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STREET SHEET

SAN FRANCISCO CANNOT WAIT



photo by Leslie Dreyer, Stolen Belonging Artist/Organizer

TJ Johnston

SAN FRANCISCO -- The homeless property yard at the San Francisco Department of Public Works saw an unusually busy Saturday afternoon on June 22, more activity than the workers anticipated.

Eleven unhoused City residents — joined by about 100 supporters of unhoused people — attempted to reclaim property that Public Works crews seized during sweeps of outdoor encampments earlier this year to where it was supposedly stored.

Alton Perdew lost four backpacks containing such personal possessions as phones, electronic items and medication.

Heather Lee wanted back her ID, photos of her children and recent birthday presents

inside a Pelican case and a big green wagon that Public Works took away, but the 90-day deadline to retrieve this property lapsed.

And Todd Bryant filled out three separate forms to reclaim items including bicycles and Husky bags filled with \$600 worth of tools, as well as historically significant letters from his ancestors.

But like many other outdoor-dwelling residents before them who attempted to recover their stuff, they were left with nothing. Fortunately, those who showed up that day were provided with 40 care packages containing tents, sleeping bags, tarps and other survival items.

This was an example of how the department's failure to restore impounded property violates its own "bag and tag" policy, homeless advocates say. More often

than not, they add, it's thrown away as trash or, if Public Works staff deems it valuable, sold on the street.

SHELTER WAITLIST UPDATE:

As of July 1st there are 1,099 people on the waitlist for shelter in SF.

continued on page 4...

BOOK REVIEW: 'Eastern Span' by Rick Paulas

Alastair Boone, reprint from Street Spirit

Street Sheet vendors will be distributing "Eastern Span" for a suggested donation of \$15 starting in July. Pick up a copy of this locally based novel from your vendor!

I could describe Eastern Span in two ways. I could tell you that it is a noir novel set in 2013-14 Oakland about a gig-economy sleuth named Pug, on a meandering hunt to find a friend who has mysteriously disappeared. Along the way, he stumbles upon a housing conspiracy wrought by the kind of evil developers that we all suspect exist, but have never actually seen in the light of day.

I could also tell you that it is a portrait of Oakland, frozen in time. Pug drinks at the city's classic dives, like Ruby Room and The Avenue. He parties at underground house shows in West Oakland. He visits at long-standing homeless encampments, such as Here/There. And he watches as houses are knocked to the ground, scaffolding is erected, and neighborhoods are devastated by gentrification. Readers who are familiar with Oakland can breathe in a scene that feels like home. Readers who are not can get a taste of the city through the author's vivid descriptions of classic Oakland sights, such as "the massive white harbor cranes loom[ing] in the background like pallbearers waiting for their cue."

Both descriptions would be true.

Paulas was born in Oak Forest, Illinois—a suburb near Chicago. He lived in Oakland for six years before moving to New York City in June. While living in Oakland he worked as a freelance journalist who wrote about the city around him. Often, he notes, this led him to stories about the housing crisis. "In my opinion, that's really THE story of the Bay right now," he told Street Spirit. Most recently, he published a story about the history of the Albany Bulb in Curbed, and an in-depth profile of East Bay lawyer Osha Neumann in the San Francisco Chronicle.

Eastern Span is Paulas' debut novel. It is being distributed in the Bay Area by the people who sell Street Spirit in the East Bay, and those who sell Street Sheet in San Francisco. Why? We spoke to Paulas to find out. (Our conversation has been edited and condensed.)

Alastair Boone: What inspired you to write Eastern Span?

Rick Paulas: Mainly, two big events happened at the end of 2016: Trump and the Ghost Ship fire. They seem like distinctly separate things, and largely are, but to me they were entwined within some of

the same systems—Trump's career as a blowhard real estate mogul who spent his career seeking ways to raise property values, often by kicking out poor minorities; the lack of artistic, "free" spaces left in the Bay due to landlords raising their property values by converting to lofts left Ghost Ship as one of the few gathering places left.

Beyond those, I've been reporting on homeless evictions—for publications, or just for Twitter sometimes—and simply living in the ether or friends having to move out of town because they can't afford it. Once I figured out I wanted to write about the effects of the commodification of property, I wanted to trick people into reading it, hence, the noir plot.

AB: Given the prevalence of encampments in your novel, the word "homeless" does not appear very often. Is there a reason for this?

RP: I wanted to present people as people, not as part of a category, which inherently comes with preconceptions of how they got that designation. I suppose that's why I stayed away from the term for the most part.

AB: I read on Twitter that having Eastern Span distributed by street vendors has been a dream of yours since before you finished writing the novel. Why?

RP: Whenever I write about homeless folks or encampments, I always have a squishy bit of guilt, in that I'm literally making money off of them—just freelance rates, but still—while they're still sleeping outside. Maybe it's Catholic guilt. Anyway, this was just a way I could pay some back a little.

That said, I wouldn't say this is entirely altruistic. I want people I don't know to read this, and that means distribution that reaches behind my social sphere. Others use the publishing industry, but working hard to convince people they can make a buck off of you isn't super compelling to me for this project. With those two goals, this just felt logical.

Oh, also: As far as I'm concerned there is no better source of news than street papers. No economic incentive by advertisers to deal with, a completely underrepresented group of writers and journalists, and a perspective you can't get anywhere else. What else is good writing or journalism supposed to be? ■

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

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.

