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STREET SHEET

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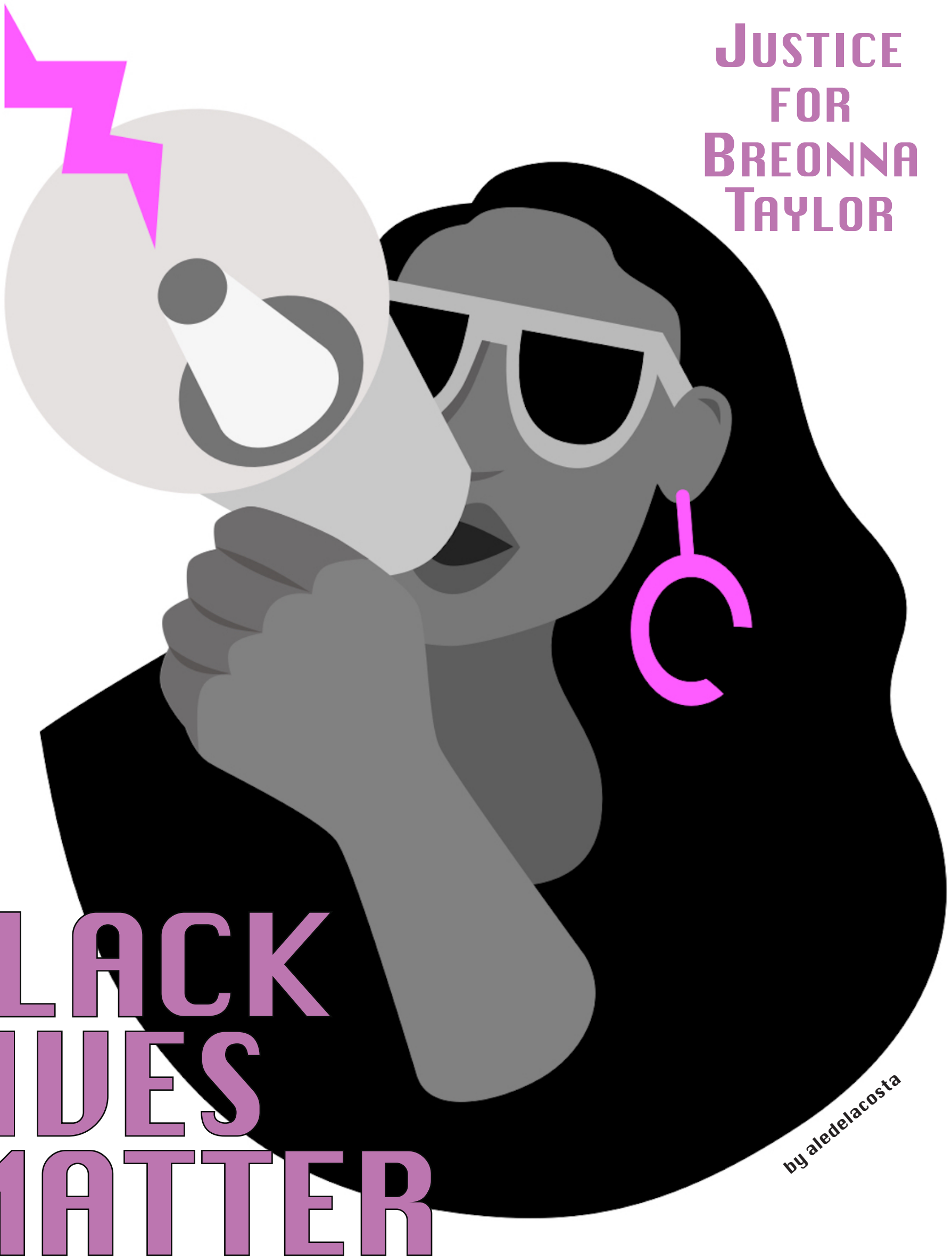

WHO DOESN'T FIT ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL?

