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STREET SHEET

CAMP SWEEP ONE DAY AFTER U.N. VISIT, BUT BEFORE POLITICAL APPEARANCE

TJ JOHNSTON

SAN FRANCISCO, CA -- In one of the most recent forced relocations of encamped residents of San Francisco, the City has swept an encampment on San Bruno Avenue and Division Street hours after a U.N. official visited the residents, Street Sheet has learned.

The sweeps happened twice on the morning of December 7, around 3:30 a.m., then again at 8 a.m. The day before, a U.N. Special Rapporteur's delegation spoke to some people living there as part of an investigation on poverty. According to the Coalition on Homelessness, which publishes Street Sheet, police and public works crews ordered residents to leave the following morning.

Those sweeps were sudden and unannounced, residents said. The procedure for clearing encampments includes prior notice and an offer of services, but recent history suggests that the City doesn't always follow its own rules. The residents — all of whom declined to give their names — reported that neither of those things happened.

"The Coalition on Homelessness is extremely dismayed that the City continues to have an erratic practice of sometimes engaging in properly addressing encampments with adequate notice and relocation plans, and then randomly and spontaneously removes encampments inhumanely at other times," Coalition director Jennifer Friedenbach said. "The result of these expensive endeavors is moving people down the block, increased complaints from surrounding residents, and further traumatizing and destabilizing encampment residents. The Coalition on Homelessness is once again calling on the City to solve homelessness through investment in solutions, and

careful planning in conjunction with housed and unhoused residents that leads to relocation into permanent housing, or temporary accommodations that lead to permanent housing."

Encampment dwellers were already being moved around for what they believed was just a cleanup by the Department of Public Works the day before. An entourage led by Philip Alston, U.N. special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, was visiting the site as part of a nationwide fact-finding tour when police and DPW stopped by.

One resident reported being told by a DPW staffer that the activity was done in advance of a visit by late Mayor Ed Lee, but he didn't anticipate barricades being set up afterward.

"This lady from DPW had come by the day before but didn't say nothing about us having to move," he said. "After I moved over here, they said we could move back once the mayor left. When I came back out, they set up those fence things."

The former mayor indeed staged a photo-op at the now-cleaned area

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ART BY JOSH
MACPHEE
VIA JUST SEEDS

the
SOLIDARITY
issue

THE UN INVESTIGATES POVERTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN SAN FRANCISCO

TJ JOHNSTON

The topic of homelessness is often addressed as an economic, health, or safety issue. But a special investigator from the United Nations came to San Francisco on December 6 to hear from community members with a take not often heard from officials in the U.S.: the human rights of homeless people.

Philip Alston, UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, visited San Francisco as part of a two-week, fact-finding mission throughout the nation. On the afternoon of December 6, the Australian-born law professor from New York University visited homeless encampments in the South of Market district — including one where a DPW cleaning crew and police paid an unannounced visit — but that morning in a special forum at St. Anthony Foundation in the Tenderloin, he also received input from several service providers and advocacy organizations.

The forum’s hosts included the Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP), a San Francisco-based homeless activist organization; St. Mary’s Center of Oakland; St. Anthony’s; and the Coalition on Homelessness, which publishes Street Sheet.

It’s in his capacity as a U.N. special rapporteur that Alston is visiting several American cities — he already visited Los Angeles’ Skid Row — to prepare for a report to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva next June. He has scheduled a preview of his recommendations and preliminary observations on December 15 at Washington, D.C.

Alston also represents a body with a special historical link to the city: The U.N. was founded in San Francisco in 1945, and a plaza less than one-half mile away — a gathering place where outdoor markets and poor people commingle — is named for the international organization. In drafting its Declaration of Human Rights, the U.N. said that all human beings are entitled to food, clothing, health care and housing, among other things, to ensure their personal dignity as much as meeting their basic needs. The U.S. was one of 48 member nations that adopted the declaration.

Alston emphasized that the lack of such necessities of life — in the U.N.’s birthplace no less — violates the spirit of the declaration.

“Homelessness is not only a denial of the human right to housing, but it is also directly linked to the undermining of a range of civil rights,” he said in a statement before the forum. “The reportedly high levels of homelessness in San Francisco and other parts of California and the United States are therefore of particular interest to me in the context of my mandate to explore the links between extreme poverty and human rights.”

Extreme poverty — as the federal government defines it — is living on only \$2 per day, a condition which is where 19.4 million people nationwide live, according



to the U.S. Census Bureau. It’s likely that the 4,300 unsheltered San Franciscans who comprise more than half of the City’s homeless population meet that standard.

Some of those impoverished folk go to St. Anthony’s for free services such as its dining room and medical clinic, which they might be unable to access elsewhere. That day at St. Anthony’s, a series of panelists from about a dozen service providers and poverty advocacy organizations brought forth a range of issues — these included the impacts of gentrification and displacement, as well as the criminalization of poverty and homelessness.

Those are issues that directly affect the growing number of the City’s have-nots, according to Theresa Imperial of WRAP.

“As more and more of our communities gentrify and displace more and more of our neighbors, it is vital that we speak with one voice, with our collective human rights at the core of what we say,” she said.