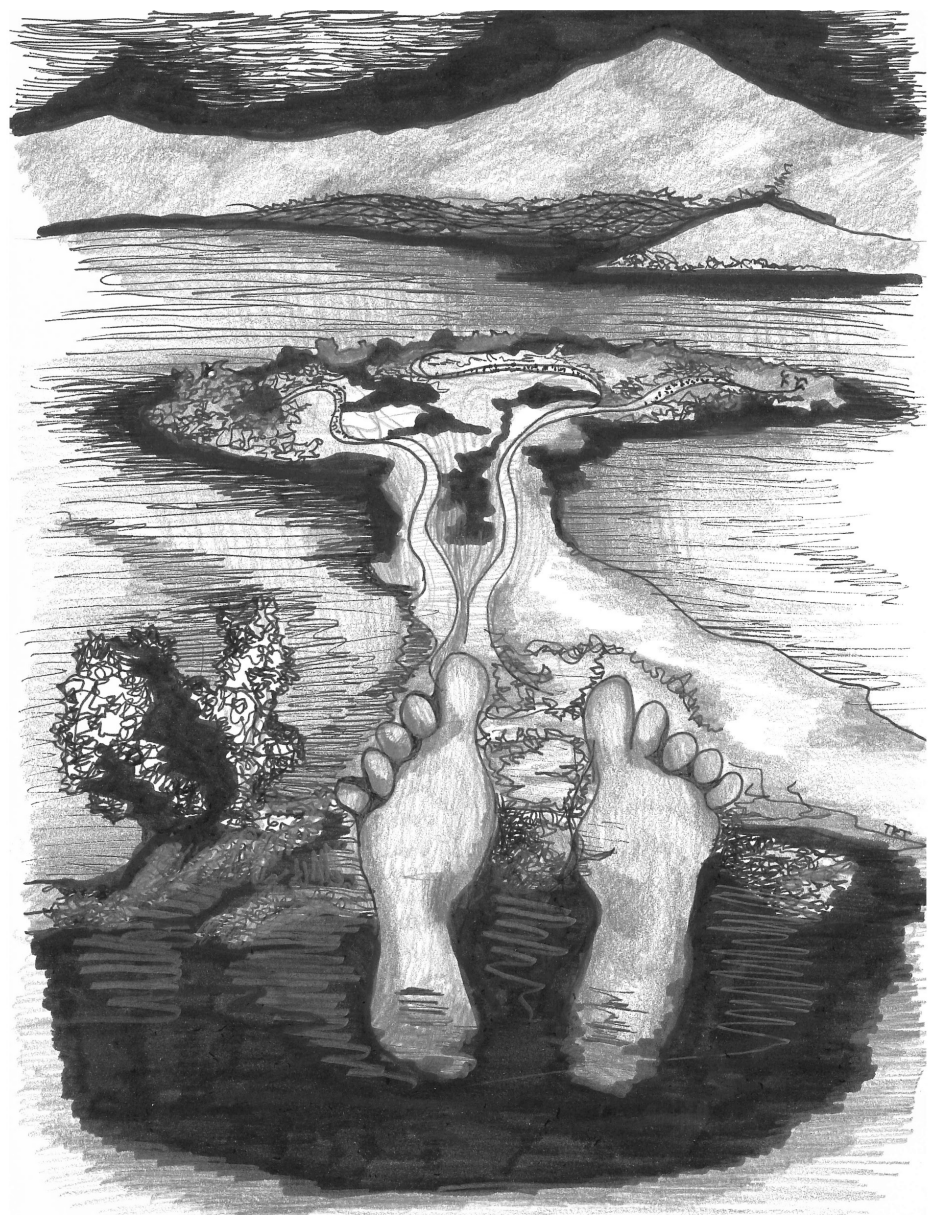
The Human Rights Workgroup has been doing some serious heavy lifting on these issues: conducting direct research, outreach to people on the streets, running multiple campaigns, developing policy, staging direct actions, capturing media attention, and so much more. All those down for the cause are welcome 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 accommodate people who cannot make it up the stairs. For access needs contact development@cohsf.org

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

AT 468 TURK STREET

SUBMIT YOUR WRITING
STREET SHEET publishes news and perspective stories about poverty and homelessness. We prioritize submissions from currently or formerly homeless writers but gratefully accept all submissions. Send submissions to qwatts@cohsf.org



Artwork from the book by artist Travis Tarr, who also drew the cover for Eastern Span

TIMELINE OF TRANS STRUGGLE 2019

Percy Langston

Here's a brief overview of some of the milestones (and setbacks) in transgender rights in 2019, and why they matter.

JANUARY 1 & FEBRUARY 1, 2019 NEW YORK CITY AND NEW JERSEY OFFER GENDER-NEUTRAL BIRTH CERTIFICATES

WHAT IT IS:
Laws enabling residents to amend their birth certificates with a gender-neutral designation took effect in New York City on January 1 and the state of New Jersey on February 1.

The new designation, which features an “X” in the place of an “M” or “F,” was designed to be inclusive to trans and gender nonconforming residents and to support the right of citizens to have their gender identity affirmed by their birth certificate, according to New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio.

The New Jersey law, titled the “Babs Siperstein Law,” was named after New Jersey transgender activist Barbra “Babs” Siperstein. New Jersey has become the fourth state to enact such a policy, following California, Oregon, and Washington.

WHY IT MATTERS:
There are few legal avenues for recognition of nonbinary gender identity, and this restriction of options means that the majority of nonbinary people are forced to adopt a legal designation that is not congruent with their gender (or lack thereof). This can create any number of uncomfortable and distressing situations in everyday life, to say nothing of the discomfort inherent in being legally designated as something one is not. Adding new designations that allow increased inclusivity and recognition for nonbinary people is, barring the total abolition of gender markers, the easiest way to ensure that citizens have access to legal documentation that is reflective of their identity.

APRIL 12, 2019 TRANSGENDER MILITARY BAN TAKES EFFECT

WHAT IT IS:
A long-contested ban on transgender service members in the military, announced by President Trump on Twitter in 2017, took effect. Trump’s tweets launched an acrimonious legal battle, and enforcement of the ban was blocked for almost two years by a string of lawsuits. The final injunction was lifted by a federal judge on March 7, and an edited version of the ban was promptly approved by the Department of Defense on March 12.

