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COLD WEATHER HEARING	3	COALITION WEATHER PROTOCOL RECOMMENDATIONS	4	SMASH PATRIARCHY CELEBRATE WOMEN	4	COORDINATED ENTRY AND "THE PUBLIC" FILM REVIEW	6	ALENA MUSEUM FIGHTS DISPLACEMENT	8
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THE INHUMANITY OF HOMELESS ‘SWEEPS’

Tiny

No matter how many times you “sweep” me, “arrest me,” or “study me, it doesn’t give me a home.

In 1984, when I was 11 and me and my disabled mama were living on and off the street, in doorways, bus benches, staying in hoopties we scavenged, shelter beds we case mangled, motel rooms, and apartments we would temporarily wrangle, the City of San Francisco had just began to “see” homelessness as a “problem.”

Coincidentally, the federal agency known as HUD (the Department of Housing and Urban Development) and local housing authority agencies across the US were launching a slow bleed to the public housing budget – that is, housing for the poorest of the poor, like me and my mama.

In all of this silent violence, this quiet war on the poor, an anti-poor-people public relations campaign was also being crafted which resulted in the launching of a series of hygienic

metaphors used to describe unhoused peoples bodies on the street. Exposed for all to see.

“We need to clean up the homeless problem.”

“We need to clean up the neighborhood” (referring in coded language to poor, working class folks and communities of color).

“Homeless people are crazy, lazy, dirty, messy...”

“The Mess on Market Street” (referring to an entire part of Market street in the Tenderloin as a Mess.

“My houseless body was “power-washed” several times when I was unhoused,” said Bruce Allison, elder and disability, poverty skola with POOR Magazine.

“I was power-washed as a pregnant houseless woman several times in SF,” said Juliana Cheng, a single mama/poverty skola.

The reason this “exposure” of unhoused bodies, communities and peoples was and continues to be such a problem in the US is we have a globally perpetuated myth that we are all doing OK. That “real” poverty only exists in the global South. That we live in a “classless” society and we all “have a chance to “make it.”

This myth is necessary for many exploitation reasons, not the least of which is to fuel a stream of poor workers risking crossing dangerous, killer borders to get here only to find the dream only exists in your sleep.

“People always think our family is doing good because they live in the US, when we tell them about Luis being homeless and killed by police, they don’t believe us,” Said Roxanna, who lives in Teabo, Yucatan, Mexico, and is the daughter of Luis Demetrio Gongora Pat, killed by SF police for being brown and houseless in the gentrified streets of San Francisco’s

Mission District.

Fast forward to the late 1990s, the advent of (NO) Hope VI — meaning the demolition of several thousand public housing projects and passing out of useless Section 8 vouchers (See WRAPhome.org for more on this as well as POOR Magazine’s Volume 1 the Homefulness issue). And suddenly a new colonization project in the Bay Area known as the dot-com boom fueled even more anti-poor people hate along with a dangerous housing and commercial space shortage, followed by a poison cocktail of aristo-krazy corporate media, false promises from Jerry Brown to Willie Brown, wealthy tech industry pandering, and intervention by the police and the Department of Public Works ...

And just as quickly, without even a blink of the societal eye, the concept of “sweeps” was launched.

A concept of equating unhoused human beings’ bodies and our life-long belongings with trash to be swept, seized, discarded, and/or absconded by the same state agency that picks up trash off the road, DPW, followed up with a punitive gun-toting agency such as the police or sheriff to enforce the de-humanizing of unhoused/un-roofed humans.

The notion of “sweeps” and equating humans with trash is nothing new under the settler colonizer sun. The original stealing fathers (my affectionate name for the Founding Fathers) imported anti-poor people laws when they first stole this indigenous territory. Laws like the “Ugly Laws” that made it illegal to be “unsightly” aka disabled, or houseless in public incarceration

continued on page 2....
photo credit: Robert Gumpert
description: tent sits in front of train tracks as the sky pours



SHELTER WAITLIST UPDATE: As of February 15th there are 1,134 people on the waitlist for shelter in San Francisco.

THE INHUMANITY OF HOMELESS ‘SWEEPS’

Tiny

continued from page 1....

ated poor people for being poor — all under the guise of “helping” us or “taking care of” poor people, which ties in perfectly to the Savior Industrial Complex and the cult of rehabilitation.

And while all of this poor-people-hate unfolds, popular culture is fed a terrifying collective understanding that equates the lack of humans in a landscape with “cleanliness” — the Starbuckizaiton of the world — that somehow because people didn’t have the money to pay rent they were not worthy of being seen as human.

This wasn’t really a hard sell in the US. People already were sold a whole gaggle of lies about poor people. We were receiving “free money” welfare (not true — we all work in menial sub-minimum wage work to “earn” that poverty crumb) and food stamps (hardly covers the cost of food and certainly not healthy food so you have the poisoning of a massive population of poor people because of agribusiness and corporate GMOs). Not to mention the entire basis of a capitalist culture itself that relies on everything being a commodity, from Mama Earth to care-workers. And that there must be poor people for rich people to even exist.

Sweeping humans wasn’t met with the proper shock, disgust, or even empathy. It was just accepted as the new normal.