After each panel presented its findings, Alston peppered them with questions. He asked what the Bay Area’s new arrivals, i.e. employees in tech companies, could do to stem gentrification. Tommi Avicoli Mecca of the Housing Rights Committee replied that wealthy people, such as investor Ron Conway, could easily raise \$1 billion to establish land community trusts and co-op housing. Mecca also told him of a meeting with Conway where he bounced the idea off the self-styled “angel investor.”

“He just looked at me, told his assistant ‘talk to this guy,’ and walked away,” he said.

The police-centered approach to homelessness was also criticized in this session. Dilara Yarbrough, a sociologist at San Francisco State University, presented figures from a study she co-authored where a majority of homeless and marginally housed residents said they were often ordered out of public space by the police, creating what she called a “constant spatial churn.” Her research also showed that they mostly got ticketed for so-called “quality of life offenses” and jailed when they can’t pay. The City later stopped issuing bench warrants for people who don’t answer citations in court.

Complaints of homeless visibility often drive complaints from merchant organizations, said Shelby Nacino and Daisy Quan, who study law and public policy, respectively, at the University of California, Berkeley. These groups form business improvement districts that effectively privatize public areas and hire security to exclude homeless people.

Nacino and Quan also noted that since 1910, California cities enacted almost 500 laws that restrict homeless activity, from sitting on sidewalks to sleeping in vehicles.

When Alston asked what he could recommend in his report, Yarbrough suggested that cities “get rid of laws that make it a crime (for homeless people) to be in public space.” Some cops who were interviewed in the study deemed quality-of-life laws ineffective, and are reluctant to enforce them. Quoting an officer, Yarbrough said, “If Mrs. Smith calls 911 on a homeless person, we are duty-bound to respond.”

Alston also asked if the City had a strategy to expand housing for low-income populations, citing a recently voter-approved bond in Los Angeles as an example.

Jennifer Friedenbach, director of the Coalition on Homelessness, said a sales tax measure that narrowly lost in 2016 could be revived next year. Thanks to a recent court decision, she added, it could and pass with a simple majority instead of the two-thirds the previous version needed, but fell short of reaching.

WRAP director Paul Boden, in a rabble-rousing moment, said homelessness can be ended with a systemic overhaul and people organizing. Lobbying organizations like the American Legislative Exchange Council push for neoliberal economic policies, such as tax breaks for wealthy homeowners at the expense of social service programs, he said.

“When we demand and when we push back, we kick ass and we win,” Boden said.

“It’s good to see an angry white male on the panel who’s not on the far right,” Alston said, wryly. ■

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

The STREET SHEET is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition’s work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: They bring their agenda to us. We then turn that agenda into powerful campaigns that are fleshed out at our work group meetings, where homeless people come together with their other community allies to win housing and human rights for all homeless and poor people.

WORKGROUP MEETINGS

AT 468 TURK STREET

HOUSING JUSTICE WORK GROUP Every Tuesday at noon

The Housing Justice Workgroup is working toward a San Francisco in which every human being can have and maintain decent, habitable, safe, and secure housing. This meeting is in English and Spanish and open to everyone!

HUMAN RIGHTS WORK GROUP Every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m.

The Human Rights Workgroup has been doing some serious heavy lifting on these issues: conducting direct research, outreach to people on the streets, running multiple campaigns, developing policy, staging direct actions, capturing media attention, and so much more. All those down for the cause are welcome to join!

To learn more about COH workgroup meetings, contact us at : 415-346-3740, or go at : www.cohsf.org

STREET SHEET STAFF

The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

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ANDREW BASH

How do you find yourself on the streets as a vagabond? Let me share this with those who think this cannot happen; when you are weak socially, economically and ill, you really have no way to defend yourself against less-than-honorable landlords, bosses and strangers. It was the perfect storm, that came on the back of years of surviving the social wars of poverty. Let me be clear to you GOP types: if you are middle -aged, with an illness and homeless, there is 70% chance you are going die out there, a 90% chance of going to jail and 70% chance of a spiritual death. Do you want take the Journey!?

I could share the utter pain, sorrow and terror I found, but you hear that all the time. I could share the utter wonder and beauty, but that can be perceived as me slacking off by some. So for the sake of those on the street in harm’s way, fighting against savage personalities who like to kick the dog when it is down, I’d rather share some tactics I found out there to survive and come back to to the world.

FIRST POSITION: To survive you must begin by estimating your environment and odds and each environment, and then doing some resource mapping: food banks, thrift stores, community colleges, where the doctors were, the public libraries, the parks- everything you can think of.

SECOND POSITION: Gear. In my case when I got thrown to the streets, I had one jacket, two pairs of socks, a 1977 skiing sweater, a 1995 kayaking spray jacket, one Cabala Fly fisherman’s shirt, one pair of blue jeans and a 30 liter pack. I am a man who spent years outside before this at sea, and lived in a van after the

1989 earthquake, so I had some background in surviving without a home. I had also graduated from a Community College while living in the back of my van. So I understood my situation better than most.

THIRD POSITION: The cash resources which I got from SSDI I could barely have survived without. So I was able to slowly get survival gear. I went to as many thrift shops, REI sales and garage sales as I could. I bought a pocket knife, some base layers, and 200 or 260 grade cotton shirts. I got pants that were light and durable. I also got a 80 liter backpack, a stove, some secondary layers, thick inner jackets and shirts. I got a solid rain jacket, and rain pants. My sister got me a tent, a sleeping bag, a flashlight and a ground mat.

