

'BARRIO MAN'

March 23, 2014

(Native American saying: "Without tears there are no rainbows.")

By his slow gait and shuffle he appears to carry his defeat deep in his bones under his tie-dyed, hooded sweatshirt. A Christ-like figure in brown sandals, pushing a heavily-laden grocery cart, he seems unaware of the moving crowd carrying him along, as he shuffles. A black, Rasputin beard hangs from a mud-caked face. In the wave of revelers and spring, 4th Ave Street Fair-goers in Tucson's hippie district, he is a colorful ghost pushing his cart with a misspelled sign: 'HOUSLESS, NOT HOMELESS.'

He labors to push his metal grocery cart, bouncing across the newly installed Trolley tracks, linking 4th Ave. directly with downtown and the Old Congress Hotel where Frank Dillinger was captured. His cart glints in the hot afternoon silver haze ; it holds light blue blankets, torn shelter-cardboard, big bags of karmelcorn, three water bottles and several discarded pairs of blue jeans on top. As he approaches, I notice his light green eyes staring vacantly and his bandaged, swollen left ankle which causes him to limp along, almost dragging his foot like a suitcase tied with rope. A brilliant light blue Mexican butterfly strangely floats above his hood, alighting from time to time on the cart.