Sadly, sweeping humans like we are trash became more and more normalized, it became something constantly said, by everyone from poltricksters to tech workers — and suddenly, it seemed perfectly OK to dehumanize people just because we were on the street, culminating in a deadly group of sweeps from former Mayor Ed Lee, to “get ready for the Stupid Bowl” – and the power structure seemed fine with it.

Except us poor people. POOR Magazine, the Coalition on Homelessness, Coffee Not Cops, and many more groups stood in front of the DPW trucks in 2015. POOR Magazine launched our RoofLESS radio WeSearch project which continues today, determined to not let the city harass, criminalize and arrest every poor person they got in these violent sweeps, which included crushing disabled people’s wheelchairs and walkers, their lives and their bodies.

To fight back, lawsuits were filed by revolutionary attorneys and POOR Magazine’s WeSearch (Poor and homeless people-led research) which

documented hundreds of thousands of dollars in belongings stolen and seized from unhoused folks was lost or crushed or never returned.

After Ed Lee died, an interim mayor, Mark Farrell, was put into office and one of the first things he did was launch a whole new gaggle of — you guessed it — sweeps.

SF is not the only one doing these violent moves against unhoused people. Oakland and Berkeley and pretty much the whole entire US is now about these sweeps. It became so deadly, we had RoofLESS radio elder reporters on both sides of the Bay reporting that if they even sat down to rest for five minutes the police and DPW would drive by and harass them, tell them to stand up and then if they didn’t take all of their belongings, throw them away.

It got so horrible for us as WeSearchers and poverty skolaz both housed and unhoused at POOR Magazine that we launched our own “sweep” — this time of the poltricksters themselves on both sides of the Bay. We called it “Sweeping the Poltricksters” which actually helped slow down the sweeps a little just cause of the shame factor. And then we got Mayor London Breed in SF, who has taken the unwritten homeless policy — aka “sweeps” — to a whole new level. Since August, 2018, under the Breed Administration, more than 405 tents were seized (stolen) from 210 unhoused residents.

Because of the unwritten violent policy of daily tent and belonging seizure in the rain, cold and harsh weather of the last several months, already physically fragile unhoused people have had their lives put at risk, and others have lost their medicine and basic necessities. We Poverty Skolaz at the RoofLESS radio project realized we needed to do a public release of our findings, which we did twice asking the SF community of housed people to demand that London Breed stop stealing our tents.

To date, she has only stepped up this policy.

Which brings us to Thursday’s special hearing on sweeps at City Hall, which starts with a protest called by United to Fight Displacement, POOR Magazine, the Coalition on Homelessness and Democratic Socialists of America.

Imagine if someone came into your home and snatched the roof off your bedroom, dorm room, or home, leaving you exposed, over-seen, no longer covered. In other words, no longer “safe” to be messy, unorga-

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!

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.

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!

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO OUR WORK GROUP MEETINGS. Unfortunately our space is not wheelchair accessible, but we will move our meeting location to accomodate people who cannot make it up the stairs. For access needs contact development@cohsf.org

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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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fulness in East Oakland. Change won’t come from a savior, a pimp or an institution; change will only come from a poor people-led solution.

Sup. Matt Haney has called for a hearing on the city’s response to homelessness in extreme weather. The Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee will meet for that hearing Thursday/7 at noon in Room 250, City Hall. Activists will gather at 11am on the City Hall steps for a rally. ■

Tiny is the Author of Criminal of Poverty – Growing Up Homeless in America- published by City Lights and co-author of Poverty Scholarship – Poor People-led Theory, Art , Words and Tears Across Mama Earth- just released on poorpress.net. To reach tiny go to her website www.lisatinygraygarcia.com

nized, unclean, or just human, because now you no longer were living with what housed people live with every day and take completely for granted — the privilege of privacy.

You see, just because we are outside, without a roof, without shelter, it doesn’t mean we have no precious mementos, belongings, pictures, things, or lives. It also doesn’t mean we are inherently unclean, or messy, or dis-organized; as a matter of fact, people who survive outside are some of the hardest working, most organized people I know.

In the end, we are demanding that we as poor people, landless people, homeless people, be given the chance to our build own solutions to homelessness, communities like First we Came for the Homeless in Berkeley, Right2 Survive in Oregon, like Home-

A HARD RAIN'S A-GONNA FALL

Tj Johnston

Who would have thought talking about the weather could be so intense?

San Francisco officials and community members weren't just interested in small talk, though. The Board of Supervisors Public Safety Committee held a three hour-plus hearing on March 7 about the cold and wet weather policy for homeless people.

But while the hearing was about the bad weather protocols, it didn't take long for it to become a forum on the City's heavy-handed practice of sweeping homeless encampments — especially during the recent heavy rainstorms.

San Francisco instituted its extreme weather protocols in the 1980s at the onset of late 20th-century mass homelessness. But it wasn't until late January that Supervisor Matt Haney called for a hearing on the protocols. A collective of homeless advocates — including the Bay Area Landless People's Alliance, Poor Magazine and the San Francisco chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America — called out the City's laggardly response to what's now a four-decade crisis during a pre-hearing rally outside City Hall.

“That it took four months of heavy rains to schedule a hearing is bad enough,” the collective said in a statement. “But in fact, the City of San Francisco's first inclement weather protocol was established in October of 1982. The City isn't just four months late; it's 37 years late.”

This past February alone, San Francisco saw some rainfall 17 out of 28 days. According to USClimateData.com, the winter months average 10 or 11 rainy days per month.