FOURTH POSITION: I looked at the city and found the odds of surviving there slim to none. If I did make it, the chances of a ticket or some kind of run-in with the law was at 90%, so I headed for the woods, in Marin and the Sier-ras. From these two positions I could calculate food, travel and resources (food banks, doctors, showers). I had to set up a PO Box too, but I could slip out of sight into the woods, be that urban forests or into the wilderness. Out there, there is safety from the police and drug heads and angry people of all classes. FIFTH POSITION: staying alive is not enough. I realized I had to rebuild a resume and myself. I did this by volunteering for the parks and doing so got On the Job Training (OJT). I also got involved with Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) . In addition, I took wilderness first aid. I went to a Community College and took sign language; I read daily, and wrote daily. I was

making headway.

SIXTH POSITION: Psychologically, volunteering helps you reconnect with people, and to use social skills which atrophy if not used. I found being known in good stead is healthy, and social contribution is rewarding. I still found I needed to have a cafe or place where my name was known and they said, “Hello Andrew, good to see you!” That is worth more than anything in world at times. While homeless your love life is done, your social life is near gone and in those hard places is where you learn to feel what it means to be lonely but not alone. But I had to find new friends, as for love at my age and in my situation, an acceptance that was gone for now helped me. Places I recommend for work and growth: 1) California State Parks Volunteers, 2) Volunteer USA.Gov 3) Also, concessioners in state parks offer housing and a job. It’s a good bet for people who are sober. 4) Americorps: they place lots of youth.

SEVENTH POSITION: Willy-nilly social stigma is common, and with GOP-minded-people or elitists, class status is supreme. That means you have to find a way to bathe, clean your cloths, shave and shit. This has to be done in Youth Hostels or in Urban Forests areas. Also you must gear up, (find good gear and clean it) or you are frowned upon.

EIGHTH POSITION: In campgrounds and wilderness areas, everyone is homeless, in that all they have is the tent and the sky. Here too, you learn to socialize and learn wilderness survival skills. No one cares for the most part about how bad you look, or if you have shaved. It is about the experience and your capacity to move under the heavens. In this you learn you have common ground with all most all there. There in the wilderness, you meet people from all around the world and from all backgrounds. In many cases some will give you good feedback or you will see your own folly in others - social learning - if you are awake and still learning. I mean you have rock climbers, wilderness guides, mountaineers, biker touring dudes and girls and all can teach you.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1...

on December 7th around 11 a.m. with DPW director Mohammed Nuru, Department of Public Health director Barbara Garcia, whose department includes the SF Homeless Outreach Team, and Homelessness Department director Jeff Kositsky, and tweeted about it.

“This morning, @JeffKositsky & I walked through Showplace Square with SF HOT & @sfpublicworks to resolve an encampment & connect people experiencing homelessness with resources & supportive services to get them off the streets & into stable living conditions,” he posted.

But apparently, those resources won’t be readily available to another resident, a woman in her 40s. She said the sweep caught her and her family off guard, leaving them essentially with nowhere else to go.

“I needed to get my kids to school, and

NINTH POSITION: Learning and meditating is essential. I kept a book called “Think on These Things” with me. I kept a journal. I studied survival books. I read poems and sang in the woods. I danced as well.

TENTH POSITION: Diet is the killing factor. I started to study what people ate and that was easy to make for example: ready-made polenta, rice pasta, clarified butter/olive oil, onions, cucumbers, seasonings, cheese, small packets of fish or precooked hot-dogs, produce. You also want to eat hot peppers for they make you shit and you want things to come out fast in case they go bad. But remember you can only carry so much.

ELEVENTH POSITION: Solitude can be healing as well as unsettling. Somehow somewhere you have to come in if you been gone too, long. For me I found a cafe or place where I could come into, then if I got lucky my father would call me and I would sit alone in the woods talking with him about philosophy and world politics. You have to realize when you been alone too long or you are fucked!

TWELFTH AND FINAL POSITION HERE: The housing shortage is so bad, places like San Francisco, Seattle, Portland or others like this is unattainable for 90% of the people. You have to start thinking outside of this area. You have to start building credit, references and yes, the Parks can hire you if the GOP motherfuckers do not cut it all down.

You can be of service to yourself and others. I just came in. It took me 6 years, so effort and fortitude is essential but you might do it in one year or two. Never give up brothers or sisters and know this, even the toughest US Marines break out here, they fucking do. You break, you cry, you scream and get back up. Goddamn it, they are the long years, the hardest and the most wondrous! And at points any wrong decision is your death, that makes a spiritual channel deep inside you. Good Luck. Peace be with You! ■

they woke us up at 3:30 in the morning, and made us move, and then made us move again at 8 a.m.,” she said. “They then put up barriers so we couldn’t move back. I don’t know where we are going to go.”

DPW workers at the scene were excited at the prospect of earning overtime and holiday pay.