Evan Owski and the Hotels Not Hospitals Team

I scan the City's COVID-19 Alternative Housing dashboard this morning as I have most mornings since April. "Total Current in SIP Hotels: 2,340" and "Total Current in SIP Congregate: 485" read a few of the metrics, typical of the acronym-filled jargon that fills most City reports. (Translation: "SIP" is "shelter in place" and "congregate" is a group setting like a shelter.) My fellow Hotels Not Hospitals organizers and I have struggled to find out what's really going on in the hotels, but Mayor Breed and City officials have been scant on details. So we're stuck with these numbers instead. The City bureaucracy loves metrics and churns them out endlessly, but we're never told the stories behind the figures. Who is in the 675th hotel room or the 1,760th? What stories does the person in the 240th congregate bed have? How did they wind up there, and what has their experience been with the City's offering? The dashboard would have you believe they're interchangeable.

Rosibel, one of our Hotels Not Hospitals guests, arrived in the US this year after applying for asylum from an ICE detention center where she spent 4 months. She was beaten by other detainees, neglected and threatened by staff, served inedible food, and had no access to a private bed, bathroom, or shower. For a trans woman, these conditions made her particularly vulnerable.

Her time since arriving in San Francisco has been difficult. She has survived several instances of violence, including being kidnapped off the street by a stranger as she was trying to sleep. She has been sexually assaulted, beaten, and robbed of her money and personal documents. What she wants is some sanctuary, a full kitchen where she can cook her Honduran dishes. "The home is everything, it's what should come first," she said. She feels safer in the hotel provided by our project. It's more secure than other places she's stayed, and it's cleaner and quieter. She has a private bathroom and worries less about violence from strangers or police. She hopes to attain a level of autonomy and stability in her housing so that she can find a job and help her family back in Honduras. Rosibel's story is not one-size-fits-all.

The Chronicle, ever questioning if we can afford the price tag of basic human rights, recently put the City's cost per hotel room at $260 per night. That doesn't just include the room but an array of staffers keeping watch. Do all 2,340 of these human beings need to be constantly monitored? "We're not babysitters," said Mayor Breed of the program in May with her standard dose of condescension towards the unhoused. This was just the latest of a string of excuses put forward by the City for leaving over 5,000 people to shelter in place on bare concrete. (Some others: "We don't have the ability to force anyone", it's not "fiscally prudent", and the myth-that-won't-die of out-of-towners flooding in.)

In the City's heavy-handed approach, grown adults who simply need a place to stay must be "babysat." When the Mayor's administration raised staffing as a reason why the Board of Supervisors' mandated target of 8,250 rooms could not be reached, the Board shot back with a recommendation for "low needs" hotels that could operate with minimal staffing. The recommendation was ignored, and the Mayor couldn't even get to one-third of the target. One-size-fits-all thinking dehumanizes and leaves people behind.

John, another Hotels Not Hospitals guest, was injured on the job years ago when he fell from dangerous scaffolding. As a result of his injury, his boss fired him and he lost his home. He has been on the streets for over 10 years. Earlier this year he was sleeping on the street and was swept by the City, forcing him to another part of town. He, like many other people experiencing homelessness across San Francisco, was forcibly displaced from one place to another seemingly without purpose. Shortly after, he was robbed. Before this month, John had not slept indoors in months. A place to sleep has been a huge blessing, according to John. He tells us that he is hoping to turn this experience into permanent housing. John's story is not one-size-fits-all.

In one of the richest cities in the world, we must continue to demand more of our elected officials, and until they are up to the task, we must organize and take matters into our own hands. A crisis that leaves thousands of people to sleep on the streets every night, an abomination during "normal" times, has been compounded by twin public health crises of COVID-19 and toxic wildfire smoke. Inaction has killed twice as many unhoused people this year compared to 2019.

Hotels Not Hospitals exists to show that for John, Rosibel, and thousands of other unhoused people, the speculation-fueled housing market and capitalist system that prioritizes profits over human dignity has thoroughly failed. With a nationwide eviction crisis looming, many millions more among us are vulnerable to losing our homes. As organizers, some of whom have been homeless ourselves, we are helping our neighbors get through this pandemic safely while building community, solidarity, and resilient relationships. Contributing to our project has a direct and immediate impact, enabling unsheltered people to live indoors for at least part of this pandemic. With money already donated we've secured hotel rooms for three people, but we're just getting started. To donate and get involved, visit hotelsnothospitals.org.