The resulting order states that no one diagnosed with gender dysphoria after the ban takes effect will be able to serve while medi-

cally transitioning, and requires that, should transgender service members continue to serve, they must “choose” to adhere to their sex assigned at birth.

WHY IT MATTERS:
Regardless of one’s personal feelings about the armed forces, the exclusion of marginalized groups from equal participation in civil society is alienating and reinforces already-existing stigmas.

The legacy of harmful “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy – which ruled the military’s attitude towards LGBT service members until 2010 – looms large over current discussion on the inclusion or non-inclusion of transgender citizens in military service. As many as 15,000 service members are transgender. They deserve an equal chance to serve because transgender people deserve an equal chance to live, and indeed to die, as is afforded to our cisgender counterparts.

The Trump administration’s decision to exclude transgender people from military service furthermore claims to be based on cost (although Trump’s proposed \$200,000 to \$250,000 per-person figure is a staggering overestimate), with the Department of Defense “burdened” by expenses related to gender-affirming care. Trans people are not “burdens,” and money spent on necessary medical treatment is never wasted. Trump’s policy, and the incendiary rhetoric behind it, constitutes little more than an attack on transgender existence.

MAY 17, 2019 “EQUALITY ACT” PASSES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WHAT IT IS:
H.R. 5, cited as the “Equality Act,” seeks to amend existing civil rights legislation to include protections on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act, which passed the House in a 236-173 vote (including 8 Republican supporters), will prohibit discrimination against LGBT people in areas of “public accommodations and facilities, education, federal funding, employment, housing, credit, and the jury system”.

Despite its claims to support equality, the Trump administration has expressed opposition to the bill, citing “poison pills” found in Equality Act’s current form.

WHY IT MATTERS:
Anti-LGBT discrimination is far from a vestige of the past; a 2017 Harvard poll suggested that more than half of LGBT Americans have experienced some form of harassment or discrimination related to their sexual orientation or gender identity. The effects on trans people are even more

pronounced, and trans people are more likely to experience serious discrimination to the tune of physical or sexual assault, eviction or exclusion from housing, or denial of medical services.

Although twenty states and Washington, D.C. offer anti-discrimination protections to LGBT people, no comprehensive legislation exists on a federal level. The Equality Act offers a life raft to groups threatened by discrimination and codifies the treatment of LGBT people as a protected class.

MAY 22, 2019 TRUMP ADMINISTRATION PROPOSES ROLLBACK OF LGBT ANTI-DISCRIMINATION PROTECTIONS IN HOMELESS SHELTERS

What it is:
The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) proposed a rule allowing federally-funded shelters to create policy “considering an individual’s sex” when determining their eligibility for accommodation.

This is in stark contrast to HUD’s 2016 Equal Access Rule, which ensures that housing programs are “open to all eligible individuals and families regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.” Despite the insistence of HUD Secretary Ben Carson that he is “not currently anticipating changing” the Equal Access Rule, the May 22 proposal guts many of the protections for homeless transgender people.

Under the proposed rule, single-sex and sex-segregated shelters can legally refuse housing to transgender people on the basis of “privacy, safety, practical concerns, [and] religious beliefs.”

WHY IT MATTERS:
According to the US Transgender Survey, approximately one in three transgender people have been homeless in their lifetime. 70% of those surveyed who accessed a homeless shelter in the previous year experienced assault or harassment or were kicked out due to their gender identity. UCLA’s Williams Institute suggests that the number of homeless youth who identify as LGBT is as high as 40%.

These figures speak for themselves in illustrating a population that is incredibly and disproportionately threatened by housing insecurity. Transgender people are already at risk, even under the protection of the Equal Access Rule, and HUD intends to allow shelters to put them back on the streets. There is no need to mince words: this policy will have a body count.

MAY 24, 2019 TRUMP ADMINISTRATION PROPOSES REMOVAL OF GENDER IDENTITY PROTECTIONS IN THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

WHAT IT IS:
Continuing the administration’s rollback of existing legal protections, proposed regulation by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) seeks to legalize discrimination against transgender patients seeking health care.

The DHHS maintains the rule will “clarify the scope” of the anti-discrimination protections in Affordable Care Act (ACA). The Obama-era legislation is explicit in its stance that discrimination against transgender people falls under discrimination “on the basis of sex”; the Trump-era DHHS, however, hopes to amend the ACA’s policy on anti-trans discrimination by removing this language.

If the rule is finalized, insurers and medical providers will be able to legally deny necessary care to transgender patients for reasons based solely on their gender identity.

WHY IT MATTERS:
Health care is a human right, and it is critical that we protect that right for transgender people as well. The proposed rule does not merely affect procedures specific to transgender people, and will in fact impose a greater threat of discrimination upon a population which already faces significant barriers to care.

The rollback will incur the additional consequence of signaling to insurance providers that it is not necessary to cover gender-affirming medical procedures, and will be costly to transgender people trying to obtain coverage for necessary procedures that do not typically align with their legal sex (e.g. a transgender man obtaining OB/GYN care).

MAY 25, 2019 WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION REMOVES “GENDER IDENTITY DISORDER” FROM ITS LIST OF MENTAL DISORDERS

WHAT IT IS:
On May 25, the World Health Organization (WHO) released a revised version of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) which removes “gender identity disorder” as a mental disorder. In many places, a diagnosis of gender identity disorder is still required in order to obtain legal recognition of one’s gender identity. This standard, which relies inherently on the notion that trans identity is a form of mental illness, is rendered obsolete by the revision.

WHY IT MATTERS:
The WHO is the health agency of the United Nations. As such, the ICD is used internationally to diagnose patients, and the removal of gender identity disorder is a watershed moment for the rights and dignity of transgender people around the world. The revised ICD opens the door for widespread reform and abolition of policies that require an official “gender identity disorder” diagnosis and signals that antiquated notions of trans identity as a sign of mental instability will no longer be tolerated by the medical establishment. ■

BELONGING(S) STOLEN IN SAN FRANCISCO SWEEPS

TJ Johnston

Housing activist and artist Leslie

continued from front page...