Street Sheet contacted the Special Rapporteur’s team for a response on the sweep, but spokesperson Junko Tadaki declined to comment. “We have certainly taken note of the situation, and the Special Rapporteur will address the issue, either through his report or through a communication addressed to the government,” she said. ■



IMAGE BY ROGER PEET via just seeds

ASK US
ANYTHING

HAVE A QUESTION YOU WANT US
TO ANSWER ABOUT HOMELESSNESS OR
HOUSING IN THE BAY AREA?

ASK US AT STREETSHEET@COHSF.ORG OR
(415) 346-3740 AND IT COULD BE
ANSWERED IN THE NEXT ISSUE!

STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH YOUR

COLLABORATION BETWEEN HOMELESS AND HOUSED ACTIVISTS

APRIL ANTHONY AND REVEREND SANDHYA JHA

APRIL ANTHONY:

I was houseless for the better part of twenty years. During the last six of those years while living at our beloved community at the Albany landfill (AKA the Bulb) I became an activist/advocate for the houseless.

I went to the city's homeless task force meeting and introduced myself, including telling them where I lived, adding "without one of us representing the houseless community, this task force could be a waste of your time, energy and money. You might make choices and decisions that we wouldn't approve of or that we would refuse to participate in." That task force listened to us and brought a proposal to the city that reflected the concerns and needs of the houseless community, which was rejected without even being read.

To make a long story short, we ended up suing the city. Through this event, I met many housed individuals who worked in solidarity with us, before and after our day in court.

REV. SANDHYA JHA:

As a pastor of a small congregation in Oakland, we ended up with a lot of people crashing on our property to get away from the established drug corridor a few blocks away. We started

getting to know folks by name and worshipped with them. We also learned how many hurdles there are for unhoused people to be able to get housing if they want it or to find a safe place for them to live in community. Eventually I worked with an organization called East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO) who fights for the right of the lowest income people in our communities to get access to housing with dignity. On a really good day, churches like the one I served can work alongside the houseless community to make a real difference.

My favorite example of that was a church in Walnut Creek I worked with through EBHO. One of the members of the church started making friends with people living in their cars and trying to get by in such an expensive community, where many of them worked but could no longer afford housing. She asked what they needed, got the church to invest in a day program, and as her friends noted their desire for housing, she got the church on board with building housing (with community space at the urging of the houseless community in Walnut Creek) for the people who need and want it.

BETWEEN THE TWO OF US, WE SEE LOTS OF WAYS THAT HOUSED PEOPLE CAN SHOW UP IN SUPPORT OF HOUSELESS PEOPLE:

- Our friend Genevieve Wilson always says "start out by getting to know people by name. Ask what they need." Recently on a bus ride, she was sitting near a houseless person having a panic attack. The bus driver was agitated and trying to get him off the bus, but enough people were comfortable enough to know they could talk to him, ground him and help him get to where he was going so that he wasn't left stranded and the police weren't involved. That only happens when housed people can get over the irrational fear they're trained into, so they can show up in helpful ways.
- If you have relationships with houseless and formerly houseless people in your community, you can invite them to community meetings or you can ask them what they would like you to share in those community meetings.
- There are some great efforts right now to build tiny homes by, for and with houseless people, such as Needa Bee's work with the Village. Donate some time with the folks doing the building, and also find out if your house of worship could give up a few parking spaces or a piece of lawn so that those tiny homes have a place to go.

TOP TEN PIECES OF ADVICE FOR OUTREACH WORKERS!

From the San Francisco Youth Policy and Advisory Committee

1. This report gives topical brief and straight to the point pieces of advice to service providers and policy makers. The advice comes straight from the minds and hearts of youth with lived experience and knowledge of homelessness.
2. If I am asking for help I obviously need help so don't turn me down.
3. If you can't help me, point me in the right direction to the right referral. Take me there if you can.
4. Protect confidentiality. Don't talk about me with other youth or coworkers.
5. Hand me something that will benefit my body/health not just gummies. (But we do love the gummies, we just want something healthy too.)
6. When you are handing items out let people pick and choose what they want.
7. Don't give out (or purchase to give out) expired food!
8. Do more outreach in the Bayview.
9. Have outreach workers that are helpful with recovery and rehab.
10. Have mobile crisis services as a part of outreach teams.
11. Here is what we would like to have: underwear when you give out socks, gift cards with an amount of money that will allow us to buy something, and hot meals.

Created by the Youth Policy and Advisory Committee at their meeting on November 16, 2017

Questions or Comments? Please email ypacsf@gmail.com

- There are programs in Contra Costa County like Warm Winter Nights that provide shelter and paths to housing. One way to build relationships with the houseless community is volunteering with them and supporting them in accessing services. This is often a really big eye opener for housed people, who don't realize how hard and humiliating the process can be to sign up for something like CalFresh for access to food. Also consider investing in the emergency relief program with Shelter, Inc to support people who are at risk of losing their home.
- Pay attention to where houseless activists show up on the political front and show up with them. Sometimes our city councils think no one cares about the needs, concerns and activism of houseless people, but when church folks and housed constituents show up and say "we are here because we support our houseless neighbors," that can force the council to take houseless people's concerns more seriously...especially if the neighbors aren't "professional organizers." The houseless seniors at St. Mary's Center in West Oakland are really involved in local advocacy; showing up with them is a great starting place.
- The Table in Berkeley is hosting a memorial service for the houseless people we have lost this year. Show up. Hear the stories. Get to know the other mourners. Listen for how you can show up. ■

**THIS IS JUST A STARTING PLACE, BUT WE HOPE IT WILL
HELP YOU THE NEXT TIME YOU THINK:
"HOW CAN I SHOW UP WITH MY HOUSELESS SIBLINGS?"**

HOMELESS NEIGHBOURS

HOMELESS SHELTERS: ARE THEY SET UP TO HELP OR HURT HOMELESS PEOPLE?

