



## ‘Homeless’ people are city-life nuisance



by [Nestor Aparicio](#) | May 9, 2008 at 6:00 am

Posted in [Baltimore](#), [b the paper](#), [sports](#)

### *From today's b, the paper*

With the start of real spring weather comes the inevitable swoon for the Orioles — and the inevitable emergence of more “homeless” people on the streets of downtown Baltimore.

I moved downtown four years ago because I wanted to be in the heart of the action. And living downtown has been a lot more good than bad for me. I've met international tourists and interesting people, and have experienced a lot by wandering on nice-weather nights, seeing Baltimore in a way you'd have to live here to understand. There are good restaurants, bars, shopping, events and all the conveniences that urban living can afford.

But then the negatives start to get weighed: the insane taxes, the glare of all of the blue lights from crime corners, the crazy cabbies and lost tourists going south on North Charles and east on Lombard.

But, without a doubt, the biggest thing that will drive me away from urban life is the daily nuisance of the “homeless” people approaching me at red lights and when I walk the streets. I love Baltimore, and I have sympathy and compassion for those less fortunate. But when the weather gets nice, they come out like moths to light, some who appear to be “homeless” only until the end of the day when they take a bus “home.” Just try driving more than a few blocks at the edge of downtown and you'll see they're unavoidable. You're getting panhandled every 50 feet on foot, or they come up to your window in traffic. The same people on the same corners every day, for years and years.

A few blocks from where I live, there are two guys — one on each block — who have been panhandling at the same two bus stops about 250 days a year for four consecutive years. Then there's the woman who walks through the harbor with her little girl begging every night.

My wife and I have given them nicknames that aren't suitable for the b readership.

Can't something be done about this?

How can we brag about the pride of this city and “BELIEVE” and “Get in on it” when the first thing anyone “gets” coming into downtown is accosted by people holding signs begging for money at every red light?


One more “crabby” Baltimore rant for you: For the second time in 10 days I have attempted to get a crabcake downtown. For the second time, I’ve also eschewed my own good common sense by not walking the extra mile to Mo’s in Little Italy or Faidley’s at Lexington Market. Instead, I’ve given a well-known harbor tourist destination a chance last week and a major, high-end hotel a chance this week. These were probably the two worst decisions I’ve made this spring! Just incredible — and extremely expensive to boot! It has made me wonder, as I spit the remnants into a napkin, whether the tourists eating this slop even know the difference between something legitimate and these filler-laced, freezer-case imposters? There used to be a bunch of old dudes who had a crabcake “club,” and every week they went to a different restaurant around Baltimore and ordered crabcakes. Maybe I can start a club like that so we can find some good eats. I’m 0-for-2 in 2008. If anyone has a downtown crabcake that can even approach rivaling the legendary (and deservedly so) Faidley cake, I wanna know about it.

*Nestor Aparicio, owner of WNST-AM 1570, covers sports and more. His column appears Mondays and Fridays. For more, go to [wnst.net](http://wnst.net).*

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## 20 Responses to “‘Homeless’ people are city-life nuisance”

1.  *Daily Breather* Says:  
[May 9th, 2008 at 8:47 am](#) | [report this comment](#)

I’m with ya on the homeless. I give what I can. I consider it a homeless tax. But I’m starting to see a lot more young able bodied men on the street. They can spend 8 hours walking up and down Erdman Ave. but can’t spend 8 hours behind a lawnmower or anything productive? THEY get no \$\$\$. But the mangled arm, no foot gnarly guy outside St. Vinny’s always gets a buck. He survives on pure charity and the hope that he doesn’t get beat down for his loot.

Keep me posted on the crabcake scouting. I’ll stay away from the 5 star hotel crapcakes.


2.  *rachelisarockstar* Says:  
[May 9th, 2008 at 9:19 am](#) | [report this comment](#)

Daily Breather -

I’m with you on the mangled arm, no foot guy. I feel totally bad for that guy and give him money...but as far as the more able-bodied “homeless” I do pass them by.

My husband and I have given up slices of Pizza Boli to the homeless too and they have been appreciative.


What I have to ask, is don’t any of these people have family? Would you let your own family member get into this type of situation without trying to get them back on the right track? I know families have their limits, but why do we feel that the rest of society should deal with the issue of homelessness?

3.  *F Bush* Says:  
[May 9th, 2008 at 9:36 am](#) | [report this comment](#)

I wrok a full time job and umpire baseball and ref soccer and basketball part time to make ends meet for my family. The money I make is for my daughters schooling not for panhandlers. Do I feel sorry about


their plight, yes. But I will not give them money when my free time I could be spending with my daughter is spent working part time and these folks won't even work.

There's this homeless guy on Howard Street that I brought pizza to one time and he complained because it didn't have pepperoni. I can't help it that I only like cheese or veggie pizza. That was the last pizza he got.