The bad weather policy kicking in usually depends on temperature forecasts or the amount and/or duration of expected rainfall. When that happens, the emergency shelter system temporarily expands its capacity.

How many more beds become available? Between 25 and 75, and the beds are actually mats. Over 4,300 San Franciscans are unsheltered, according to the point-in-time homeless count in 2017, the latest year figures are available.

Also, a further shelter expansion at various pop-up sites not normally used as shelter is triggered once 70

of the extra 75 mats are filled while severe weather conditions last.

FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE

Haney requested a report back from five City agencies — including the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, Department of Public Works and the Police Department — and essentially asked them “how does that work?”

The homelessness department's thresholds for accessing shelter during cold or rainy weather was criticized. So, was the City's communication of when space becomes available.

Sam Lew, policy director of the Coalition on Homelessness, which publishes Street Sheet, told the panel of her problem when she recently contacted the 311 telephone system to aid a homeless person who was drenched.

“I myself called 311 during the shelter expansions, and 311 did not have the information on where to go for pop-up shelters,” she said. “The information is not accessibly available to a housed person, so it's even harder for our unhoused neighbors.”

Such information is apparently available by 311, social media and texts from AlertSF, according to the homelessness department. But the Coalition says that could be expanded.

Bolstering communications during inclement weather was one of the Coalition's several recommendations, particularly to neighborhood groups and all City agencies, including the Muni transit system and the public library (see sidebar). It also suggested a resetting the protocol trigger to 50 degrees or a 50 percent chance of rain, as well as funding shelter staff-hours to keep them open 24/7.

SWEPT AWAY

But notably resonant with the audience was the Coalition's call for legislating a ban on tent sweeps and property confiscations. Several people in the board chamber flashed yellow paper signs reading “stop the sweeps.”

Media outlets, including Street Sheet, have reported of destruction of tents and seizure of personal property, including items of sentimental

value, during the storms. Such stories were entered into the hearing's record — some from video interviews, others in the public comment period.

Cheryl Shanks, a formerly homeless woman who is now active with the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation and Hospitality House, recalled being at her lowest one wet day in 2017 when Public Works employees refused to let her keep her few remaining possessions.

“All I could carry was precious to me,” she told the panel. “It was rainy and I asked them to please give me time to go through my heirlooms. I was told ‘no.’ Only then, in my time of homelessness did I want to die and contemplate suicide.”

WHERE ARE THE SERVICES?

The police department has been pushing a narrative of facilitating homeless outreach as part of the inter-agency Healthy Streets Operation Center. Though the department claims partnering with staff at other city departments such as Homelessness and Public Works, cops have been the public face of its operations. Critics have blasted the center for not connecting street dwellers to adequate services. Instead, it has been issuing misdemeanor citations and confiscating their property — ostensibly for evidence, though there's no record of active prosecutions.

Lt. David Lazar, the center's commander, has previously defended the practices of his unit in public hearings. He pointed out that it has 15 dedicated beds in the low-threshold navigation centers available for seven days, and that ticketing is only a last resort under the center's policy. When Haney pressed him on the center's procedure, Lazar reiterated the policy under SFPD Bulletin 18-137.

“If there's no shelter available, our policy is that you cannot issue a citation and you cannot confiscate a tent as evidence,” he said. “You have to work to the best of your ability as an officer to connect that person with a navigation center or a shelter,”

But still, the price of admission to these weeklong placements apparently has been homeless people's survival gear. Homelessness department director Jeff Kositsky said that available storage space factors into navigation center placement, and they “do their best.” It was one of several times in the hearing that “stop lying” signs were flashed in the chamber.

STANDIN' IN THE RAIN

Videos with statements of people who had property taken away — and of sweeps in progress — refuted the

City's claims of following its own rules of posted prior notice and “bag and tag” policy. As his stuff was taken away by Public Works with a phalanx of police officers standing by, a Mission District street resident bemoaned his numerous confiscations and fruitless efforts at retrieving his work and survival gear.

“They expect me to stay out in the freezing cold and take my tarp away,” the unidentified man said. He added that he lost about \$60,000 worth of Snap-on tools, had seven tents “taken as evidence” and was only notified of the sweep one hour earlier.

“I've been down to the DPW yard so many times,” he said. “I've never gotten a thing back.”

A police officer in the video claimed that sufficient notice was given, despite the apparent absence of posted notices and refused to comment further.

Additional footage played in public comment, detailing other forms of abuse. Amber Fina told of how she was sprayed during an early morning powerwashing when she was camping outside the library. A woman who identified herself only as “Patricia” said that Public Works staff mocked her in her attempts to stop them from taking her medication away.

DISPOSSESSED

Since 2013, Chris Herring, a Ph. D. candidate in sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, has been following the City's approach to homelessness. In a Medium post published before the hearing, he said that offers of services preceding and during sweeps appear half-hearted.

In his research, Herring noted that the City rarely stores encampment dwellers' property, much less return it to its owners. Also, he said that helping hand from the City is backhanded.

“In this situation, the offer of shelter is not a genuine offer of services, but a weapon to dispossess the city's poorest who have already lost everything else,” he said.

Accounts from the Coalition and local media say that enforcement of the tent ban has been heavy especially during recent downpours. Yet, amid the sea of yellow signs urging officials to stop lying, Lt. Lazar was candid when Haney asked him if the bad weather deterred his unit from engaging in sweeps.