It has been said "it's easier to imagine an end to the world than an end to capitalism." Socialist organizing and mutual aid are critical components in creating a material vision of how society can be transformed when released from the predatory clutches of capital. Longer-term we seek to transform the housing system to one based on need rather than corporate greed. Building a more compassionate, humane society will require all of us to organize, mobilize, and fight for a fundamentally different politics. ■

Hotels Not Hospitals is a project of the DSA SF Homelessness Working Group.

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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 agendas to us.

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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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STREET SPEAK

Episode 4: Why Do You Need Housing?

A panel discussion hosted by House the Bay with unhoused San Franciscans Couper Orona, Don Poisson, and Shy Brown. The panelists speak about the urgent need for housing. This conversation happened August 13th and the full video can be viewed on House the Bay's Facebook or Instagram.

House the Bay is a group of housed and unhoused community members who are tired of waiting for our cities to address the very immediate need for housing. To learn more about House the Bay or to organize with us, visit housethebay.org !

Listen at http://www.streetsheet.org/street-speak-podcast/ or wherever you listen to podcasts

PROP C CARRIES THE DAY IN COURT: MEANWHILE ADVOCATES ADVISE SAN FRANCISCO ON HOMELESSNESS FUNDING

TJ Johnston

"The Court of Appeal Decision stands. Proposition C is valid.

WE WONNNNNNNNNN!!!!!!!!"

That was the announcement I received via Facebook Messenger on Wednesday, September 8 about Prop. C taking effect.

After almost two years, the measure known as "Our City, Our Home" can now live up to the promise of its name, affirming that I'm part of a city committed to housing homeless people and keeping them housed.

In the November 2018 election, 61% of San Francisco voters approved of the City taxing wealthy corporations to fund homelessness programs, mental health and substance use treatment programs, and eviction defense efforts.

But an anti-tax group and big business associations filed a lawsuit against the City to prevent Prop. C from taking effect. They argued that Prop. C proponents needed a two-thirds supermajority, not a simple majority, to pass.

However, the City Attorney's office maintained that a citizen-driven revenue measure only needs 50 percent plus 1, and the San Francisco Superior Court and California Court of Appeal agreed, thus solidifying its electoral victory.

Now, almost a half-billion dollars that have been collected and sitting in escrow is now unlocked, more than doubling the amount of homeless expenditures — benefitting over 10,000 unhoused San Franciscans.

Under Prop. C, the funds will be disbursed this way: 50% will go to housing, 25% to mental health and substance use services, 15% to rental assistance and eviction defense programs and 10% to emergency shelter and drop-in hygiene programs. An oversight committee will watch over how funds are spent.

Added to the $300 million San Francisco already dedicates to homeless services, this funding will go a long way in addressing this systemic problem — as well as challenges specific to the unhoused people who shared with me their stories, experiences, meals and shelter space.

That leads me to the beauty of the measure: the true experts on homelessness — unhoused folk themselves — were consulted in drafting that measure. About 300 unhoused people were hired in phone banks, calling some 90,000 voters. Allies from health networks, community-based organizations, service providers and faith communities also joined our successful campaign.

Still, homeless advocates felt the need to remind the gravity of the situation to the public when Prop. C was in litigation. To that end, the Coalition on Homelessness again relied on unhoused people's expertise when it conducted a needs assessment study.

Six hundred homeless and marginally housed people were surveyed and interviewed by a team of peer researchers — including myself — who share or have shared their lived experience. They provided input on what the new system would look after the influx of Prop. C funds and how it would work to prevent homelessness, as well as pave exits from homelessness.

Why did survey participants lose their housing? Mostly, it was due to lack of affordability. The factors most reported behind their displacement were job loss and low incomes unable to keep pace with high rents. Rental assistance, if it were made available, would have kept them in their homes, one third of them responded.

Aid to tenants was just one of 102 policy recommendations spelled out in the study. Among others were: making housing case management available, increased and enhanced permanent supportive housing, fully implementing treatment on demand, intensive case management for mental health clients, developing alternatives to a police-centered approach to mental health, gender-affirming services for transgender people.

Significantly, the myth of "service resistance" — declining shelter and treatment in favor of street life — was debunked. When survey participants were asked about shelter, a majority said they preferred legal campsites with private tents, showers, bathrooms and basic security over the existing shelter system.