4.  *CurlyQ* Says:  
[May 9th, 2008 at 10:02 am](#) [report this comment](#)

I like to check out the “homeless” people's shoes. If you're “homeless” & wearing nicer Nikes than me, you can be darn sure you aren't getting my \$\$\$!

As for crabcakes, check out Don't Know Tavern on Light Street in Federal Hill. 2-cake platter w/2 sides runs somewhere around \$25, but every Thursday is half-priced crabcake night so you won't break your bank if they aren't what you're expecting.

5.  *YCKTR* Says:  
[May 9th, 2008 at 10:11 am](#) [report this comment](#)

So wait, you're sooooo busy and soooo important that simply telling someone “no” presents a daily struggle for you? I think you need to examine your reaction to “those people” a little closer - I have a feeling it has less to do with their behavior than you might think.

Sure panhandlers are annoying sometimes - but guess what....you signed up for that when moved downtown. I'm sorry it can't ALL be natty boh and crabcakes for you big guy, but that's the way life works. If you want “all the conveniences that urban living can afford” you have to give up some luxuries.


Don't like it? Fine, go volunteer at Healthcare for the Homeless, or lobby for better mental health treatment, or better job training for lower income citizens. But seriously, spare us the 8th grade rant about why “homeless people suck dude.”

!

6.  *Evan* Says:  
[May 9th, 2008 at 11:39 am](#) [report this comment](#)

Getting a decent “real” crabcake anywhere near downtown makes about as much sense as trying to get “authentic” cajun/creole food on Bourbon Street. It's fine for tourists who don't know any better but as a resident - you should.

Also at what point do people feel they can qualify themselves when they complain about things going on in the city? “I've lived here (X amount of time) and I can't STAND (y nuisance).” I'm actually genuinely curious about this.

7.  *Daily Breathe* Says:  
[May 9th, 2008 at 11:54 am](#) [report this comment](#)

I have a theory that the less \$ we have the more inclined we are to share with the homeless. Maybe it's because we know we're 2 paychecks away from sharing that 40oz with them.


But CurlyQ is right on the money with the shoe check. That's a dead giveaway. Broke ass standing outside the corner market wearing new shoes asking for \$\$ is getting a firm “no” from me, not even a liberal chicken shit “Sorry, I don't have any”. I got it, you ain't gettin' it.

But the creative panhandlers will usually get my ear. Entertainment is the best way to get my \$.

8.  *rachelisarockstar* Says:  
[May 9th, 2008 at 2:20 pm](#) | [report this comment](#)

To add to Daily Breather’s last comment...

At least the guy who drums on the empty buckets is doing something to earn some change.

9.  *gofreescout* Says:  
[May 9th, 2008 at 2:21 pm](#) | [report this comment](#)

The biggest thing that will “drive you” from urban life is the “nuisance” of homeless people? (You got your quotes wrong). Really? That’s just pathetic. Suck it up dude. The overriding tone of your little rant is that the homeless are either there by choice or not really homeless at all. Maybe you should have actually talked to some of these people before you put this in print instead of glaring from across the street. But, if their mere presence is a nuisance to you, I can only imagine that talking to someone would be a step right into hell. I’d say man up and do some real reporting, but methinks you’re a bit more of a coward than that. Just reading this also makes me think I’d take ten panhandlers than one more suburban yuppie moving downtown to give city life a whirl.


Give a night on the streets a try and see what kind of lifestyle choice it is (as you are implying). People aren’t there because they’re lazy—in fact, I guarantee a day on the street requires more effort than you put in in a week writing dimwitted blog posts. People are on the street for myriad reasons: addiction, mental illness, parental/spousal abuse, medical issues (no work, no money, and disability doesn’t go far), and/or basic loss of housing due to more reasons than I could list here. The social safety net in America is a very poorly woven one. It shouldn’t take falling through it to realize that. Your “compassion” and “sympathy” doesn’t mean a damn thing without empathy.

But the thing that makes me think you will never ever get this:

Then there’s the woman who walks through the harbor with her little girl begging every night.

My wife and I have given them nicknames that aren’t suitable for the b readership.

If you can’t see how repugnant that is, you are one soulless person.


10.  *YCKTR* Says:  
[May 9th, 2008 at 2:32 pm](#) | [report this comment](#)

Seriously.


The guy’s an A+ douche of the highest order.

Move back to the burbs and STFU.

!


11.  *johnny dollar* Says:  
[May 9th, 2008 at 5:00 pm](#) | [report this comment](#)

on the other hand, if his goal was to rack up page views by posting something provocative, you may be doing him a favor with your flamage.


12.  *gofreescout* Says:  
[May 9th, 2008 at 5:14 pm](#) | [report this comment](#)

It says it’s from the print...