ALLEN ARMSTRONG

It doesn’t take long for one to figure out if the homeless shelters are truly here to help or harm homeless people. While it’s not important to most people in San Francisco, it’s certainly important to those who actually want to be off the streets for the most part and be a better, more productive member of society that also wants to be a positive influence on people. There is no reason to hold grudges against anyone really, however not everyone knows the plight that we homeless people face on a daily basis.

I have stayed at most of the homeless shelters in San Francisco and its unanimous: MSC South is the worst homeless shelter in the area, due to the staff. I personally have been treated with contempt and anger by prejudiced people. It’s a shame that nobody knows about this , except for homeless folks. This also happened at Dolores homeless shelter on (24th Street), as well as Dolores on South Van Ness Avenue although there were also good and decent people there. The people at Providence and Next Door were very decent as well. I also have a friend who has stayed at Sanctuary, and he said that the people were very nice too. All in all, one

would have to come to the conclusion that the people who work at these homeless shelters are ignorant at the very least.

Cleanliness is also a tough thing to be considered. After all, how clean is the street? However, bathrooms at places that receive money from the City and state ought to be at least sorta clean, right? Well, there are also few homeless shelters with showers. MSC South has showers at all times for the public and for the shelter, but again you have to be aware of the way they treat us homeless. On Dolores at South Van Ness, you can only shower at what time you sign up for at night and it might not be hot; most likely, it would be cold in my experience. No showers are at Providence. Sanctuary and Next Door have showers, but all of the bathrooms were dirty.

How you even get into a homeless shelter is also a messed-up thing. For instance, at Glide, they basically make you run across the street. If you are unable to, then they’ll just skip over or cut in front of you. I was told to wait across the street on Taylor Street, then cross with every-one, but what ended up happening was that everyone ran and even though I waited about

an hour and was first or second in line, many people butted in front of me. I was denied a bed that evening and told they don’t start taking reservations until 3 p.m. exactly and they were already filled up again and I was reminded why people don’t want to stay at homeless shelters, because it is a bunch of prejudice and even a hint of racism. Really sad that it’s one of three resources that I’m aware of. The drop-in center on 165 Capp St. and GA are the other two. And neither of those have I tried, although 311 is the SF helpline that will put you on the list for a 90-day bed. These are the only ways to get into homeless shelters in San Francisco.

When it boils down to right or wrong, fair or unfair, one easily comes to the conclusion that being homeless in San Francisco isn’t easy and becoming un-homeless is difficult. Shelters in San Francisco are not set up or equipped with the necessary employs to help people achieve success and to become un-homeless or find a home. No, they are mostly a place to sleep at night and “see ya later” during the day, which

helps no one except the people who don’t need help. Without decent workers who are qualified to give advice, mentor and counsel. And gentri-fication on the horizon, San Francisco is look-ing, at the very least, double the homeless. More than likely, one-third will be treated as if in the majority will be treated like they are getting the help they need. I am only speaking of my experience with homelessness in San Francisco, and it hasn’t been very good, mostly awful and unfair really. I totally feel bad for anyone who finds themselves in the situation such as myself, homeless, for the cards are stacked against me, and the deck isn’t all there; it’s missing a card or two. So maybe one day there will be a program that isn’t just a smoke screen, and will actually help homelessness, not make more homeless scapegoats. I have hope, though. I want to help and make a difference. I am able to succeed because I had found what I had lost -- and that’s integrity. ■

Check back for PART 2



ART BY DAVE LOWENSTEIN VIA JUST SEEDS

AN OAKLAND REPORT

This week massive sweeps were expected in Oakland after the city moved some camp residents into semi-permanent Tuff-Sheds. The City Administrator’s office had announced that all campers would be cleared once the “Safe Haven” opened, pending the end of the city workers strike. Sweeps were reported Tuesday afternoon and are ongoing. If you see a sweep, please ask residents how you can best support, and ask permission to document the abuses.

