**Jackson Speech [EZ Speech No. 16420]**

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Remarks by Ms. Felecia Jackson at the Homeless Veteran Stand Down sponsored by the CAVHCS.

[if you were introduced:] Thank you so very much for that kind introduction, [name of introducer].

ladies and gentlemen . . .service providers . . . and most especially all the brave and dedicated servicemen and women who’re with us today:

i stand here before you, and i am ashamed.

i’m ashamed that my country — the greatest and richest and most generous country in the history of the world — would send it’s young men and women off to war and then forget about them when they return.

i’m ashamed of a veteran’s healthcare system that, even today, remains crippled by corrosion, riddled by red tape, and hobbled by hidden agendas.

i’m ashamed of a bureaucracy that seems incapable of delivering the depth and breadth of service our cherished veterans deserve — or when it does, taking months and even years to provide it.

there are few americans alive today who don’t know at least one military veteran . . . or who haven’t passed at least one poor and homeless soldier begging for food on the streets. . . or who haven’t seen a million media stories about the forty thousand homeless veterans stuggling to survive in the wealthiest country in the world. and so i’m also ashamed that we, the american public, haven’t been *nearly* as forceful as we should have been in demanding that our government take better care of our veterans.

and while i’m not ashamed of it, i am deeply saddened by the fact that all the helping agencies who’re here for you today cannot — because we simply lack the funding — fully meet all the needs we absolutely *know* you have. I’m sorry we can’t do more.

but we can at least do *something*, and that’s exactly why we’re all here today: to provide the opportunity for all the homeless veterans in our community to learn about, and then get help from, the [no.] federal, state, and local agencies who’ve partnered together with the central alabama veterans health care system to sponsor this event.

now, i’m pretty sure most of you don’t know much about the organizations that’re here to serve you today. you’ve probably never even *heard* of most of ‘em. but every one of the service providers you’ll meet over the next two days have one goal in common, and that is to get you into some decent living quarters, get you off the streets, and — hopefully — help you get your life going in a better direction.

[name of agency], for example, is here to provide a battery of different health screening tests for both men and women. [elaborate on some or all of the service agencies (etc.) and the service(s) they’ll be providing.] we’ve also got food, entertainment, and a bunch of give-aways. but none of this is the real purpose of this event.

the real purpose of this event is, first, to make sure you all know about — *and know how to access* — all the helping hands that’re actually out there for you right now. and our second purpose is to urge you . . . to ***beg*** you . . .to take *advantage* of these services!

because you’ve got to do your part. you must be willing to let others help you. you must *not* be ashamed of your need. you must *not* be ashamed of the failures in your life. you must know that there are people out here who are dedicated to helping you overcome those failures. we are none of us saints. we are all human, and so we all fail. there is no shame in failure. the only shame is letting failure defeat you, letting it turn your life into nothing more than a living death.

your life is a valuable life; it wants and deserves to prosper. i pray that your participation here today will prove to be your first step toward that prosperity.

thank you, and god bless you!

[if appropriate: introduce next presenter/segment.]

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