“We keep our policy consistent regardless of the weather,” he said. ■

SEVERE WEATHER PROTOCOL RECOMMENDATIONS

Coalition on Homelessness March 2019

Severe weather in San Francisco, which will occur more frequently due to climate change, be that poor air quality from fires, wind and rain storms or severe heat, has a disparate impact on homeless people forced to live outdoors. So far this year, San Francisco has faced six consecutive rain and wind storms, with high winds in three and flooding in all six, that left homeless people cold and wet, putting them at severe risk. Last November, fires engulfing California made San Francisco's air quality the worst in the world. The City's response to protecting our unhoused neighbors — over 4,500 which are unsheltered on any given night — from these hazardous conditions has been abysmal.

The City has a protocol in place that applies to wind, rain and cold, and a separate protocol for heat and poor air quality. Many of this year's storms did not meet the protocol; the Mayor made the executive decision to expand a very small number of shelter floor mats. However, the availability of these mats was poorly communicated. Meanwhile, SFPD and Department of Public Works confiscated hundreds of tents, tarps and survival gear, leaving homeless people alone and unsheltered.

This is a deliberate choice from the City to ignore the health and wellbeing of our City's homeless families, youth, and adults, exposing them to hours of dangerous pollutants that will have long-lasting health impacts or alternatively to cold, wind and rain that jeopardizes their very lives.

We implore the City and the Dept. of Homelessness to amend the emergency protocol to:

Lower and simplify the threshold for the protocol so that it is activated at 50 degrees or with a 50% chance of rain, based on the National Weather Service. Community members and service providers will be able to memorize it easily and it will qualify this year's storms. These lowered thresholds must account for the fact that unhoused children, seniors, and people with chronic illnesses are particularly vulnerable and defenseless to severe weather conditions.

When the protocol is activated, provide funding for emergency staff to keep all shelters open 24/7. When that is not possible, establish temporary emergency drop-in centers or ensure access in existing drop-in centers for the adults and families who have no access to daytime shelter and safety.

When the protocol is activated, al-

low clients to go directly to shelters and receive any available empty bed without a shelter bed reservation or going to a resource center.

Expand the number of winter shelter mats, which are currently open between December and April.

Expand shelter access in predetermined locations that are available on the first night of the emergency, just as would occur during an earthquake or any other natural disaster. These sites can include expanded beds in current shelters, plus recreation centers, drop-in centers, school gymnasiums, and churches. They should include the same proportions of shelter health as occur in traditional shelters, in terms of nursing hours and health workers. Shelters should be available in multiple neighborhoods and have mats for sleeping, as well as raised cots for people with disabilities. Shelters must accommodate pets, couples, as well as people's property or have a system in place for temporary storage.

In the case of poor air quality alerts, ensure all community based organizations and homeless people on the streets have enough masks to distribute three per day per person. Order a sufficient quantity ahead of time and have in storage to be distributed on the first day of disaster. Have a distribution plan in place that includes pick-up locations broadly advertised and available on social media year round, and activate those locations as soon as disaster occurs. Masks should also be readily available in children's sizes.

Pass legislation that bans homeless sweeps, property confiscation, and the confiscation of tents and improvised structures. As many shelters are inadequate placements for homeless people (and, particularly, the most vulnerable homeless people) and it is unlikely we will have space for 4,500 people, it is essential that homeless people can retain their survival gear.

As none of this is useful unless word gets out to homeless people, develop a strong communication plan once protocol is activated:

Action #1: Advertise on social media and website during activation and circulate protocol all year.

Action #2: Develop list serve with all city-funded, non city-funded community organizations, churches, civic organizations, and press. Send a clear and quick email that protocol has been activated and where to go for help.

SMASH T CELEBRA

I'M A SURVIVOR

Shyenene Brown

This is the second part of a series on the author's life after domestic violence.

How is it that you can claim to love a person while at the same time inflict physical harm on them? For the life of me, I can't understand that. But I can honestly say when that happened to me on September 4, 2018, it was a real eye-opener.

Everytime I go to sleep, I have recurring nightmares. Just imagine being beaten so badly, when you look in the mirror and you start to act like you're alright, though in reality you're not. Imagine your face being broken so you won't have to feel the pain. When you get the final word, when you can no longer see out of your right eye, that breaks you tremendously. And you try to sleep it off, but to no avail.

This is the pain I feel constantly when I wake up each morning. I ask myself, "Why me? Why did this happen to me?" But the positive thing through all this is that I'm still alive. Better yet, I'm a survivor.

I'm a strong individual. Since this incident, I've been through so much, and I haven't allowed anyone to bring me down, and I stayed around strong-willed individuals.

I'm also unique.

God rescued me from a terrible situation and planted my feet in a safe environment. Also, I'm never going to place myself in that same situation.

Also, I'm vivacious and independent. I'm doing grown woman shit for myself and going through the healing process for myself.

I'm victorious, earning this victory, slowly but surely. I will be an overcomer, and now I am a revived woman of God.

So, for all you beautiful young women out there. This message is for you. Love isn't supposed to hurt. Love is not being manipulated or using "love" against you. See, a real man will never put his hands on a female. He will love her, no matter what her flaws might be.

Since this whole episode, I've learned to love myself all over again, but it's OK because God has me right where he wants me. And I'm all right with that.

