

DESIGNING CHANGE

# SPARE SOME CHANGE

Carlos Segura is known for his award-winning typographic work on big brands such as Harley-Davidson, Nissan and Jack Daniels. It was the potential he saw in signage by lesser-known artists, though, that sparked the idea to showcase signs held on busy sidewalks by the most poorly paid commercial artists in the world—the homeless.

The Streets of Sadness project ([www.streetsofsadness.com](http://www.streetsofsadness.com)) was conceived by Segura to create awareness for those with no choice but to beg for money. His idea: buy those cardboard posters that the homeless design to solicit donations, and assemble a traveling exhibit.

All designers have the power to connect their professional influence with what's most meaningful in their personal lives, combining their experience and opportunity to find how they can best help create a better world.

For Segura, the desire to help impoverished souls stems from his childhood in a family that owned next to nothing. In 1965, 8-year-old Segura, his parents and four sib-

lings were forced to leave Cuba forever, with just the clothes on their backs and without the wedding ring his mother once wore on her finger. Peso-less and stranded in a Mexican airport en route to Florida, Segura's family benefited from the kindness of a wealthy couple, who helped them make it to Miami.

Now, a lifetime away from the one-room apartment he grew up in with 19 others in Little Havana, he's both lived the indignities of poverty and experienced the potential of the American Dream. Today, Segura and his partner, Sun Segura, run a highly successful virtual design firm.

Segura describes the first time he offered to buy a cardboard sign from a homeless person (instead of offering a handful of change) as "awkward." "I stuck my head out the window of my Porsche at a stoplight and asked this guy, 'How much for your sign?'" A strange look and five bucks later, his collection of commercial street art began.

Since then, the designer has refined his approach for acquiring art. He now solicits

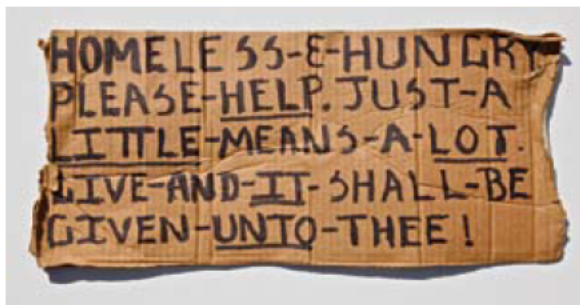
the homeless near the end of their day, making it easier for them to produce a replacement poster in time for the next shift.

The Streets of Sadness traveling exhibit's lead sponsor, Chicago Apartment Finders, will pick a winner among the signs, entitling the creator and their family to a one-year free rental apartment in the Windy City.

Will turning the tables on spare change create lasting change in the world? Segura sums it up from his perspective: "I really don't know if this will make a difference, but trying is better than not." **HOW**

*Expert speaker and thought leader David Berman ([www.davidberman.com](http://www.davidberman.com)) is ethics chair for graphic design in Canada, and has been named a special advisor to the United Nations on how to use design to improve humanity's condition. Read the first 40 pages of his book "Do Good Design" at [www.davidberman.com/dogoodgooglebook](http://www.davidberman.com/dogoodgooglebook).*

**STREETS OF SADNESS CHICAGO**  
[www.streetsofsadness.com](http://www.streetsofsadness.com)



**CALL TO ACTION**  
How can you contribute to Streets of Sadness? Carlos Segura says it's easy. Approach a homeless person who is brandishing a sign and ask the price of their work, thus changing begging into a more respectful trade of goods. Then, ship your sign to Segura's Chicago or Barcelona office. (You'll find the address at [www.streetsofsadness.com](http://www.streetsofsadness.com)).