

Introduction its
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primarily concerned



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Introduction

The Community for Creative Non-Violence (CCNV) is a community-based group founded in the early 70s to express outrage on faith and moral matters.

This organization led by Father Guinan with the assistance of students from the George Washington Foundation was more concerned with bringing a voice of reason to a society that had become unreceptive in faith and moral matters. To Father Guinan and the George Washington students, CCNV was an answer to questions touching on integrity and constitutional rights during the period preceding the Vietnam War. Despite being a community-based group, the tenacity of the CCNV gained popularity and attracted the attention of the federal government, which was forced to act on the issues raised by the group. The popularity and success of the CCNV could not have been complete without the help of its founders such as Mitch Snyder whose influence made the presence of CCNVs to be felt all over America. This essay incorporates research on the role played by CCNV and Mitch Snyder in trying to provide affordable housing to the homeless people in America.

(Community for Creative Non-Violence) A few months after its formation, CCNV was primarily concerned with emancipating the masses on education and outreach matters.

Through public forums and seminars, the group sought to bring people together in an environment of sincerity and discussion. With the progression of time, the organization realized that mere words would not bring the much-needed change that they wanted to see in America. This led to a change of

strategy and on top of the peace crusades, the group vehemently began opposing the ongoing Vietnam War. Instead of waiting for the government to help the poor in the society, the organization formed the “ soup kitchen,” which was a name used to refer to feeding points for homeless people in Washington. (Bogard 150) With the increased interaction brought by the change of strategy, the group was able to detect and quickly react to the needs of the homeless poor.

Through the increased interaction, it slowly began to emerge that these poor members of the society not only lack food but they were also unable to get shelter and adequate health. On top of these, this group had difficulty in trying to negotiate the various systems of government, which were obviously beyond their intellectual capacity. Although the group wanted to do more for the homeless, their limited resources did not allow them and they had to remain content with running the soup kitchens, hospitality houses and a medical camp. (Elmer 100) In December 1976, the group seriously began a quest to ensure that every homeless person in America had ample shelter since it was believed that this would bring back the dignity that these people were lacking. On top of this, the group was also concerned with addressing the spiritual and material needs of the homeless, which had grown in to unimaginable dimensions. Despite the increased efforts by the CCNV to address the plight of these people, their efforts did not gain the recognition of the federal government, which was dealing with other ventures such as the Vietnam War. However, this dramatically changed after the famous “ Reaganville Protest” which was held in Lafayette Park situated opposite the White House.

(Hombs et al 56) Unlike in the past, this protest march organized by the CCNV brought the reality of the homeless people closer to the country's leadership and for once, this exposed the homelessness issue in the country. Again, this protest near the center of power exhibited the great inconsistency in ethics that existed in America. After this protest, President Reagan's leadership was forced to facilitate congressional hearings on unsheltered people in America. This was a big achievement on the part of CCNV considering that no such hearings had been held for close to 50 years.

This was somewhat a breakthrough since this first meeting opened the door for a host of similar hearings all across America. (Hopper 178) Although there were many able-bodied men and women in the CCNV leadership, the person whose influence helped to turn the tables around was Mitch Snyder. In fact, Snyder invested the last 20 years of his life in trying to draw societal attention to the great disparity that existed in the sharing of the national cake and the destructive consequences of that disparity. During this period, Snyder made incessant calls to the rich people in the society to examine how their lifestyle contributed to homelessness and scarcity in America.

According to Snyder, whoever wanted to make a positive contribution toward eliminating poverty had no option but to leave whatever venture he was engaged in and join the CCNV. During the 20 years at CCNV, Snyder advised anyone who crossed his path to take a theological or hypothetical notice on the lives of the homeless and to remain committed toward a lasting solution to the whole issue. (Hopper 179) During his stay with the CCNV, Snyder and the entire organization met the needs of thousands of homeless people in Washington.

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On top of this, the group staged protests in a bid to get the government to help these destitute people. Although Snyder worked with the CCNV, he approached the homelessness issue in a singular manner and this put him on a collision path with the leadership of Ronald Reagan. Using Snyder's influence, CCNV managed to acquire a disused federal building just a few blocks from the White House, which they intended to use as a temporary shelter for the homeless in Washington. Although this facility was supposed to serve only as a winter shelter, CCNV refused to vacate the building and insisted on being given an alternative location. This led to a confrontation between the CCNV and the federal government, which almost ran in to a year. (Hombs et al 58) When it appeared that the CCNV was losing the battle, Snyder went in to a self-declared fast, which he claimed would only be stopped by death or until the Reagan administration agreed to fund the construction of an alternative site that could act as a replica for the other states. This fast went on for close to two months and the public sympathy that emanated from it helped to convince the federal government to release funds for the shelter that Snyder and the CCNV were demanding. The confrontation elicited by this fast gave Snyder and the CCNV in general notoriety and ethical authority and by 1986, a series of movies had been produced in CCNV's honor.

With the newly acquired influence, Snyder and the CCNV organized a national day to raise awareness on homelessness in America. (Elmer 102) Even before this national day of homelessness was observed in 1988, voters in Washington had passed a CCNV supported initiative, which was christened " The D. C.

Right to Overnight Shelter Act of 1984.” The passage of this right had marked the first time in history that American voters had united to create a legal framework for the protection of the unsheltered people. Two years later, “ The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act” which demanded the release of \$1 billion to help the homeless was passed making it the greatest financial aid to ever be given to the homeless. Over the next few years, the CCNV led by Mitch Snyder engineered sporadic acts of disobedience and building takeovers to demand affordable housing for all Americans and especially the poor.

By 1989, Snyder’s pressure group included more than 140, 000 people all calling for increased funding to ensure inexpensive housing for all Americans. Faced with a string of defeats at the local scene, Snyder got discouraged about the projections of success and he ended up committing suicide in 1990. However, Snyder’s death did not dim the resolve of the CCNV to fight for the homeless people and their fight continues even in the modern day.

(CCNV)

Conclusion

Since its formation in 1970, the Community for Creative Non-Violence (CCNV) has been in the forefront in fighting for the rights of the homeless people in America. After its inception, the group was mostly concerned with emancipating people on their constitutional right to affordable housing. During that time, the group was also concerned with the war that America was waging against Vietnam.

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With the progression of time, the group realized that their empty talk was not helping the situation and this made them to turn to a more reactive way of resolving the problems. However, their efforts were not felt until one of their founders named Mitch Snyder decided to single handedly challenge President Reagan on his policies regarding homeless people. In particular, Snyder's 1984 "fast until death" campaign helped in convincing president Reagan to release funds to build the Federal City Shelter, which was the first formal settlement put up by the government for homeless people.

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