LOVE YOURSELF. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF. BE TRUE TO YOURSELF ■

"We are all beautiful, phenomenal and a gift from God." — Maya Angelou

*Strong, vivacious, overcomer
Unique, independent, revived,
Rescued, victorious*

Action #3: Make sure 311 is abreast of protocol and ensure people can reserve beds anytime through 311.

Action #4: Send Bulletin to SFPD, all city agencies, Muni drivers, libraries, and neighborhood groups.

Action #5: Announce shelter locations on bus shelter electronic boards that announce bus arrivals, and announce in underground Muni and BART stations.

Action #6: Send press release to media and encourage television news stations to run as banners on bottom of screens.

Action #7: Send out text alerts to every person on shelter reservation list who have phone numbers listed.

Action #8: Make sure that all com-

munication actions listed above are translated and conveyed in multiple languages to reflect the diverse language needs of our unhoused neighbors. ■



THE PATRIARCHY! HATE WOMEN

SURVIVING IN SAN FRANCISCO

Catherine Bocog

I just had to hand you these two tasers. Walking in SF with any type of armour has never been me. When I arrived back in San Francisco and got my certification as homeless on the 1st of January, 2019, I had one taser. Today I have acquired two. Four days ago it was disclosed to me that my domestic violator, who shoot himself, survived. For me, that confirmed that even with two tasers on the street and my three children behind me, I am not safe.

I'm a resident client at St. Anthony's winter shelter. I've been here before. I arrived back to San Francisco on December 18th, 2018 with the assistance of my subsidy provider, Hamilton Housing Solutions. They assisted me with packing and moving back from Sacramento, CA. I have never purposely resided in any other city other than San Francisco. I'm a 42 year old native.

I was born at Letterman Army Hospital in the Presidio, on February 8th, 1977, the year George Lucas launched the Empire, Star Wars. Today George Lucas has turned the hospital I was born in into a state-of-the-art digital arts facility, which played a big role in the Make A Wish foundation, Batkid episode. For that event, 200 volunteers were requested, and 7,000 from all over the world showed up. I had a lot to do with it.

I appreciate every housing and homeless provider in San Francisco, including the non-profits and those that do profit. I don't know how to say it but the particular shelter that harbors me today is not funded by the city, yet for protecting me and my family, on two specific occasions, they warrant great attention. Glorious attention. I've been telling a few of the staff lately that whatever path I'm walking on, I'm very aware that a journey of a

thousand steps begins with one. And when I found myself on the ground on two occasions they lifted me up.

I come from a 17 year relationship with the father of my three children, the last two years estranged as I make a safety plan, to protect myself and family before anyone else, including my mother and father.

I'll go back to the two Tasers that I walked in and handed you. It doesn't protect me from the weapon that the father of my children just shot himself with. What it does for me is it confirms that he has bad aim and that if I am his target, my children are not safe. No matter what doors try to protect me.

At this point in time to think of leaving San Francisco is killing me. The many faces that I share a roof with right now, if these are the faces of homelessness, if their kindness is the face of homelessness today, then I have to believe in something greater than myself.

My name is Catherine. Compass Connecting Point recieved me the day I made my last phone call on my children's father. They directed us to a shelter called First Friendship Baptist Church (Providence Foundation). What an unimaginable experience. Where I come from, before that day, I was raised with glory, honor, respect, and basic training was my discipline. Today I would really like to count on all those who employed me in this city, because what I know is that they make big differences. To know exactly where I was today, they

would be more than mind boggled. But what I feel is more than that, they would feel compelled to just stand behind me.

I come from every community in this city. By the grace of my grandfather who arrived in San Francisco in the 1970s by the Joint U.S. military Assistance Group from the Republic of the Philippines, At this point in time I'd like to ask my family, the blood I was born by, to pardon my audacity, for not signing any releases to talk about them today. I'd like the attention of my father immediately. What I know is that he led big military battleships out into open waters. What I know is I come from purple hearts. What I know is alive is my spirit. So at this point my spirit calls for my retired general uncle, whose twin brother resides in California. My uncle and his wife, my auntie, because with all due respect this is just the beginning. My home, the land my grandfather conquered, will not be taken from under me.

I'm a true gem to this city. I've inherited gifts as far back as 1898

and I'm ready to share them. And whatever happens after I share them, belongs to San Francisco. What it is is my voice and what comes with it. I've been educated and employed in San Francisco since I was born.

Whatever is happening for me today, I thank San Francisco.

My story that I will elaborate on will pull strings at every heart in this city. I've embarked on a dare. For every statement I'm going to state, to make a statement in my state, you will see me cry. It's about a golden gate, how I must tell the press I do. There is a charm in San Francisco. The '89 quake, 7 by 7 by 7, that's San Francisco. I am her, and I will tell you true. I march through the city. This city is about to get littly. You're even gonna hear that song played doo wah ditty. To talk about \$181.5 million dollars allocated, may the wind fall, I'm gonna get down to the nitty gritty. ■

To be continued...

WOMEN'S HER-STORY MONTH

Darnell Boyd

To The Women of Our Society,

As we celebrate Women's Her-story Month this March, let us reflect and pay homage to the greatness of women. Let us thank them for their contribution. Let us thank women for birthing us into this world.

