Jennifer Robinson  
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I saw the homeless man bearing his sign
a plead for the offering of sanctuary
and safety
from society
cardboard, red lettering
covering his body
chest to thigh
while a lone trembling hand
held a tin can
with the hope of it becoming heavy
I see another man
middle-aged
glasses
briefcase in hand
scurry to the other side
of the sidewalk
head down
and I wonder if I would do the same
I would
even though I realize
the horror of its reality
I would duck my head
pretend to be deaf
reacting upon
the fear that has been taught to me
the fear that has been passed along
based on every news story
and every whisper of
“Stay away from him”
followed by a tug on my sleeve
as I am guided to “safety”
and I wonder if I will do the same
when my children approach
the strange man on the sidewalk

--Jennifer Robinson