Dreyer organized the project to shine a light on a reality of living on the street — San Francisco’s recurring effort by multiple City agencies to disperse unsheltered people out of public view and dispose of the things they carry. Dreyer said these decisions come from high on the chain of command and must stop.

“The City of San Francisco is targeting houseless residents, stealing their survival gear, all of their belongings and, consequently, their ability to belong in the city,” she said. “These orders come from the top down, and lead decision makers need to hear our collective voices demanding they stop the sweeps, which are driving folks further into poverty. It’s time they focus on preventing homelessness by stopping evictions and investing in services and housing, not harassment!”

HOW THE PROJECT BEGAN

As early as 2016, the Coalition on Homelessness, which publishes Street Sheet, started scrutinizing Public Works’ seizure practices. Volunteer Scott Nelson requested the agency for records related to “bag and tags” conducted during sweeps when San Francisco hosted Super Bowl 50. At the same time city workers cleared hundreds of tents in a two-month period, they recorded only 19 “bag and tag” forms.

Two years later, in December 2018,

Dreyer recruited a team of six currently and formerly unhoused people at the Coalition on Homelessness — including this writer — to interview some 40 sweeps survivors on video. What they documented were cases of theft: tents, sleeping bags, suitcases, backpacks, bicycles, family bibles, photos of loved ones, relatives’ cremated remains, all stolen.

As part of the double meaning behind the name “Stolen Belonging” suggests, the owners’ sense of inclusion in San Francisco was also robbed.

In addition to shooting over 900 minutes of footage, the team pored through dozens of Public Works property forms that noted what was taken, where and when. Each production team member was interviewed about the impact the project had on them. At the June 22 action, it also displayed its artistic side as several posters resembling department tags were displayed listing the owners’ names and their lost goods.

The project also released several videos, which can be viewed on its website stolenbelonging.org. One video followed unhoused resident Heather Lee through the Public Works facility as she was thwarted in her attempt to retrieve her wagon and Pelican case. She and production team member Couper Orona made it as far as the office before staff ordered them to wait outside the gate. A worker who promised to search for Lee’s stuff never returned, leaving Lee out in the rain for one hour.

“This is what they’ve been doing to everyone I’ve talked to, making them wait,” she said. “I don’t believe they have my possessions at all.”

THE CITY AS A THIEF

Of all the equipment taken in the sweeps, laborer Todd Bryant’s assortment was arguably the most eclectic, one which he said he can’t fully enumerate.

“I made a list of all the things they’ve taken that I could remember, but of course DPW took that, too,” he said.

As one video excerpt shows, Bryant watched helplessly while Public Works trashed his tools and other belongings as a row of police officers stood guard. In another interview months later, Bryant said he also lost a bass guitar, several bicycles and collections of coins and football cards. In addition, workers tossed out several letters dating from the 1800s by his great, great grandfather, Col. Walker McClure, who helped build the Old Lincoln Highway. But the item most likely to have sentimental value to Bryant was an iPad with his only videos of his late mother.

Oscar Wesley McKinney was also robbed of his family history. A brown, leatherbound bible that was passed through five generations also included his family tree. But according to McKinney, the City isn’t just satisfied with taking family heirlooms; it wants to violate his personal

space, too.

“It’s our privacy, that’s what the City wants to take away from us,” he said. “People who live along a doorway or a sidewalk always cover their heads up with their sleeping bag. A lot of people say it’s light they do it for, other people say heat, but it’s actually discretion. It’s the one time of the day the world won’t look at you, and you’re not looking at the world. It might be a blanket over your head, it’s still your occupied space. I prefer a tent.”

PUBLIC RECORDS

Another public records request made this year yielded a sample of “bag and tag” orders from 2016 to 2019. The City has been logging more forms each year, from 60 in 2016 to 400 last year. Yet, the paperwork still reveals scant detail. The majority of the items were listed as “bags” without specifying their contents. The forms also show that backpacks, suitcases and bicycles were frequently plucked in the sweeps were frequently.

Although no mention of family bibles, relatives’ ashes or valuables were filed, the words “stolen from the yard” were written on 30 of these forms, probably an attempt to explain away the absence of belongings. Public Works director Mohammed Nuru denied to the media that any thefts from the yard was an inside job.

“It’s mostly street people” who break into the yard, he told the San Francisco Examiner.

But a former Public Works employee’s account refutes Nuru’s explanation. Wishing to remain anonymous, the ex-worker added that no one ever spelled out the policy governing homeless people’s property during his tenure. Instead, he was instructed to throw stuff onto the truck.

“I was never trained to see the policy and the rules and all that. They never told me to do none of that,” said the informant. “I just followed the boss’s commands what to do, so that was about it.

He added that workers would sift through the seized items at the yard, disposing of tents and taking more valuable items, such as electronics, to sell at neighborhood flea markets.

“They just go to the big dumpster and start unloading it, and whatever looks good to them, they go sell it on

Meghan “Roadkill” Johnson and Sophia Thibodeaux lead the crowd in chants outside of DPW. Photo by Leslie Dreyer, Stolen Belonging Artist/Organizer.



the weekend and try to make money off of it,” he said.

“HOW DARE YOU?”

Such stories of misconduct by City workers toward unsheltered people outrage Couper Orona, a diasbled firefighter who has been unhoused for 13 years. In the Stolen Belonging project, she acted as a liaison to street dwellers who were interviewed. Her words to the City sound like a contemporary street version of Émile Zola’s famous “J’accuse” open letter.

“City of San Francisco, what you’re doing is some fuckeducked-up shit,” she said. “You’re treating people like they’re nothing. Like, how dare you? What would your mama think about your behavior and acting like people don’t matter? Where does your heart go?”

