

Where does one go?

A poem by Rolf Auer

For my homeless friends in the Downtown Eastside

June 27, 2011

During the 2010 Olympics
restaurants and bars
graciously opened their restrooms
for general use by all of the public
whereas before these had been restricted
to paying customers.

Immediately following the three-week-long
six-billion-dollar party for the rich and well-off,
these restrooms were off limits again.

At last count in 2008
there were about 700 homeless people
in the Downtown Eastside.
(The latest 2011 figures
haven't been made available yet.)

There are maybe two or three public washrooms
in the entire Downtown Eastside.

So if one is homeless,
where is one supposed to go
to pee?

Apparently, having a place to pee
is not a right afforded to the very poor.

The same goes for access to shelter spaces
for the homeless—there is a dearth of these
in the Downtown Eastside
(not to mention long overdue
construction of social housing).

So, no shelter spaces. In addition to this,
there is a municipal by-law
forbidding sleeping outside.
So, what is a homeless person supposed to do,
sleep standing up?
Sounds invigorating, especially in a
cold, winter, Vancouver rain.

Why are the poorest of the poor
being denied basic human rights?
Are they somehow inferior
to the rest of us
because of lack of money?
Are the rest of us
somehow superior to them
because we have money?

Is having money
the foundational reason
that human rights work?

If so, there is definitely
something wrong with
our society's ethic.

I Timothy 6:10 [Original King James 1611 *Bible*]

“For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”