks are increasingly populated by families and retirees forced from traditional homes. Fluid enough to afford newer models of these monstrosities, long-term residents (30 days or longer) enjoy reasonable monthly rates averaging \$350 - \$450, which include most utilities, various amenities, and no property taxes or maintenance fees.



Photo: Andrea Jansen

It's basic supply and demand. *RV Park owners* throughout the country are implementing arbitrary policies restricting admittance based on an RV's age of manufacture; nothing older than 5 or 10 years is common. The problem is compounded when (often ignored) County codes limit the time permitted to reside in an RV on private property (60 days in Jackson County). State and Federal budget cuts lead to increased vigilance and fines, which for many leads to homelessness.

Result: Established residents in a certain **Economic Position** are involuntarily forced to move as a result of their **Property** and wander aimlessly in their quest for safe and affordable housing. Artists, entrepreneurs and others following **business-driven circuits** are losing valuable opportunities, as are families in search of inexpensive trips and holidays.

Admitted for costly overnight stays (\$25-50) and perhaps even a week (avg. \$200), private parks, many of whom are endorsed by trusted organizations such as **AAA**, **AARP** and the **Good Sam Club**, have a variety of unposted excuses for barring access. Exceptions may be granted following highly personal interrogations **prior to** the vehicle's physical inspection; therefore, despite lame arguments, the following response from one park undoubtedly reflects the prevailing attitude:

“We are looking at 10 years or newer because we don't want to have the appeal of a trailer park with older units that don't look good and are not presentable to nightly guests.”

Solutions:

Equality: Amend the Protected Classes to include Economic Position and Property. It is not pie-in-the-sky optimism to state that it is just a matter of time before economic equality enjoys the same umbrella of protection as racial, sexual and religious freedoms.

Housing: Rightly or wrongly, RV's are being used as inexpensive, full-time residences across the country, and forcing people from this choice can cause economic, familial and physical hardships. Why not do what we did close to a century ago: use or acquire suitable properties, pour concrete slabs, install some plumbing, plant a few shade trees and start collecting back some public assistance monies? Profits from these modern **Weedpatches*** could be injected back into community schools and civic organizations.

Arguments focus primarily on the disreputable shape any such 'camp' might become over time. There are ways to circumvent this by strict rules governing drinking, drugs and fighting; enforced by a rotating, self-governing council. There are always alternatives, and it would be a crime to discount a new idea without first examining the pros and cons more thoroughly.

Ignoring the problem will not make it go away.

* Weedpatch

The vast majority of Dust Bowl migrants found themselves living in tents, irrigation ditches, and cramped temporary housing. These camps were often created by the migrants themselves; they were crude constructions of desperate necessity. Commonly referred to as squatter camps or "Hooverilles," due to the rage and blame that most migrants had towards President Herbert Hoover for the Great Depression. In the 1930s, hundreds of families lived in these crude towns along Route 66, which led into California.

Under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, land was provided for permanent migrant camps. One, in Arvin, California, was named "Weedpatch", and became known for the safe and cleaner living facilities in 1935. Families paid \$1.00 per week to camp, and they were provided with bathrooms, showers, and laundry rooms. Weedpatch was synonymous with home for a lot of families in the late 1930s and onwards.

These makeshift homes were responsible for the lives of thousands of people after the Dust Bowl; the camps allowed the unemployed to continue fighting and looking for work, and for families to stay together as long as possible. At the same time, the Hooverville camps were unclean and only temporary. The conditions improved slightly with Weedpatch, but it still cost money most did not have. There was no easy solution for the problems caused by the Dust Bowl, but Weedpatch was a step in the right direction.

* Wikipedia, 2012



[Andrea Jansen](#) is an award-winning artist, teacher and author, addressing issues she understands firsthand: housing and economic discrimination; struggles of American artists and entrepreneurs; and Senior-proof packaging. Accompanied by ever-faithful B.C., Andrea continues to search for the good in America, because it's everywhere. Publications: www.andreajansendesigns.com/publications.html
Blog: TravelswithButtercup.blogspot.com

OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS **

On 1 July 2003, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families entered into force. The Convention is a comprehensive international treaty focusing on the protection of migrant workers' rights. It emphasizes the link between migration and human rights—a policy topic that is drawing increasing attention worldwide. The Convention opens a new chapter in the history of determining the rights of migrant workers and ensuring that those rights are protected and respected.

The principle of non-discrimination

Article 7 of the Convention provides that parties should respect and ensure the rights contained in the Convention without distinction of any kind such as: sex, race, colour, language, religion or conviction, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, nationality, age, **economic position, property**, marital status, birth or other status.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Article 2 2(e): The term "**itinerant worker**" refers to a migrant worker who, having his or her habitual residence in one State, has to travel to another State or States for short periods, owing to the nature of his or her occupation. 2(h): The term "**self-employed worker**" refers to a migrant worker who is engaged in a Remunerated activity otherwise than under a contract of employment and who earns his or her living through this activity normally working alone or together with members of his or her family.

Article 22

1. Migrant workers and members of their families shall not be subject to measures of collective expulsion. Each case of expulsion shall be examined and decided individually.

4. Except where a final decision is pronounced by a judicial authority, the person concerned shall have the right to submit the reason he or she should not be expelled and to have his or her case reviewed by the competent authority, unless compelling reasons of national security require otherwise. **Pending such review, the person concerned shall have the right to seek a stay of the decision of expulsion.**

5. If a decision of expulsion that has already been executed is subsequently annulled, **the person concerned shall have the right to seek compensation** according to law and the earlier decision shall not be used to prevent him or her from re-entering the State concerned.

Article 39

1. Migrant workers and members of their families shall have the right to liberty of movement in the territory of the State of employment and freedom to choose their residence there.

Article 43

1(d). Migrant workers shall enjoy equality of treatment with nationals of the State of employment in relation to **access to housing**, including social housing schemes, and **protection against exploitation in respect of rents**.

** Material contained in this publication may be freely quoted or reprinted, provided credit is given and a copy of the publication containing the reprinted material is sent to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Palais des Nations, 8-14 avenue de la Paix, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.