The theft of makeshift shelter, medications and IDs wreacks enough havoc in unsheltered people’s lives, but Meghan “Roadkill” Johnson, a production team member, was reminded of how precious a keepsake could be to one’s well being. Until she found housing earlier this year, she spent eight years on the streets and in shelters. As Johnson collected stories for the project, memories of those years flooded.

“There’s been times people have been telling their stories, and I just wanted to cry because I felt their pain, you know? It was resurfacing again,” she said. “Something people were talking about our experiences where their shit was stolen by DPW and SFPD, from like years ago. And that pain is still there.”

Team member Sophia Thibodeaux was also impacted by the project experience. Currently unhoused with two children, she was affected by the tales she heard.

“Even though they’re knocked down, these people still have strength to tell their stories and what happened,” she said. “Even though they don’t see it, they’re strong people. They inspire me by just telling their stories.” ■

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ABOUT STOLEN BELONGINGS/
PERSONAL DISCLOSURE

From December 2018 to June 2019, the author of this article participated in Stolen Belonging, a multifaceted arts organizing project which documents the belongings taken from homeless residents during the sweeps, revealing the ways in which such thefts steal a person’s ability to belong to their community and the city. The project’s primary demand is to STOP THE SWEEPS. On May 22, 2019, Stolen Belonging started releasing videos on its website stolenbelonging.org, which the project urges people to visit for more information and how to take action.

The project was made possible through a grant from the San Francisco Arts Commission.



Sam Lew, Policy Director at Coalition on Homelessness

For the past seven months, coalitions have been engaging in budget justice work to make the City’s \$12.2 billion dollar budget one that is for the people, by the people. These coalitions — the Budget Justice Coalition, the Our City Our Home Coalition, and the Homeless Emergency Service Providers Association — fought for funding for the City’s most marginalized populations, including seniors and people with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, and working class youth and families.

Specific to funding towards homelessness, \$24.5M were redistributed towards ending homelessness due to our collective efforts. This includes 473 new housing units or subsidies so that San Franciscans can stay housed or exit homelessness. These include housing for homeless veterans, seniors and people with disabilities, homeless families, and families living in Single Room Occupancies. The funding also includes key investments in behavioral health services for homeless people, including pop-up street based mental health care, mental health services for homeless families in shelters, a residential treatment program for transitional aged youth. There has been a huge gap in the provision of residential treatment services for youth. Indeed, for over fifteen years, San Francisco has not had a residential treatment program specific to youth.

Employment services were another highlight in the budget,

OUR COLLECTIVE BUDGET VICTORIES!

SUMMARY WINS:

- 473 New housing units or subsidies
- 110 people will have access to emergency housing
- 10,000 times fewer times will people be forced into the indignity of relieving themselves on the streets
- 1,355 households will receive services to stay in their homes or in shelter
- 100 homeless individuals will receive employment services
- 1,075 people will receive mental health and/or substance abuse services
- Killed Tasers and the Healthy Streets Operation Center

TOTAL FUNDS REDISTRIBUTED TOWARDS ENDING HOMELESSNESS DUE TO OUR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS IN NEXT YEAR’S BUDGET: \$24,552,390!

with \$450,000 funded to provide opportunities that would serve around 100 homeless people annually. While November 2018’s Proposition C, a tax on corporations that will generate \$300 million to fund housing and homeless services, is delayed in court, employment services to homeless people will be key to building up the skills and leadership needed once job opportunities arise with the influx of funding from Proposition C.

There were also significant efforts to defund budget items

that violate human rights. Budget advocacy led to cutting one million dollars from the San Francisco Police Department to eliminate Tasers, a deadly weapon that the San Francisco Police Association has fought for for years -- but has yet to be funded! Another win was \$163,610 cut from the Healthy Streets Operation Center, a coordinated team led by SFPD that has repeatedly confiscated the belongings of homeless people, swept homeless people without offering services, and displace those living on the streets. ■

ANOTHER TRANS WOMAN DIES IN ICE DETENTION

On June 1, 2019, while many of us were celebrating the beginning of the month of Pride, Johana Medina Leon, a 25-year old transgender asylum seeker, died after six weeks of being held in an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center in El Paso, Texas. According to ICE, Medina Leon had been processed for release, qualifying for asylum due to fear of persecution for her gender identity in El Salvador. After complaining of severe chest pains, she was brought to the hospital where she died four days later.

“This is yet another unfortunate example of an individual who illegally enters the United States with an untreated, unscreened medical condition,” Corey Price, field office director for ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations in El Paso, told the Washington Post. “Many of these aliens attempt to enter the United States with untreated or unknown diseases, which are not diagnosed until they are examined while in detention.”

However, accounts from Medina Leon’s family suggest that ICE may be more responsible for medical negligence than Price’s comment would suggest. The Daily Beast reports that Medina Leon “had made numerous requests for proper medication before complaining of chest pains and being transported to Del Sol on May 28, the same day that she tested positive for HIV.” Lack of sufficient medical treatment and support throughout ICE facilities — especially for trans migrants — is a common trend throughout reports from ICE watchdogs and accounts from detainees. Katharina Obser, senior policy adviser at the Women’s Refugee Commission, reported that interviewed detainees often described medical staff as “unresponsive to requests for medical care.”

Inadequate medical resources is not the only issue in ICE detention centers that disproportionately impacts queer and trans detainees. According to the Center for American Progress, “LGBT people in ICE custody are 97 times more likely to be sexually victimized than

non-LGBT people in detention” (2018). Being in ICE custody poses a severe risk to the wellbeing of LGBTQ+ people, putting them at high risk of persecution, sexual assault and lack of needed medical facilities.