Scary thing is, I don’t think it’s that provocative to the b demo.

13.  *wow* Says:  
[May 10th, 2008 at 4:52 pm](#) | [report this comment](#)

Seriously. I liked B the paper and the site, up until reading this today.


14.  *Jeff* Says:  
[May 11th, 2008 at 11:26 pm](#) | [report this comment](#)

I see just as many homeless people begging for change in Towson, Cockeysville, Catonsville, New York, Chicago, LA, etc. I don’t think homelessness is just a Baltimore problem...it’s a national one. If you really want to escape the homeless problem, you may need to go as far as the rural countryside. Inevitably, where there’s the “haves”, the “have nots” are not far behind.

Here’s a suggestion that I have tried recently... Instead of handing out change (which might potentially feed a liquor or drug habit) try handing out granola bars. You can find them on sale for as low as \$2 a box sometimes. I’ve found the homeless on the street to be very appreciative, and make me feel a bit better rather than ignoring the problem.

15.  ... Says:  
[May 12th, 2008 at 2:12 am](#) | [report this comment](#)

Those people you like to refer to as “homeless” have more of my respect than you ever will. How about you try to live a day in their lives. I guarantee you do not have the ingenuity to survive.

16.  *Adam* Says:  
[May 13th, 2008 at 7:53 am](#) | [report this comment](#)

The experience of homelessness is indeed troubling, and the fact that over thirty thousand of our fellow Baltimoreans find themselves without a secure place to stay at some point during the year is troubling for all of us. Unfortunately, this discussion is only focusing on the symptoms — not the real illness.


What’s troubling is that Baltimore City’s housing trust fund is used to demolish low-income housing rather than build it. What’s troubling is that over the past 15 years, Baltimore City has destroyed 43% of its public housing units. What’s troubling is that the federal HUD budget (which provides housing subsidies for our lowest income neighbors) has been cut by nearly two-thirds in the past three decade while at the same time expenditures on the mortgage interest tax deduction (which provides housing subsidies for middle and upper income households) have increase four fold.

What’s troubling is that you need over two full time minimum wage jobs to be able to afford an efficiency unit in the City. What’s troubling is that federal disability assistance (SSI) is \$637 a month — far less than is needed to afford a room in many neighborhoods in the City. What’s troubling is that Maryland’s temporary disability assistance (which people receive while they await federal benefits) is a meager \$185/mo. That’s why people with disabilities are panhandling!

What’s troubling is that 47 million Americans lack health insurance — and twice that number are un- or gravely under-insured.


Homelessness will persist until affordable housing, livable incomes and universal health care exist. Mr. Aparicio, you asked whether something can be done about this. The answer is yes, but it requires looking past the symptoms to the real illness.

Oh, and because I feel the need to add a non sequitor. Yeah, other than Faidley’s, there is not really good crabcake downtown. There’s also no good Polish sausage. Why can’t I get a good Chicago-style Polish around here?!

17.  *Carol Ott* Says:  
[May 14th, 2008 at 6:12 pm](#) | [report this comment](#)


I was all ready to leave a comment here, but “gofreescout” was far more polite than I would have been.

Frankly, anyone who would call a little girl names that aren’t fit for print doesn’t deserve my readership, or the readership of any decent thoughtful person. Why this paper even exists is beyond me. Provocative? Not even. Shameful is the word that comes to mind.

18.  *OM* Says:  
[May 15th, 2008 at 12:10 am](#) | [report this comment](#)


Hey, Mr. Aparicio, you and Mrs. Aparicio having a good time calling the less-fortunate names? Putting quotation marks around the word “Homeless” to make a point is... well.. it’s kind of like me referring to you as a “journalist” or a “human being.”

And that second comment, “What I have to ask, is don’t any of these people have family?” — What, can’t you ask them? They can talk, you know. Enjoy your pizza.

19.  *zero* Says:  
[May 21st, 2008 at 3:09 pm](#) | [report this comment](#)

This is truly shameful, and you should be embarrassed to admit that you wrote this. Please move yourself and your prissy wife back to the sanitized burbs where you belong. Open your eyes. This is a city, and to truly be a part of the city means you face the daily reality that success and despair will always be bedfellows. I hate to think what would happen if someday you lost everything- something tells me the Mrs. wouldn’t hang around too long.

If this represents what b is all about, well, then no thank you.

20.  *Avalon* Says:  
[May 31st, 2008 at 4:10 pm](#) | [report this comment](#)

Relax, everyone. No one takes Nestor seriously in this town, anyway. It’s a wonder that any publication would give him the opportunity to write anything but classified ads. He’s just proving, once again, that he’s no journalist and that his character flaw is so large it can be seen from outer space.

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