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“TRACKS OF HOPE: THE FORGOTTEN STORY OF AMERICA’S RUNAWAY TRAIN AND HOW WE CAN CHANGE ITS COURSE” --

New book offers call and response to Americans in remembering the nearly 37 million who live in poverty this holiday season

Urges us to wage a ‘new, smart war on domestic poverty’ as we enter a New Year

NEW YORK (November 26, 2007) – Using original music, film, and now with the release *Tracks of Hope: The Forgotten Story of America’s Runaway Train and How We Can Change Its Course* (November 18/ List price \$21.95/34.95, blurb.com/user/store/elfenworks), the written word, The Elfenworks Foundation continues its mission of placing domestic poverty at the top of the public’s agenda through unconventional and creative means.

The Elfenworks team uses its diverse skill set to raise the profile of nonprofits and issues like domestic poverty. “We’re musicians, filmmakers, writers, designers, and web – developers,” explained Lauren Speeth, CEO of The Elfenworks Foundation and author of *Tracks of Hope*, at the ‘Concert For Hope’ in September. The concert celebrated the launch of an innovative web-based center for trend and other breaking research data on poverty, *inequality.com*, at the Center for the Study of Poverty and Inequality at Stanford University. Public commentary after a *San Jose Mercury News* article about that concert prompted the writing of this book. “When raising awareness, sometimes we run into misperceptions. This book tries to address a few of those common misperceptions, and if it gets people started down the path to questioning invalid assumptions, towards discontentment with the status quo, and towards greater involvement, we will feel it has been well worthwhile,” said Speeth.

This unique coffee-table-style book presents its case for doing something about poverty through daunting facts, inspirational anecdotes, innovative ideas, and stories of change makers – and leaves the reader with a greater understanding of the effects domestic poverty has on us all. Combining and contrasting the imagery of tracks with thought-provoking urban landscapes, this new book delves into the reasons why “getting on the right track” is in our best self-interest.

“It is up to us, and in our enlightened self-interest, starting right here and starting right now, to make things better,” writes Speeth. As an example, “Larry Brown with the Harvard School of Public Health and several other leading researchers have determined that the total cost burden of hunger in the U.S. is about \$90 billion – an amount that could be entirely eliminated by just \$10-12 billion of increased spending on federal nutrition programs.”

By appealing to the mind while being gentle on the eyes, *Tracks of Hope* focuses on the idea that domestic poverty is not just a moral issue, but an economic one as well.

“This book is dedicated to exposing the collective price of poverty,” comments David Grusky, professor of sociology at Stanford University, in the book’s foreword.

Tracks of Hope: The Forgotten Story of America’s Runaway Train and How We Can Change Its Course is not only a call to action but a response as well, in that it provides a resource for taking action: a listing of “Big and Little Things You Can Do Now to ‘Be the Change.’” This informative guide offers suggestions and spells out the dollar costs of certain actions (often zero, sometimes income generating) and how much time each action will take – showing us all that it can cost next to nothing in time or money to participate in changing the course of America’s poverty train.

About The Elfenworks Foundation: The Elfenworks Foundation was created in an effort to support non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in innovative and unconventional ways. We strive to be *-In Harmony with Hope-* by shining light on causes that benefit humanity. In affiliation with U.S. centers of academic excellence, our multi-faceted, creative and hardworking team of social entrepreneurs and advisors draws on expertise in communications, technology, film, music, law, and business administration to empower the nonprofits we serve; we remove obstacles, help strengthen program and business-model capacities, build infrastructures, forge alliances, and raise awareness about these organizations and our shared agenda. In this way we work in harmony towards our common goal of positive, measurable, and sustainable change. Our current goal is to ameliorate domestic poverty and provide new hope for the disenfranchised here at home. For more information, visit [www.elfenworks.org /project_tracksofhopebook.html](http://www.elfenworks.org/project_tracksofhopebook.html).

About the Author: Lauren Speeth grew up in the tumultuous 1960s, and her year abroad (in India), as well as a personal experience of rural poverty, helped shape her views on the subject of this book. In addition to being CEO for The Elfenworks Foundation and webmaster for elfenworks.org, Speeth serves on the External Board of Advisors of The Center for the Study of Poverty and Inequality at Stanford University, for which she co-architected / developed inequality.com. She is a Regent of Saint Mary’s College of California and a trustee at Mills College, where she serves on the External Board of Advisors for the Graduate School of Business. A computer programmer since 1983, Speeth holds a BA from Mills College, an MBA from Saint Mary’s, a doctorate from Golden Gate University, and an Advanced Computer Security Professional Credential from Stanford, as well as lifetime Community College Teaching Credentials in Finance, Management, and Computers. She has taught business methods, graduate and undergraduate statistics, and computer science. An active recording and performing musician, Speeth plays in the First Violin section of the Peninsula Symphony.

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