Medina Leon’s case is not an anomaly, and the injustice of ICE detention center runs deeper than failing to provide basic support and address medical needs. Of the 24 people who have died in ICE facilities in the past two years, two have been trans woman. The very concept of ICE detention goes against the tenets of justice that the U.S. prides itself on, like “innocent until proven guilty.” Detaining people who have not been declared guilty in a court for weeks, months or years on end in ICE facilities is undemocratic. The inhumane environment within ICE facilities is costing people their lives, with LGBTQ+ migrants facing especially severe risks. As we celebrate Pride this month, we must remember Johana Medina Leon. ■

Johnna Gadomski

gender blur

Tommi Avicolti Mecca (c) 2019

I love blurring
leaving shadows
of things in my wake
like that nude descending
the stairs
I’m fully exposed
people can’t see the nakedness
they imagine I’m a mystery
I couldn’t be more obvious
I shed gender like a snake
I spin a cocoon
when I need to transform
fluidity is a gift
that was stolen from us
beaten out of us
condemned by religion
by social norms
that aren’t normal
there are more things in
heaven and gender
than dreamt of
in any philosophy
I won’t go away
to make you feel more comfortable
I’ve done that in the past
it’s time you simply
get used to it

NAVIGATION CENTER APPROVED IN EMBARCADERO

Anisha Tammana

On Tuesday, June 25, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the construction of a 200 bed navigation center in the Embarcadero, rebuffing an attempt by neighboring wealthy homeowners to prevent the expansion of shelter for their poor and homeless neighbors.

The fight for any kind of shelter is often long, and comes with a heavy history of opposition. Back in April the Port Commission voted unanimously to approve the proposed SAFE Navigation Center on the Embarcadero. The controversial center has been the heart of multiple discussions; not only led by the housed neighbors who fought the introduction of the shelter in “their backyard”, but also by homeless advocates who have feared that the so-called “safe zone” that the city has suggested to appease the neighbors will be another way to criminalize homelessness. Neighbors have demanded increased law enforcement in the neighborhood to combat the perceived “increase in crime” that they anticipate.

Hours of public comment at the Port Commission meeting continued to push fear as the primary narrative that San Francisco has headlined in its approach to homelessness, with many housed neighbors suggesting that a Navigation Center would detract from tourism in the area, make them feel unsafe, and increase crime.

The city’s approach to homelessness has consistently been one that emphasizes heavy policing of areas with

lots of tent encampments, and of course, the regular brutal sweeps that they perform to clear out these areas. Police-led initiatives to reduce street homelessness consistently hurt the unhoused, and a “safe zone” implemented as it is being presented now will almost certainly harm those whom the navigation center seeks to help.

In speaking with unhoused folks on the street, there is a lot of speculation regarding how the navigation center itself will accommodate its residents. Many with previous experience in Navigation Centers and other types of shelters criticized the practices of staff in many locations. Others described the kinds of resources they felt were lacking in their past experiences, and how they felt the need for basic improvements like food selection, access to bathrooms and showers, and storage space. Many inside Navigation Centers appreciated the rest and respite.

The desire for humanity is another common theme among homeless voices. Humane treatment and respect are absolutely vital and often overlooked aspects of providing shelter for the unhoused. With previous negative experiences, many homeless folks have reasonable skepticism about the safety and dignity of a new shelter.

The Navigation Center model is heavily criticized; while the construction of new shelter is certainly a temporary positive, the most important thing for the

city to weigh and consider are the voices of homeless people, who understand the gravity of their own situations and have the most valuable input on what resources they need to succeed. Without considering the impact law enforcement will have on the future residents of the Embarcadero Navigation Center, it is impossible to look out for the welfare of those very same people.

After the approval of the Navigation Center, the Coalition on Homelessness conducted a survey in which a number of staff members and volunteers interviewed current or formerly homeless individuals. The purpose of collecting this information was to present to the city’s Department of Homelessness our findings in regards to people’s past experiences in shelter and their suggestions for the new Navigation Center.

While the methods of surveying were not extremely precise, we were able to get a fairly broad picture of the needs and experiences of homeless and formerly homeless individuals in regards to shelter. The majority of respondents had tried to access shelter at some point, and most agreed that a “walk-in” model of shelter was the most valuable.

In terms of stability and personal safety, most respondents felt that they had a positive experience in shelters, mostly in traditional ones. However, responses to rule enforcement was less favorable. A common trend in responses showed that rules were inconsistently and unfairly en-

forced in traditional shelters. Navigation centers seemed to have more consistency.

One of the most significant findings of the study was that many individuals facing homelessness and staying in shelters did not feel that they were on track to housing. About half of the respondents felt this way.

Many people felt that there was not adequate storage space for their belongings. Respondents had a number of suggestions on how a new Navigation Center would ideally look. A number of people felt that there should be no time limit for shelter stay, or else wanted extended time for people that were “making progress”. Other services requested included case management, counseling, job training, and consistent food access.

Respondents consistently expressed a dissatisfaction with their path towards housing and many conditions at shelters and Navigation Centers. In terms of services, there were a number of improvements and additions that were suggested. Overall, the dominant theme seemed to be that people experiencing homelessness and staying in any sort of shelter needed more resources provided on site and wished for a fair and inclusive setting.

