
The New Homeless

By Caryl Schonbrun

Original Source: <http://savingplanetearthtv.blogspot.com/> (older posts section)

Imagine having to leave your home because it becomes contaminated with fumes from your next door neighbors home remodeling. Imagine having nowhere to go where you can feel safe and well. Imagine living in a tent on a mountain because it's the only place you can tolerate. Consider - just for a moment - having an illness that keeps you away from the people you love and the places you call home, because of fragrances and toxins that make you severely ill.

This is now the life of my friend Jill, who suffers from an acute and severely debilitating growing sensitivity to chemicals. I know this story all too well myself. I suffer from the same and have had to move four times in the last five years to find, what for me is, a safer place to live. As a former nurse who once handled a break neck speed life, balancing a husband, daughter and career, my body inexplicably began failing and frightening me. After years of searching for a diagnosis, my family and I came to realize that I had become intolerant to chemicals, even the most non-descript lurking in the particles of my kitchen cabinets. I thought we had finally won a reprieve when my husband and I built a non-toxic house in Colorado that would keep me safe from everyday exposures. It seemed to work well until I realized that herbicides being sprayed in my neighborhood were drifting in through my open windows. Most people don't realize that some of the same products that they use to kill weeds, can potentially harm some people as well. A whiff of common spray that kills a pesty nest of ants and may not be even a nuisance to you... can leave someone with chemical sensitivity struggling for breath, in fear it might be their last.

In my case, my safe haven...a home built specifically as non-toxic in a rural community in Colorado, became my new prison. An open window left unguarded for a moment resulted in a chemical drift wafting into my home. A walk outside and an unexpected encounter with herbicides being sprayed, left me calling 911 for help more than once. In the ambulance I wondered why my body was betraying me and whether I would ever find a safe place to hide from what might harm me.

After a year of living like this, my husband and I now find ourselves forced to move once again. We will now build a new safe house in a rural area with 40 acres to keep all toxicities away from me. We will have to live further out from family, medical care, organic groceries, just so I can try to have some quality of life. We will finally be able to open windows again and try to heal. We must be ever mindful though that airborne toxin can still find its way to me and make me ill. It just has to go farther and try harder.

I had been working for the last two years to get my local city council to assist in curbing spraying and toxic practices when there are alternatives. And there are. We so did not want to leave our new home. But it was an uphill battle and the reason we have to relocate once again.

With all this moving and seeking a safe place to live, we are still considered the lucky ones. Lucky that we can manage to build a safe house not once, but twice. Lucky that we found some land with acreage only 20 minutes from town. Lucky that we have some resources left even after bearing such a huge financial burden. We are in the minority.

Others with this confounding and chilling condition end up like my friend Jill. A former executive, she has had to abandon her home, left to wander, still searching for a "safe place." She is literally now pitching a tent on top of mountain property where she hopes she will build a new home.

The more we saturate our planet and its atmosphere and our homes and schools with chemicals, the greater the chance some precious vulnerable bodies could pay a price. Their lives forever changed like mine. While odds are I can't meet you at a conference or meeting, I can offer you my voice. For years I kept my thoughts, my anguish, my hopes to myself. Now I will still live in isolation but I will speak out because I don't want you to joins the ranks...of the new homeless.

Caryl Schonbrun lives in Ft. Collins, Colorado with her husband Bob and daughter Jill. She has become an activist for Chemical Injury and works to bring awareness and solutions for people struggling with it.

Comment on "The New Homeless"

By Gordon D McHendry, Founder & Campaign Coordinator, MCS-International.Org

Severe Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) has increasingly eroded my life for around a decade and a half now. I can therefore resonate deeply with all the difficult chemical injury problems Caryl and Jill are wrestling with, and I take my cap off to Caryl for standing up and speaking out publicly on behalf of sufferers of the modern plague illness of Chemical Injury (by whatever name – and there are many now).

I would just like to widen the scope of this excellent article a bit by addressing some of the additional and very substantial issues faced by MCS/CI sufferers who are either trapped in poverty on welfare benefits, and/or who have an additional serious illness(es) to further complicate their already difficult chemically-injured lives.

For example: In my own case I have existed on state welfare benefits for almost 2 decades due to chronic health problems caused by severe Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (M.E.) – better known outside the UK as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) – and severe MCS. With Type II Diabetes and Osteoarthritis recently thrown into the mix. I have never owned my own home and have, for a long time now, been at the mercy of welfare benefit rates, which, of course, greatly restrict ones renting options – especially if you live alone. Consequently, "safe housing" is therefore practically impossible to achieve. As is the option of escaping to the mountains in a tent because most of the time, for a severe ME/CFS sufferer, just making it to the toilet and back is a trial and tribulation in itself.

So, what I would like to ask you here is this: When you are imagining and considering your way through Caryl's excellent opening paragraph that you also imagine and consider the following. Imagine you suffer from MCS/CI so severely that your own home is poisoning you – but because of poverty you are trapped in it unable to leave. Imagine the you suffer from MCS/CI so severely that even your clothing, your bed, and even your bedding makes you increasingly and intolerably ill – while your severe ME/CFS afflicted body constantly screams at

you to lie down on that toxic bed or sofa until, very soon, you become so weak that you have no option but to do just that. Imagine day after day of this. Then week after week, month after month, turning into year after year. Then finally try to imagine a future that contains nothing but more of the same right up until the last of your health finally expires. If you can manage to imagine your way into all those things – and engaged your heart as well as your head in the process - then congratulations, you have just managed to gain an very rare insight into the lives of a growing army of the chemically injured poor – world wide.

Just trying to survive my own MCS I had absolutely no option but to spend almost 6 years sleeping - and often largely living – in a small garden shed, all the year round, and in all weathers. If you would like some idea of just what that is like I invite you to view 2 short video files that I managed to “self-shoot” some time ago called “Wooden Pillow” and “Toxic Bedding” – both are available from the Google Video and YouTube services (just type the video titles into their search boxes). Additionally, a more illustrated in depth look at life with severe MCS is available from the “Unbelievable Crisis” sections of my personal web site at www.satori-5.co.uk.

For another current and “unbelievable” MCS story on Nutritional Biochemist and severe MCS sufferer Gillian McCarthy, who is basically being killed by medical, social and political neglect, please visit:

<http://www.mcs-international.org/news.html>

In closing I would just like to say that if you are affected by MCS, Chemical Injury, Environmental Illness or similar - or are just plain concerned about the rampant proliferation of synthetic toxic chemicals into every nook and cranny of our lives and environment and would like to get active in doing something about it, then you may like to consider joining us at MCS International. We would love to hear from you.

Towards a toxin free future...

Gordon D McHendry
Founder & Campaign Coordinator
<http://www.mcs-international.org>

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Bringing the hidden dangers
of modern synthetic chemicals
out into the Light worldwide

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