The impact of Prop. C will be wide-ranging, said study team members, from stress relief to reduced trauma to greater inclusion of marginalized communities.

Jazmin Frias, a peer researcher and focus group facilitator among Spanish speakers, noted that Prop. C would provide an ounce of prevention in the form of subsidies and tenant protections that's worth a pound of housing stability cure.

"My life would change drastically under Prop. C," she told project researchers. "It would give me and all of these families a great amount of peace to be able to have somewhere stable to go home to … not having to worry about if the police is going to remove you at three in the morning with all the children because we are parked on the side of the street. Our children will grow up with less traumas because parents will not be overworked to keep a stable home that leads for more family time and more happy memories."

Another takeaway is housing as a form of harm reduction. Half of the people who report a substance use issue remain untreated, largely because of such barriers to treatment as waitlists, lack of beds, difficulty in navigating the system and overly strict treatment rules.

In the report, Lisseth Sanchez of Mujeres Latinas en Accion pointed out the benefit of housing and treatment, especially to unhoused subpopulations in the transgender and Latinx communities, as well as other working in underground economies.

"One big impact of Prop. C would be lowering the use of substances because TransLatina women would have opportunities to be in things that actually benefit us," Sanchez said. "How are you supposed to be OK if the night before you needed to exchange sex for a place to live or being up all night waiting for a client to pay for a motel so you can rest? What we need is opportunity."

Peer researcher Ms. Earl also indicated in the study that the measure would also partially act as a social corrective. Ms. Earl, who is a Black trans woman, said it would clear a path to housing for members of communities who have suffered injustice.

"Access and education are a big deal to my community," she said. "There are lots of people who just don't have access to services, housing or jobs because of their skin color, gender identity, criminal history or housing status. Prop. C is a way to rectify the systematic exclusion of people who daily face these oppressions."

In their own way, the people I've interviewed, as a journalist or researcher, were performing a vital service: they were directing the City and County of San Francisco toward solutions. That reminds me of the adage about working with a specific group of people on an issue that affects them: "Nothing about us without us!" ■

TJ Johnston is a Community Advisory Board member at Tipping Point. He served as a peer researcher and editorial team member for "Stop the Revolving Door: A Street Level Framework for a New System." A longtime journalist whose work has appeared in several media outlets, he writes and edits for Street Sheet, a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco.

STOP THE REVOLVING DOOR

a street level framework for a new system

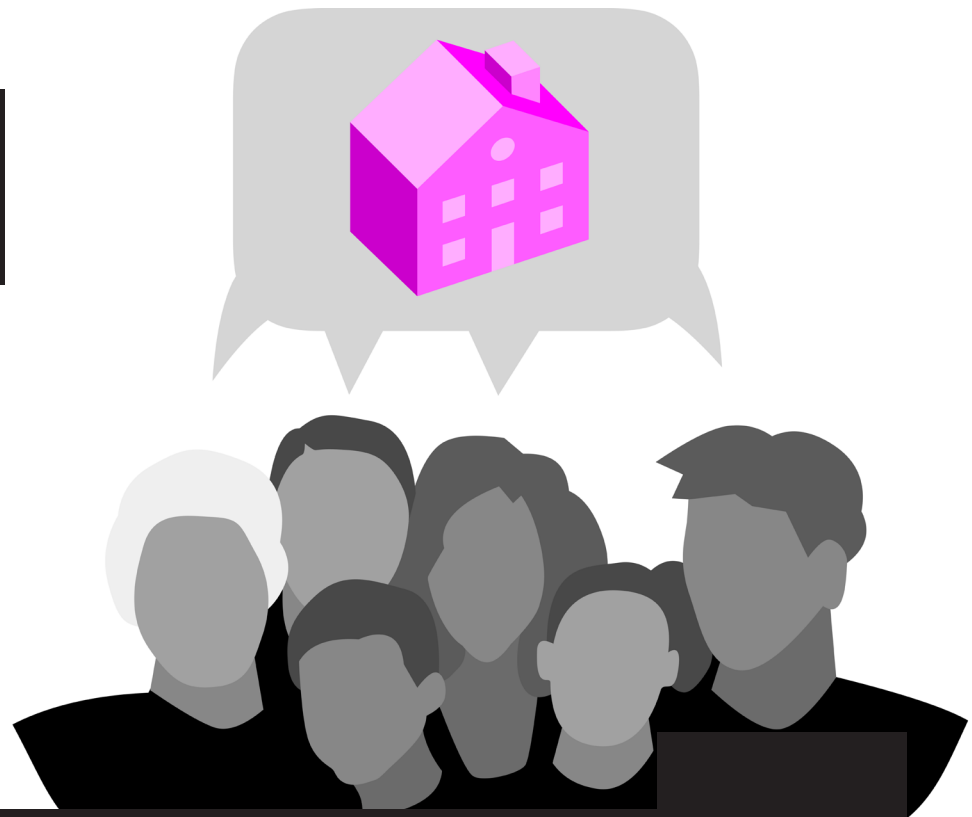
In September of 2020, the Coalition on Homelessness released a detailed report exploring the needs of homeless people navigating a broken homeless system and presenting policy recommendations on how to implement Proposition C. This report presents how we can best address the homelessness crisis in San Francisco by asking the experts on homelessness: homeless people themselves. As such, homeless people developed and carried out this report — in partnership with researchers and advocates — for the benefit of homeless people. Each chapter of this report focuses on a city system: homelessness prevention, shelter, substance use and mental health treatment. This needs assessment will help policymakers understand the prevalence of and institutional solutions to the homelessness crisis in San Francisco, and make sure that homeless services systems more effectively serve multiply marginalized people.