This additional 200 beds will move Mayor London Breed towards her goal of increasing Navigation Center capacity to 1,000 by the end of next year. With expanding services, the fight to stop criminalization make become even more fierce. ■

SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

<div>JULY 3</div> <div>PACK THE COURT FOR PROP C!</div> <div>WHERE: 400 MCALLISTER ST @9AM-4PM (EXACT TIME TBA) Three business organizations (Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association, CA Business Roundtable & the CA Business Properties Association) representing big corporations such as Chevron, Albertsons & Sutter Health, have filed suit to invalidate Prop C - Our City Our Home. We refuse to allow a small group of corporate interests tear down a bill that can help thousands of exit homelessness! ACCESS: The Courthouse is wheelchair accessible. Other accommodations can be requested on their website: https://sfsuperiorcourt.org/general-info/</div>	<div>JULY 4</div> <div>STANDING ON THIS LAND TOGETHER: INDIGENOUS, SETTLERS & MIGRANTS</div> <div>WHERE: SHELLMOUND AT 1900 4TH ST, BERKELEY @10-11:30AM This July 4th, join members of the indigenous Ohlone, interfaith and immigrant community for prayer and ceremony on sacred Ohlone territory at the West Berkeley Shellmound site. This 4th of July, we honor the ancestors and 1st nations of the Bay area. ACCESS: This is an outdoor event. If standing for 1.5 hours is uncomfortable, please bring a camping chair.</div>	<div>JULY 16</div> <div>LOCAL 2 ACTION: FLAGSHIP CAFETERIA WORKERS DEMAND RESPECT!</div> <div>WHERE: 181 FREMONT STREET @4PM Local 2 Action: Cafeteria Workers working for Flagship, a tech industry contractor, demand respect! ACCESS: Outdoor event</div>	<div>JULY 20</div> <div>THE CAULDRON BENEFITS ST. JAMES INFIRMARY!</div> <div>WHERE: THE FIRESIDE LOUNGE 1453 WEBSTER ST, ALAMEDA @8PM DJs & Visual Artists: Starr, Chat Noir, Unseele, Bat Kat & epiDEMIc Hear an eclectic mix of Goth, Darkwave, Dark Electronic, New Wave and Pop! Something for everyone! Someone you love is a Sex Worker. They and their families need your support more than ever! For this installment we will be raising funds for St. James Infirmary! St. James Infirmary is a peer-based occupational health and safety clinic for sex workers of all genders. ACCESS: The Fireside Lounge in Alameda is ADA accessible but not scent free. Contact the event page with further questions/accommodation requests)</div>
<div>AUG 3</div> <div>(DIS)LOCATION: BLACK EXODUS LAUNCH PARTY AND COMMUNITY GATHERING</div> <div>WHERE: BAYVIEW OPERA HOUSE, 4705 3RD ST @5-7PM The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project is proud and excited to announce and invite you to a launch party and community gathering to celebrate the print and online publication of (Dis)Location: Black Exodus, the culmination of several years’ work in the community.</div>	<div>AUG 6</div> <div>DISTRICT ATTORNEY DEBATE</div> <div>WHERE: SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY MAIN LIBRARY - 100 LARKIN ST @6-7:30PM Please join the; San Francisco - ACLU Chapter, Eastern Neighborhood Democratic Club, Democratic Socialist of America, Indivisible San Francisco, and the Willie B Kennedy Democratic Club for a special District Attorney Debate. ACCESS: SFPL is ADA compliant</div>	<div>SEPT 12</div> <div>save the date ARTAUCTION19: TRANSFORMING ART INTO ACTION</div> <div>WHERE: SOMARTS CULTURAL CENTER The Coalition on Homelessness cordially invites you to our 19TH ANNUAL ART AUCTION AND EXHIBITION. Come enjoy and bid on work from over two-hundred local artists and activists that truly transform ART into ACTION. DONATE ARTWORK, BUY TICKETS, OR SPONSOR THIS AWESOME COMMUNITY EVENT ONLINE AT HTTPS://WWW.ARTAUCTION19.INFO/</div>	

MENTAL HEALTHCARE FOR ALL

Anisha Tammana

Supervisors Ronen and Haney recently introduced new mental health legislation after a long history of criticism of what has often been called a broken system. Mental Health SF will be on the ballot in November 2019, and proposes a radical shift to the system, attempting to support underserved populations in San Francisco by providing easier access to mental health care, substance use treatment, and medications.

If passed, the ordinance would create a community mental health service, establishing a working group to advise the Mental Health Board, as well as the Board of Supervisors and city departments. Called the Implementation Working Group, the members will be appointed by the Board of Supervisors to represent medical and housing professionals, as well as individuals with lived experience.

Mental Health SF would also greatly expand services to uninsured San Franciscans and those with serious behavioral health challenges (“core” patients) as well as providing immediate treatment for patients without access

due to various insurance-related reasons (defined as “bridge” patients). Another population served would be those exiting the County Jail, who haven’t re-enrolled in Medi-Cal.

Making treatment low barrier and easily accessible is a stated priority, according to the drafted legislation. By creating a Mental Health Service Center to centralize services, hub offering treatment, assessment. By offering services before considering eligibility for coverage, Mental Health SF would be better able to serve a wider array of vulnerable citizens.

A common topic of discussion around treatment in San Francisco is harm reduction. The legislation provides a framework for how the program will seek to customize services using the harm reduction model. According to the Harm Reduction Coalition, the principles of harm reduction include judgement-free, knowledge-based treatment that seeks to reduce the harm of drug use, rather than criminalizing it and coercing patients. Considered a more “progressive” model of treatment, harm reduction has been

praised as being far more effective than traditional, often forced methods which have a history of oppressing and exploiting marginalized communities.

Services offered will include triage (prioritizing patient needs and assessing care options), psychiatric assessment and treatment by a medical professional and medication if needed, and many other essential ways to meet patient needs. The Service Center will provide a pharmacy onsite, as well as critical intervention for individuals experiencing psychiatric crises. Case management and social workers will also be a part of Mental Health SF. The crucial need for transporting patients will be met by the ordinance, with accompanied transportation from the hospital and county jail to the service center.

Aiding formerly incarcerated individuals in the re-enrollment process is a significant step towards achieving healthcare. By serving every San Franciscan, most of us hope to see Mental Health SF transform the system of care in the city. ■

For This Year’s Pride March

lady briyani
Paypal : ladybriyani@gmail.com

I shall once more steal + eat/drink all the pizza + wine from the witchy TERFs. No shame. I’ll go grab two slices from a lesbian party, smirking at their Bernie collection pitcher all the while.