Let us thank all the female doctors, lawyers, police officers, firefighters, nurses, pilots, astronauts, CEOs, CFOs, mayors, representatives, senators, case managers, social workers, teachers, mothers, sisters, daughters and (one day, soon) President of the United States.

We say "thank you, thank you, thank you" for everything you have done for us, our society and our country. Without you, we would be nothing.

Women's Her-story Month is a chance for them to tell their story, so we can learn from them and grow.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,
The Men of Our Society



COORDINATED ENTRY

Sam Lew, Policy Director

Hundreds of Homeless Families Excluded from Housing, Services by Homelessness Department

The rollout of San Francisco's homeless coordinated entry system has been one fraught with controversy and conflict.

The opposing teams? The City vs. front line service providers: social workers, outreach workers, and case managers who see that the system is not working.

The coordinated entry system is a federally mandated system. Every county in the United States has implemented one of their own over the past couple of years and each is unique, although they are to accomplish the same goal: to increase efficiency and efficacy. Instead of giving homeless people the runaround to access services and case management from nonprofits and city agencies across town, coordinated entry is supposed to be a one stop shop where one would be assessed based on a vulnerability index and subsequently prioritized for housing and services that they are qualified for through that assessment.

But what happens if you aren't even fully assessed once the Department of Homelessness deems that you are not homeless enough?

That's exactly what is happening to hundreds of San Francisco's homeless families.

In San Francisco, the definition of family homelessness — also recognized on the federal level through the federal McKinney-Vento act and on the statewide level — includes two key populations that are perhaps even more invisible than the already less visible homeless family population: families living doubled up (in an overcrowded living situation, on someone's couch, etc) and families who live in single room occupancy (SRO) hotels. In both situations, families are in inadequate shelter, with sometimes upwards of eight people living in one room. In both situations, the negative outcomes for children — educationally, psychologically and developmentally — are similar to those of children who live in shelters and on the streets. These families deserve to receive equitable access to the same services and housing as would any other homeless family.

According to the SRO Families United Collaborative, a coalition of community groups that organize families living in SROs across the city, there are over 700 families living in SROs, the majority of

them in Chinatown and many who have been living in these conditions for over a decade.

Ivy, a homeless mother living in a Chinatown SRO hotel says, "In my room, I have a twin-sized bed in there. There are four people, one son and two daughters. When we have to eat inside the room, we sit in the bed because we don't have any other space. We have to use something in the room for the kids to relieve themselves because the restrooms are just too busy and they can't wait so they do it in the room. This is what we face all the time. Our kids go to the restroom while we're eating and it stinks like hell and this is our life. I have been here for seven years living in the SRO. I always take opportunities to apply for affordable housing, but no luck. I have no way of finding housing. I hope that the Coordinated Entry system would take care of some of our families. We need an opportunity to get our housing."

The Department of Homelessness will have a bit more trouble excluding families with the passage of last year's Prop C. Proposition C, a local voter initiative passed last November which requires taxing corporations for services and housing for unhoused communities, specifically mandated that funds for homeless families were required to include those living doubled up and in SROs.

It's a dire problem that homeless advocates have been fighting since the creation of coordinated entry. The Homeless Emergency Service Providers Association, a coalition of over 27 of the City's homeless providers, including the Coalition on Homelessness, has raised this issue for the past couple of years, arguing that these homeless families are being systematically excluded. Even worse, there is no means of tracking how many of these families are turned away. Advocates are only asking that SRO and doubled up families be included in the system so that they can be eligible for services and housing.

Maria Alvarez, who lives with her family in an SRO in the Tenderloin, is a tragic reflection of the decades that homeless families live in these conditions and desperately want a way out: "I have been fighting for 20 years to find housing and my children are already grown and I was not able to make that possible for them. What's even more painful is my daughter is already married and has three children of her own and they live in an SRO." ■

FILM REVIEW: EMILIO ESTEVEZ'S THE PUBLIC

Olivia Glowacki and Kelley Cutler

It is hard to believe a Hollywood elite got a movie about homelessness right. Not only that, he managed to create a realistic movie about homelessness and libraries that is spot on AND hilarious!

The line of people armed with umbrellas waiting to enter Glide Memorial Church stretched beyond Ellis Street and around the corner down Taylor last Sunday. This crowd of hundreds of folks who waited in the rain were not there for a church service or baptism, but for a free screening of Emilio Estevez' new film, "The Public." This new movie about homelessness in Cincinnati shows how the local library responds to a cold spell which takes the lives of a handful of folks on the street. With topics of homelessness, death, substance abuse, and mental health, you would think the film was a Hollywood drama sensationalizing the homeless crisis, but Estevez handled the narrative with dignity and in a way which managed to have the whole congregation in laughter. After the film, Estevez joined a panel of community activists including our own Human Rights Organizer Kelley Cutler, library social worker Leah Esguerra, and homeless disabled firefighter, Couper Orana.

Without spoiling the movie, the homeless folk in Cincinnati, faced with no shelter beds in the winter, decide to take over and occupy the local library. What ensues is a strategic battle between the media, law enforcement, and homeless folk and allies in the library.

"The screening of The Public here in San Francisco was a hit!" Kelley Cutler, human rights organizer commented. "He captured the reality of the lack of resources for people forced to live on the street and the importance of the new role libraries play in our times. But what surprised me most was that this movie captured the fact that the government's response to a housing and health crisis is regularly law enforcement. That's not Hollywood dramatics, it's reality! He was somehow able to capture this reality, while at the same time making it hilarious!"