This briefly summary highlights some of the barriers in the system, but to get a full view of the problems keeping people homeless, and an un understanding of the policies needed to fix them, please read the full report available at https://www.cohsf.org/research-papers/

All graphics used here and in the report were created by aledelacosta -- @aledelacosta

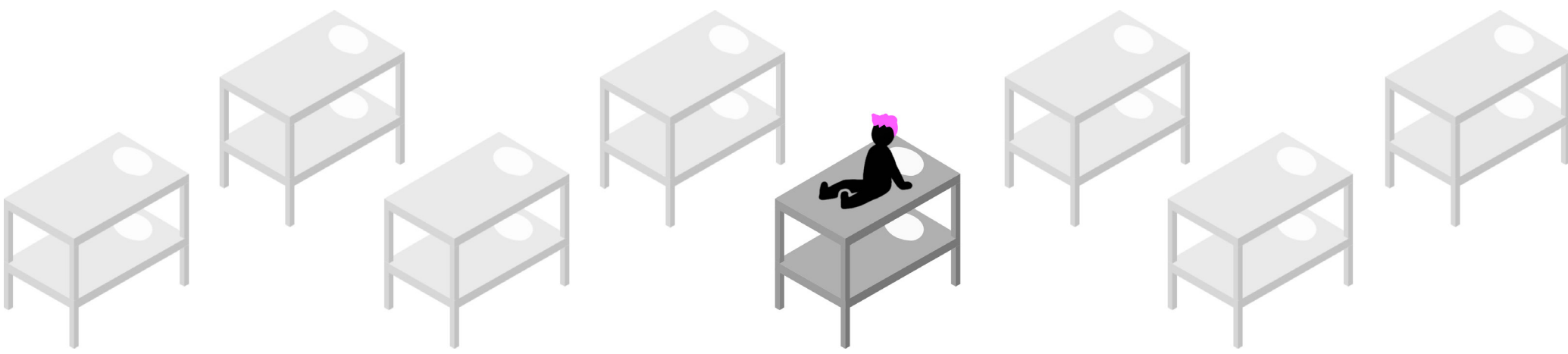
PREVENTION

The after-effects of homelessness are devastating – trauma, lost years, shortened life expectancy, compromised health and real human suffering. It is both more cost effective and humane to keep San Franciscans housed, instead of addressing it after the fact. We focused part of this study on prevention for exactly that reason – to ascertain exactly what interventions would work to keep people in their homes. While the homeless population is diverse, there were a lot of common experiences. We started with the very last time respondents had a place of their own and went from there.