STAY TUNED FOR UPDATES

MY GUIDE FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

DARNELL WILLIAMS

1. GET A WATERPROOF BACKPACK AND _LL IT UP WITH DOGGIE BAGS BE-CAUSE YOU WILL NEED TO KEEP YOUR FEET DRY. THE DOGGIE BAGS YOU CAN GET IN THE PARKS—THEY’RE THE POOP BAGS FOR THE DOGS. YOU PUT THEM OVER THE FEET AND THEN PUT YOUR SOCKS ON SO YOUR FEED DON’T GET WET. NEXT, YOU NEED BIG PLASTIC BAGS TO PUT ALL OF YOUR ELECTRONICS IN THEM AND IMPORTANT PAPERS. YOUR ID IS VERY IMPOR-TANT.
2. HOW TO KEEP WARM: WATERPROOF BOOTS AND WARM CLOTHES. ALWAYS KEEP EXTRA PAIRS OF SOCKS AND GLOVES TO HELP YOUR FRIENDS OUT. YOUR SLEEPING BAG MUST BE FOR 20 BELOW ZERO DEGREES. YOU MUST HAVE AN EXTRA HAT. I WAS ALSO DRINKING VODKA TO KEEP WARM AND TAKE AWAY THE PAIN OF BEING HOMELESS AND USED THE ALCOHOL FOR CUTS AND SANITATION. LATER ON, I LEARNED A BETTER WAY TO KEEP WARM: USING HOT PEPPERS (LIKE CAYENNE PEPPER) IN MY TOP RAMEN OR TEA.
3. YOU MUST HAVE THE ABILITY TO MAKE FRIENDS BECAUSE YOU WILL NEED THEM. ALL YOUR STEREOTYPES OF HOMELESS PEOPLE MUST LEAVE BECAUSE THEY WILL HELP YOU _ND YOUR WAY. YOU CANNOT SURVIVE HOMELESSNESS BEING ANTISOCIAL.
4. YOU MUST HAVE A WORKING CELL PHONE.
5. YOU MUST LEARN HOW TO LIVE ON A BUDGET OF \$3.50 A DAY (WHICH IS HOW MUCH YOU WOULD GET FROM FOOD STAMPS) AND THE ONLY WAY TO DO THAT AND STAY HEALTHY IS TO GO VEGETARIAN. I WOULD BUY CHICK-EN TOP RAMEN, AN ONION, AND GARLIC. THE GARLIC AND ONION ARE TO PROTECT YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM. I CARRIED A HOT POT IN MY BACKPACK AND USED PUBLIC OUTLETS TO MAKE MY RAMEN.
6. USE YOUR BACKPACK AS YOUR PILLOW SO THAT YOUR THINGS DON’T GET STOLEN. TRY TO TAKE NAPS DURING THE DAY SO THAT YOU DON’T GO INTO A DEEP SLEEP IN THE SHELTER SO YOU CAN WATCH YOUR STUFF.
7. KEEP THINGS CLEAN. USE TEA TREE OIL AS ANTIVIRAL MEDICINE BECAUSE EVERYONE GETS SICK IN THE SHELTER, ESPECIALLY IN THE WINTER. USE CLOROX BLEACH TO CLEAN THE MATTRESSES AND THE PILLOWS AT THE SHELTER BEFORE YOU SLEEP. THEY ARE MADE OUT OF VINYL.

STREET SHEET THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING US!

SPREAD THE WORD

Invite our **Homeless Speakers Bureau** to come speak at your house party, birthday party, school, or community event! The proceeds benefit our speakers as well as the work of the Coalition on Homelessness.

DONATE GOODS

Donate your old car through Vehicles for Charity in the name of the COH. Call 1-800-574-0888 for more information. **Donate items** to Community Thrift store and pick COH as your charity of choice. Call (415) 861-4910 for more information.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HOW TO GET INVOLVED,
CONTACT SAM LEW AT SLEW@COHSF.ORG

STAY INFORMED

Keep up to date on homeless issues and policy in San Francisco by purchasing the Street Sheet and visiting streetsheet.org. Educate your friends, family, and co-workers on poverty issues in San Francisco. You can also sign up for our mailing list at www.cohsf.org.

JOIN THE STRUGGLE

We always need more people to **join our campaigns**, conduct outreach, contribute content to the Street Sheet, or help out in the office. You can also join a workgroup: Housing Justice meets on Tuesdays at noon and Human Rights on Wednesdays at 12:30, both at our office.

Since 1989, the STREET SHEET has been an independent media organization that provides a powerful platform to homeless people to reclaim and shift narratives about homelessness in San Francisco.

Help us keep it that way!

By donating to the Coalition on Homelessness you can ensure that this paper continues—and grows. Visit www.cohsf.org and click “Donate Now” to become a sustainer!

GETTING PERSPECTIVE ON HOMELESSNESS

BOB PRENTICE

In reading media coverage of homelessness, it has been stunning to note the lack of historical perspective and what we are up against. It portrays homelessness as largely a local problem—what is each city doing?—or even a regional problem—how is homelessness connected to more general housing problems in the Bay Area?

Of course it is a local and regional problem, but it is much more than that. This is not meant to discount the importance of work going on at the local and regional level, but rather to gain perspective on what the larger stakes are so we can have a more realistic assessment of what is possible, and what is not, from these efforts.

It does not help to begin with the most common media profile of homelessness. The focus is on mental illness, substance abuse and chronic homelessness, and they become the default explanation about why people are homeless. However, they beg more questions than they provide answers. Why does having a mental illness or addiction mean someone is homeless? Although roughly one-third of homeless people are described as being mentally ill, it's not all that different from the more than one-quarter of the population as a whole who experience mental illness. Addiction to alcohol or drugs is not unique to people who live on the streets, but they are more visible. And, the term “chronically homeless” is probably more a statement about how being homeless contributes to or exacerbates mental illness, addiction or loss of hope to the point that mere survival becomes the daily task. It is impossible not to see the pain in people who talk to voices no one else can hear (other than those on their cell phones) or are so strung out that nothing else matters, but to experience it while having no place to live is more than most could manage.