Although the fictional film took place in the Midwest and was produced over a year ago, the similarities to the current homeless crisis in San Francisco are striking. This March has reported the highest number yet on the shelter waitlist of over 1,400 single adults wait-

ing to get into a 90 day bed, and most of these folks have been waiting for weeks or months to make it to the top of the list. While they continue to wait, the cold doesn't stop. The rain doesn't let up. February alone saw 17 rainy day of the 28 in the month and the city's response was a mere additional 50 mats on the floor at MSC South. To make matters worse, when folks are waiting for hours in line for these mats, they're not allowed to sit or lie down- it's literally against the law. Their mere existence is against the law.

Three days before the screening of this movie, San Francisco Supervisors at the Public Safety & Neighborhood Services Committee heard presentations from the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, the Department of Emergency Management, Department of Public Works, and the Healthy Streets Operation Center about how they handle homelessness in extreme weather. Each department pointed fingers at one another when the time came to answer to the supervisors about vacant mats, shelter beds, sweeps, confiscation of property, and citing homeless people with 647e's for illegal lodging. The treatment of homeless people year round, not just in inclement weather, is similar to how the movie portrayed.

During the cold, winter months, homeless folk across our country, not just in Cincinnati or San Francisco, are dying due to lack of resources. One scene in the movie depicts a librarian ally who informs his supervisor about the library take over and these four simple lines show the urgency and simplicity of the crisis:

Supervisor: What's going on? Nobody is leaving.

Librarian: The patrons are staging an action.

Supervisor: What are they protesting?

Librarian: Freezing to death.

While we don't have sub-zero temperatures in the bay, homeless folk die on the streets from the cold temperatures, persistent rain, biting wind, and exposure to the elements. The chronic illness homeless people face only exacerbates

continued on page 7...

SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

<div>MAR 21</div> <div>5TH YEAR ALEX NIETO ANGELVERSARY</div> <div>WHERE: BERNAL HEIGHTS PARK @6-9PM</div> <div>We will meet at the makeshift memorial site we have had for the past five years on the north side of the hill and share food, music, poetry, a lowrider bike show, y mas; then together we will walk over to the actual memorial site, where we will all share a moment of silence at 7:18 p.m., the moment that Alex Nieto was killed. From there we will hear some speeches from the family and community and update you all about the very important actions you can take in these final stages of the memorial installation.</div>	<div>MAR 21</div> <div>FREE SCHOOL: HOUSING POLICY 101</div> <div>WHERE: HOSPITALITY HOUSE, 290 TURK STREET @10AM-12PM</div> <div>This will be a basic course on housing policy covering the different types of housing, the preservation and building debate, area median income, and below market rents and affordable housing and what this all means!</div> <div>ACCESS: ADA accessible space. Bag lunches will be provided. Classes will be in English with Spanish translation.</div>	<div>MAR 22</div> <div>BENEFIT FOR THE ALENA MUSEUM</div> <div>W/ THE WYATT ACT, JUDO NO, AND WAYFAIRY</div> <div>WHERE: THE STARRY PLOUGH @8PM</div> <div>The residents and artists who have created this collective have fought hard to keep the doors open, but last year their landlord, Lynne Glassman, refused to continue their lease agreement. Now their lease is almost up. We are doing a benefit to help them find a new location and to keep the Alena Museum alive. Let's dance for a great cause!</div> <div>ACCESS: This space is 21+ and is wheelchair accessible. Tickets start at \$10</div>	<div>MAR 27</div> <div>AMERICA IN TRANSITION- SPECIAL SCREENING FOR TDOV 2019</div> <div>WHERE: NEW PEOPLE, 1746 POST ST @6-9:30PM</div> <div>Trans Thrive is proud to present a special screening of "America in Transition" (AIT) is a documentary series and community engagement campaign that explores community, family, and social issues for trans people of color across the United States.</div> <div>ACCESS: Free Event- Tickets thru Eventbrite</div>
<div>MAR 30</div> <div>RECLAIM OUR CITY COMMUNITY ART AND CULTURAL FESTIVAL</div> <div>WHERE: GET TICKETS ONLINE AT EVENTBRITE TO FIND ADDRES</div> <div>The forces of gentrification are attempting to evict the Alena Museum from their home base warehouse where hundreds of thousands of dollars of personal money, labor, time, and energy have been invested over the last 5+ years. The time to come together as citizens, creatives, organizations, and more in order to co-create a culturally rich, diverse, and inclusive Oakland. Alena Museum is partnering with Alliance Den in hosting Reclaim Our City Community Art and Cultural Festival.</div>	<div>APRIL 4</div> <div>FREE SCHOOL: ORGANIZING & OUTREACH</div> <div>WHERE: HOSPITALITY HOUSE, 290 TURK STREET @10AM-12PM</div> <div>This course covers the Coalition organizing methodology, from how to gather input from constituents through to recruiting volunteers and the difference between transactional and transformative organizing. Our unique bottom up organizing technique has brought numerous successes for homeless people.</div> <div>ACCESS: ADA accessible space. Bag lunches will be provided. Classes will be in English with Spanish translation.</div>	<div>APRIL 9</div> <div>FREE SCHOOL: DE-ESCALATION</div> <div>WHERE: HOSPITALITY HOUSE, 290 TURK STREET @2-4PM</div> <div>Learn the techniques of defusing explosive situations. Homeless people are traumatized constantly and under stress due to having no place to live. In this class we will learn hands on through role playing how to keep everyone safe and welcome in our spaces.</div> <div>ACCESS: ADA accessible space. Bag lunches will be provided. Classes will be in English with Spanish translation.</div>	<div>DEADLINE TO SUBMIT CONTENT FOR OUR APRIL FOOLS DAY COMIC ISSUE IS MARCH 27th</div> <div>* comics *funny articles*jokes*art*</div> <div>submit to streetsheetsf@gmail.com</div>