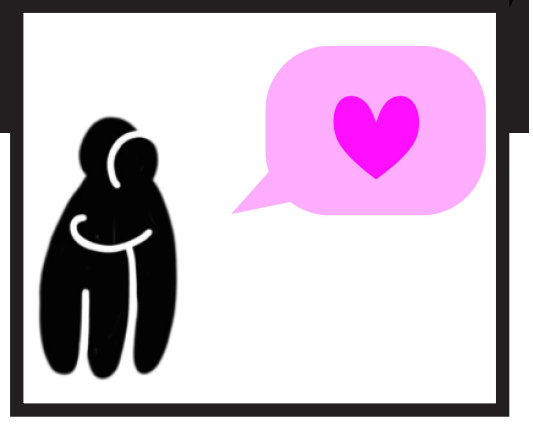


SHELTER

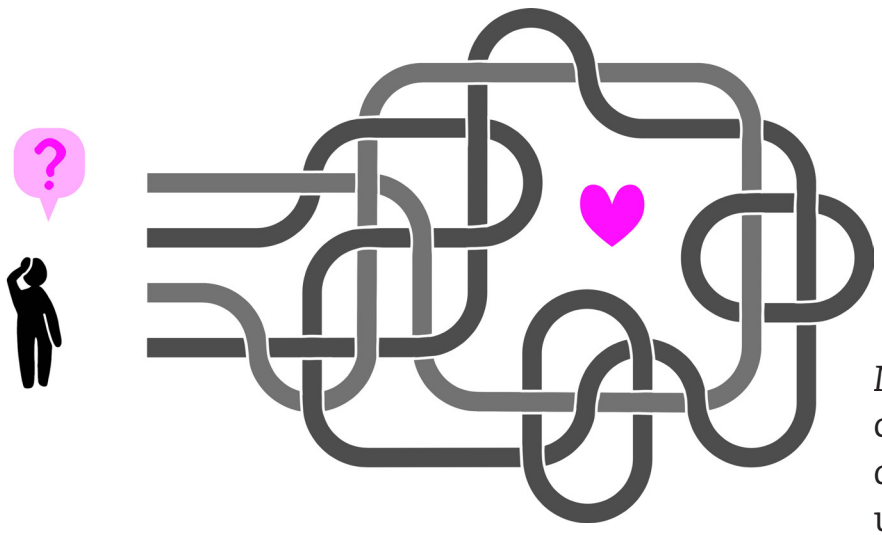
Shelters have been shown to play a stabilizing role for those experiencing homelessness: serving as a safe haven from domestic abuse, inclement weather or police harassment faced when living outdoors, a platform to maintaining employment, a pathway to accessing social services and benefits, and a means of improving health compared to residing outdoors in public space. However, research has consistently found barriers to accessing shelter, poor shelter conditions that fossilize poverty and traumatize clients, and unstable exits that often lead back into homelessness.5 This section assesses the benefits and challenges of shelter and navigation centers in San Francisco among our study participants and considers what improvements and changes they see as most urgent and necessary.



SUBSTANCE USE



Substance use can be a coping mechanism for homeless people on the streets, a way to "self-medicate" mental health challenges, a means to dull pain, or to drown out recurring traumatic events. For about a third of unhoused San Franciscans, substance use has become an issue that can have health and socio-economic consequences. Participants' experiences with substance use treatment in SF is a focus of this report. When participants are able to access and stay in treatment, most participants report that treatment is effective at helping them manage, reduce, or abstain from substance use. Long-term success is often contingent on participants' ability to access stable, affordable housing upon exit from treatment, which is relatively rare. Some people are able to address their substance use issues while homeless, but for most homeless people, their housing status acts as a barrier to addressing substance use issues. There are mixed reports with regard to the effectiveness or preferability of harm reduction versus abstinence-only treatment programs.