We have to step back and ask how this seemingly intractable problem began and rather than bemoan the fact that, in spite of the best local efforts to help people off the streets, the problem continues with little evidence that we are reducing the size of the homeless population. More

importantly, we need to understand what we have to do in the longer run to make our efforts successful.

The upsurge of homelessness in the early 1980s, on a scale not seen since the 1930s, corresponds with a shift in U.S. politics that, over the last four decades, has seen an increase in the inequality of wealth and income unprecedented since at least the 1920s. In the United States, the most unequal among developed nations, 1% of the population now owns over a third of the wealth and roughly a quarter of total income. How is it possible not to see homelessness as the most extreme expression of this degree of inequality? During the Great Depression of the 1930s, when Hoovervilles were the precursors to today's tent encampments, a combination of social movements and political advocacy created New Deal programs that provided public employment (Works Progress Administration, Civilian Conservation Corps, etc.), Social Security, unemployment insurance, nutrition programs, the rudiments of a federal housing policy (United States Housing Act of 1937) and other measures (sadly, not including health insurance) that established government commitment to the common good and its role as a source of support for the basic necessities of life.

Just as the New Deal established a framework for our political culture for roughly four decades, however, the neo-liberalism introduced by Reagan in the 1980s set the course for the next four decades when the private market became the solution to all problems (“government is not the solution to our problems, it is the problem” he famously stated). He certainly kept to that view when he reduced the budget of the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development by over 75% (from \$32 billion to less than \$8 billion)



during his two terms in office. That legacy is not only alive but on steroids in the Trump era, with the ideological commitment to private sector interests as the cornerstone of policies affecting health care, education, housing, employment, public assistance and environmental regulations undermining any public commitment to basic standards of healthy and secure lives for everyone.

When considering the question of where we go from here, we have to confront a fundamental irony. In the absence of adequate public support, there has been a desperate turn to philanthropy. Maybe that is what we have to work with under current circumstances, but it is also an example of how the private sector has eviscerated the legitimate role of the public. It is not enough that venerable public institutions have become the Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital or the UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital, but now we deal with homelessness as the extreme expression of wealth and income inequality by having billionaires donate pocket change from their excess wealth to programs for homeless people.

It is also striking to note that homelessness is a huge political issue locally, but it was barely mentioned in recent presidential elections, even though it

is fundamentally a national problem. Democrats and Republicans, liberal and conservative, seek a safe base by referring consistently to the “middle class” (whatever that means) without regard to the extreme poverty, including homelessness, that we have created.

Like many of the social movements that have been activated or invigorated in the Trump era—Black Lives Matter, women's march, immigrant rights, environmental justice, Native rights—homelessness must be seen as part of a larger issue of social justice. And, like those other movements, it cannot be seen as an isolated issue but rather must become part of larger forces that are fighting for social justice and a commitment to our common interests in everyone having at least the basic elements of a decent life.

In the meantime, let's continue doing what we can at the local and regional level, but let us not lose sight of the larger issues we confront as we claim we are doing what we can to end homelessness. If we are serious about ending homelessness, there must be a national strategy, because that's where it all started and continues to be the primary source of what appears to be an intractable problem at the local level. ■

SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

DECEMBER

DECEMBER 16	DECEMBER 16	DECEMBER 16	DECEMBER 17
WINTER POP-UP: QUEER AND POC MAKERS WHERE: OAKLAND SOL, 1236 23RD AVE, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94606 FROM 1-5PM Winter Pop Up Shop will showcase art and services by Bay Area Femmes. Come on out and get your cards read, have a hair consultation or grab some adornment. Snacks and drinks will be provided by donation.	COUNTER PROTEST AGAINST “MARCH AGAINST SANCTUARY CITIES” WHERE: UNION SQUARE (POWELL AND GEARY) FROM 12:30-3:30PM The far-right is having a “March Against Sanctuary Cities” in San Francisco on the afternoon of December 16th. We are organizing a counter-protest with a march.	FANON: DECOLONIZING THE PSYCHE - FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE WHERE: RED BAY COFFEE 3098 EAST 10TH STREET, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94601 This workshop explores how the practices of racism manifest through institutions and organizations, impacting the psychic wholeness of program participants.	TRUMLAND BLUES-CHANGE THE TUNE-DEFEAT CAPITALISM/WHITESUPREMACY WHERE: 1305 FRANKLIN ST, # 411, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612 Hear Larry Holmes, First Secretary, Workers World Party talk about “Trumpland Blues: Changing the Tune To Defeat Capitalism and White Supremacy in 2018”.
DECEMBER 19	DECEMBER 19	DECEMBER 19	DECEMBER 20
BERKELEY HOMELESS PERSONS’ MEMORIAL SERVICE WHERE: FIRST CHURCH BERKELEY, 2345 CHANNING WAY, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94704 Honoring the homeless neighbours lost this year. Hosted by the Table Spiritual Community and First Church Berkeley.	DEPORT ICE: THE RESOLUTION TO END COOPERATION WITH ICE WHERE: OAKLAND CITY HALL, 1 FRANK OGAWA PLAZA, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612 Protest the illegal ICE raid on a family home on 27th Street in Oakland.	THIS IS NOT A TEST WHERE: SOLESPACE, 1714 TELEGRAPH AVE, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612 FROM 6-7:30 HAWG, Homeless Advocacy Working Group, is hosting an evening to bring together & flush out neighborhood based, autonomous, and compassionate community responses to The Town’s homeless EMERGENCY.	PERIWINKLE CINEMA PRESENTS 2017 A YEAR IN REVIEW WHERE: PERIWINKLE CINEMA ATA - 992 VALENCIA ST 8-10PM Come hang out with Periwinkle Cinema this December to look back on 2017 and find out what we have planned for the next year.
DECEMBER 21	JANUARY 1	JANUARY 31	EVERY SUNDAY
THE VIGIL: ANNUAL HOMELESS PERSONS MEMORIAL WHERE: CIVIC CENTER PLAZA SAN FRANCISCO, CA AT 5:30PM Join people of all faiths, or no faith, (we’re all in this together) to remember those who have died this year while living on San Francisco streets. In silence, in prayer, in song we’ll remember them, honor them, mourn our loss, reach out to each other for comfort and hope, and show our solidarity in working for change.	ANNUAL NOISE DEMO OUTSIDE OAKLAND JAIL AT MIDNIGHT	STREET SHEET MUSIC WHERE: EL RIO, 3158 MISSION ST, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94110 9PM-12AM A night of music and poetry, raising money to benefit San Francisco’s Coalition on Homelessness. Plus raffles, Street Sheets, and an open jam session.	HOMELESS HERBAL CLINIC WHERE: SAN FRANCISCO DRUG USERS UNION. 149 TURK STREET SF 12-4PM Free herbal medicine consultations for homeless people and drug users offered every Sunday