THE PUBLIC FILM SUPRISES AUDIENCES

continued from page 6...

the health issues and contribute to lethal conditions.

It's difficult to focus on the positive amid all the barriers and obstacles facing the homeless, especially when these barriers are perpetuated by the very government officials who are tasked with removing them. Where law enforcement and politicians failed in the movie "The Public," it was the librarians and regular citizens who responded effectively in support of the homeless. We see similar failures by our own city government and law enforcement, but at Glide church, we saw a diverse crowd of supporters including District 6 Supervisor, Matt Haney, and the nation's first Library Social Worker, Leah Esguerra, who works at the San Francisco Public Library. Esguerra describes her work, "I sit down with the person. That's when being a clinical social worker comes in. I do the full clinical assessment, and then I make a presentation to my colleagues at the SF Homeless Outreach Team." Esguerra sees over 5,000 library goers everyday and around 15% of them are homeless. Since 2009 when Esguerra started, the library social worker model has taken off

and has been implemented sporadically throughout the country.

"That movie was right on and it was very, very real. There was a lot of overlap from the movie to what happens here. The cops push us to different parts of the city, they degrade us," formerly homeless woman Kotton Kandie said. "This film makes me want to occupy City Hall and get on Mayor London Breed's case. I think the homeless should take over this library until something is done!"

Kotton Kandie's sentiment is shared by many homeless folks in San Francisco who have been churned in and out of the shelter system from being on the streets, to shelters, to mats on the floor, and back to the streets again.

"We are all if not already just one or a few moments/ circumstances away from becoming homeless, and it's not just here, this country is fucked and we need to realize that," SF resident Mary Howe stated. "We need to

start a new dialogue, this is about US not THEM, we are all human beings and we should be treating each other as such. We cannot police ourselves out of poverty it just at best, makes people's lives worse and at worst, leaves us dead."

It's clear "The Public" was well received by community members of all walks of life and stayed true to the realities of homelessness. During the panel,

Estevez said he put on a hoodie and walked around the streets and libraries talking to people, gathering their stories, and synthesizing them to create "The Public."

In the words of former San Francisco Homeless Czar, Bevan Dufty "every government official should see this film."

For those of you who were not lucky enough to have a free screening with the director himself, "The Public" is set to release April 5, 2019.



BLACK ARTISTS FIGHTING EVICTION FROM WEST OAKLAND HOME

alenamuseum.com

On March 31st the Alena Museum is slated to close its doors on Magnolia Street forever, after serving as a creative home for African Diaspora artists working to counteract gentrification in Oakland for the last five years. The residents and artists who have created this collective have fought hard to keep the doors open, but last year their landlord, Lynne Glassman, refused to continue their lease agreement. Now their lease is almost up.

On March 30th, their last day in the space, the Alena Collective is hosting a day-long celebration of cultural identity, with live music, workshops, and creative resistance live art making.

From the outside the one story brick building could be mistaken for any of the other warehouses in the flats of West Oakland. But just a step beyond its heavy doors is another world entirely. The walls are hung with vibrant and political artwork, and a wooden platform rises in the corner, often the stage for local musicians, poets, and

thespians.

Seven Asefaha, founder of the Alena Museum, has built his home in the scaffolds of the Magnolia Street warehouse. He says he is not ready to abandon his home, or to give up on the mission of the museum, which is provide a critical safe space for African Diaspora artists to express their cultural identity in the face of gentrification.

The Alena Collective is by no means an exception; over a dozen warehouses across Oakland have been shut down in the aftermath of the Ghostship fire, sharpening the tremendous grief felt by artist communities. But this is not the only art warehouse on the block; in fact the Glassman's lease several other warehouse spaces to artists right next door. But the majority white neighbors are not currently facing displacement.

What is most devastating for

the Alena collective is the racism underlying their displacement. Black people are being driven out of Oakland by skyrocketing rents, racism, and evictions. The collective plans to resist the eviction and show that the community won't stand for any more displacement of Black people.

There will be a benefit show on March 22nd at the Starry Plough in Berkeley. Tickets start at \$10. On March 30th the Alena Museum will host an all day cultural festival. See the Street Sheet calendar for more details.

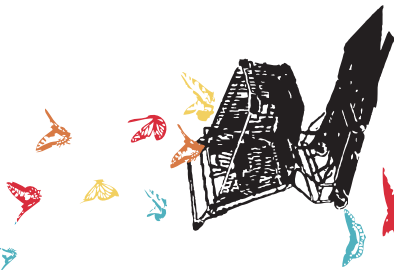
photo from Alena Museum Facebook archives



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Deadline is March 20th!