And I saunter in-I have no problem sitting myself right at the cool kids’ table.

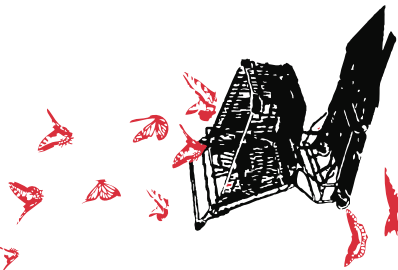
And if another cisman drag queen screams at me, saying trans women are not welcome at Pride, that “We’ll never help you again! Never again!” as if homeless, poor, trans women of color didn’t pay for his liberation with literal blood, sweat, tears — and bricks?

I wonder how many liberals will awkwardly turn their cameras away to more pleasant scenery?

And can we trust anyone of any gender who hasn’t slept rough for at least a month, anyway? ■

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FROM NAVIGATION TO HOUSING

Slyhene Brown I can remember the first time I went to the navigation center. It was a long process getting documents ready to working with my case manager and going through the whole process. Yes, it was hard at time, but now I’ve got keys to my own place.

It’s a big change from the navigation center. Like the navigation center, I can come and go when I want — the only thing is I have to check in after three days. The difference between my spot and the nav is that you have more responsibilities, like paying your rent and making sure you have food in the fridge.

Also, you’re not around a lot of people. It’s you and your own space.

Since moving in my own spot, I’ve gained a new sense of serenity and peace. I can open my own door knowing that no one is in my spot but me. I also have to clean my house for inspection every month, just like the nav.

On a more serious note, I’m hella glad for my spot. When I first came out here, I never thought I would have my own spot to call my own. Someone gave me a chance and saw something in me to bring me off the street and help me obtain the proper things to get my own spot. Don’t get me wrong, it wasn’t all fun and games, nor was it smooth sailing going through the process, but with perseverance and the motivation from my case managers, I learned how to be humble and open-minded to their suggestions, and that’s why I’m in my own spot.

So for that one individual who feels like there is no hope in getting housing, I’m a walking testimony that the process is real. Yes, it’s hard but in the end I can sit here and honestly say I’m in my own spot. I just want to humbly say “thank you” to all the case managers at the Civic Center Hotel, Kelley Cutler and the people at the Coalition on Homelessness, and my God who played a major part in getting me my own spot. Thank you, guys! ■

photo of Shy Brown



the Donut Shop

Raina “Scar” Hunter

The donut shop on Castro Street was open 24 hours. The hungry, the curious and the cold found themselves there in the ‘80s, before technology and the impersonal took over. Male hustlers and their sophisticated sugar daddies, winos who drank beer, and runaways in shock from the mean streets found a friendly smile — perhaps a free donut — from a well-meaning neighbor in the donut shop we called home. I lived around the corner from the laundromat where my cousin Stephanie got a job after coming to stay for the summer, realizing my sister and I went hungry a lot.

Kelly and JT hung out there a lot. Kelly had blond hair that hugged

her shoulders and wore heavy black eyeliner that never obscured her blue eyes, which danced with laughter, lively and quick. A confident optimist, though she mostly lived on the streets with her three kids, all younger than six years old. JT, I remember he was from Montana. He had a beard, a scraggly one that looked like a small animal that had died somehow perched on his chin. He was good-natured and would cool hot apple fritters by waving them in the crisp fall air, then took them inside and fed the younglings.

Crusty, a Vietnam vet drifter who had a drinking problem. He was a skilled gardener, sometimes working in a small garden that was part of a church that gave out free sandwiches. He would brag to us he had once worked as a gardener in Buckingham Palace. He would spin tales like a carnie conning a crowd, but his stories were free. We called him Crusty Old Fuck, but his real name was Michael Longum. I know his nickname was awful. He had a few choice words he called some of us as well. Michaels’s father used to own the Pilsner Inn, a bar near Church and Market streets. He had a chest as stout as wide as the side of a boat. Once he took off for months, returning with tales of

walking through a desert somewhere. He told us about the intense heat and isolation. After relaying his travels, he puked up parts of what appeared to be a lizard. We were never sure what it was. He became a living legend.

Jubb-Jubb, the best talker of the group. A day after we shared a joint together, I ran into him the next day.

“That weed was super. It was the right day and time. I was stoned all day!” he said.

Once he sat next to me at the donut shop, while a few people laughed at a dress I had borrowed from my mother’s closet. Some guy called it a muumuu. It was orange and white and super-short. Everybody started laughing. “That’s not a muumuu,” Jubb-Jubb said. “That’s a ‘60s sundress. Where did you get it?” I told him my mother loaned it to me.

“That was your mother’s dress?” he exclaimed, his eyes widening in surprise. “Your mother couldn’t look good in it as you do now. That’s vintage. One day, everyone is going to want to wear that. Everything will be recycled. You must take a picture of yourself in that dress.”

I never did. Jubb-Jubb’s kind words

were enough. Jubb-Jubb was an old, seasoned punk rocker with a head of hair that was ruined by multiple dye jobs, a faded brown like a hungry bird in the winter. In the old days, he took a lot of LSD and lived at the house of Tommy Tadlock, who played with Angels of Light and The Lockettes. He left Tommy’s house, dropped the angry attitude and became one of the most peaceful and witty people I ever knew. On a cold November night, he soothed the feeling of some girl who wanted to beat me up because I said I liked The Cure. He lived among the shadows and neon lights of Castro Street, a bright star in our somber galaxy. My friends tumble like tumbleweeds in the vast prairie of my memory, my once lonely childhood that became a city of friends. My soul is rich from knowing them.

The donut shop is closed now, and the space has been split into two places. The food smells good, but I haven’t walked in there. Like dandelions, my friends blew away. The nooks and crannies of the world will protect them from the “average” cookie-cutter people who judge anybody who is different. ■