GET PUBLISHED IN OUR ANNUAL POETRY ISSUE!

THE STREET SHEET IS LOOKING FOR POETRY SUBMISSIONS FOR OUR JAN I ISSUE. WHILE WE PUBLISH POEMS ON A VARIETY OF TOPICS, WE PARTICULARLY WELCOME THOSE THAT ENGAGE IN THEMES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE, RESISTANCE, HOMELESSNESS/HOMEFULNESS & (IN)EQUALITY.

DEADLINE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER20
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WRITER’S CORNER

BY THE GHOSTLINES COLLECTIVE

Make a list of all the objects that you carry with you or are most important to you. Choose one and write about how you are similar and different to this object.

Ghostline: Some days I am...

Example: “Some days I am a lighter: small and skinny and hating the cold. But I do not fit comfortably under somebody’s thumb.”

PROFILE OF A STREET SHEET VENDOR

CHARLES DAVIS

I was born in Vancouver, WA. We had relatives that lived over on Vashon Island so we'd spend a lot of time over there, weekends in Seattle. I had two sisters and one brother. My mom and dad got divorced when I was a kid. I like Seattle, I consider it my second home. Last time I was there, which wasn't that long ago, it still felt the same even though it's gotten a lot bigger. I like it cause there's a lot of people up there.

I didn't have it all too good growing up, my dad drank a lot so I was kind of his punching bag when he got drunk. I lived at home until I was about sixteen and then one day my dad came home drunk, I already knew what was going to happen. He'd come in the house, come straight at me and I already knew what he was going to do but I didn't let him. Before he got a chance to, I stepped out of the way, he fell, and said he was going to call the police to say I'd hit him even though I didn't touch him.

So after that I spent some time in juvenile hall then went and spent some time with an aunt and uncle in Castle Rock, WA which is all farm land. No skyscrapers, no city, really pretty. I stayed til I was about 17 and I've been on my own since. I'm 58 now and I think I've done pretty good so far -- still here. A little older, but still here.

I've been in San Francisco this time for over a month now but I've been here before and worked for Street Sheet before. Twice before this, actually. First time I came was in '78 and then I traveled around for awhile. Time before this, I was in San Francisco in 2013 and I was on SSI like I am now, living

in an SRO. After that I left, went back to Washington in 2014, and I found out my SSI had been cut out due to legal problems, but it's been cleared up so now I can get my SSI again. Now I'm waiting to get my ID and once I get that, instead of an SRO I'm going to get a regular apartment. It's going to be away from the city though, the closer you get to the city the more expensive stuff is so I'll probably go to maybe the Haight-Ashbury Area. The rooms in SROs are small, I want a regular studio apartment. Once I get that money, any place that's 24 hours I'm going to go eat! I love that restaurant called The Melt here in the city, I love all their macaroni and cheese. I tell everybody to go there, I recommend that place to a lot of people. They're really nice there, a couple of them know what I usually get and they've got quick service. I know most of the good food spots down here.

I've worked for a landscape company, a construction company when I lived in North Carolina by the beach. I had a '71 Mustang, one of the first cars I've ever owned and a '57 Chevy too, both were in great condition! I worked for Subway when I lived in Nebraska, when I was in Seattle I worked on the waterfront at a restaurant called Ivars. Mostly, I've just done a lot of general labor to get by. I've come by a lot of helpful people, especially in the south, who help me find work to do to get by. I like travelling because I go where I want to go and don't have any restrictions, but once I get my ID and everything I want to stay in San Francisco for a while. I need to find a place to call home, cause I'm too old for this at this point. ■



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