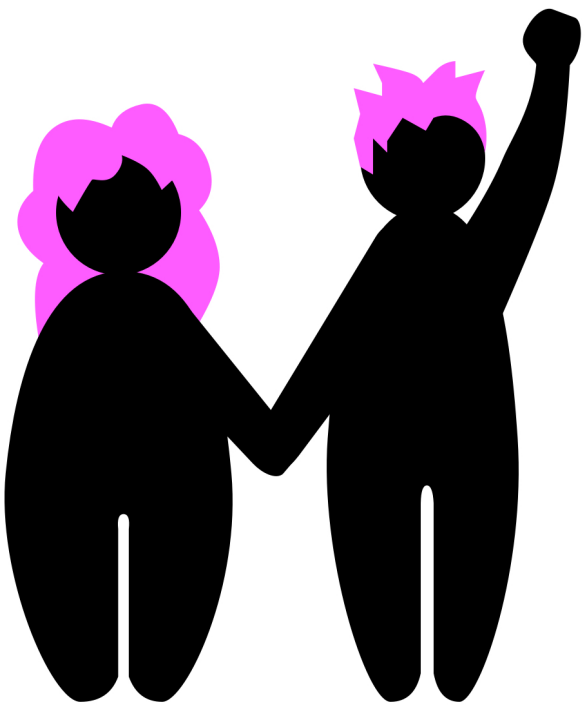


MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health issues are forefront on the minds of many San Franciscans - whether it is through reading about the crisis in the media, witnessing the effects of untreated mental health issues on unhoused neighbors, or having experienced it yourself - no one can deny the existence of the problem. Study participants' experience with the mental health system is a focus of this report. We found that few who need services are getting the care they deserve, facing capacity, bureaucratic or cultural barriers. We also found that the lack of dual diagnosis care, alongside lack of placement in stable housing post treatment presented barriers to individuals ability to successfully care for their mental health. Too often, individuals first experience with care is through emergency care, such as Psychiatric Emergency Services, rather than in a community setting.

TRANS HOMELESSNESS

Trans people experience rates of unemployment and homelessness that are disproportionately high compared with those of cisgender people. Yet when trans people seek support services, they often encounter the same dynamics of exclusion that contributed to job loss or housing deprivation in the first place. In San Francisco and nationwide, trans people need comprehensive support and safe housing. In response to years of advocacy by transgender communities, San Francisco has taken promising first steps toward ending the crisis of transgender homelessness. Our Trans Home SF has successfully advocated for rental subsidies, housing navigators, and other crucial changes, but gaps in the city's homeless service system still disproportionately harm trans people, and dire unmet need remains.



This chapter of the report centers the voices of transgender women of color and immigrants. Trans women of color are deprived of housing at higher rates than cisgender people—one in every two trans people has been homeless—yet trans experiences and needs are routinely marginalized or excluded from discussions of homelessness policy, and trans-led organizations are rarely consulted about issues related to housing. Too often, transgender experiences are subsumed into the category "LGBTQ" without meaningful representation. Many homeless service and advocacy organizations have no trans women of color in leadership positions or even as staff. In response to this shortcoming in homelessness research and policy, the Coalition on Homelessness partnered with organizations led by transgender women of color to help design and implement a Needs Assessment that centers trans people's experiences and needs. Our decision to include this chapter is a timely one: As federal laws and policies of the Trump administration and Ben Carson's Department of Housing and Urban Development endanger trans and immigrant communities in particular, this report details evidence-based recommendations for local policy to ensure human rights for multiply-marginalized groups. See *http://www.ourtranshomesf.org* for more information

INSIDE AND OUT

Justice

Over the past 10 years, San Francisco has gone through a through change of scenery, from artist weirdo hub to an odd suburbia parallel timeline. The kind of people that inhabit the city change the landscape and the city seeks to appease these people while maintaining its glory. Where you are on the tier systems of the city will shape how you view what's working and what's not. Here's one person's living example of moving through the system created to house or hurt San Francisco's houseless populace.

I moved here over 13 years ago and lived on the street for quite some time. There was easy access to showers and laundry at that time and socks to go around. I was constantly moved by cops, kicked by city workers for sleeping outside. When I was in the "youth" age range (18-24) there was a good amount of resources and support to encourage me and keep me busy, places to eat and hang out. Things seemed to go well and it was a time when the city was still booming with opportunity in my field of art and creativity. There was access to case management, resources and support.

On the flip side staying in the shelter was difficult, it felt maybe like it was run like what I suppose a group home would be. You could get kicked out with no explanation and no remedy and left stranded outside as some form of punishment for your offense. This would leave a grave distrust of who I could or couldn't trust in the system.

In the end I was housed through the program with some effort on my part. I got my first lease and keys of my own and it was a proud day. I would let friends stay over, clothes drenched because the city would spray them with water at odd hours in the morning to "wake them up". As I aged out of that system of youth, the way I approached getting resources had to change, The people in my building were very harsh and living in the building was my first encounter with the "adult" system and learning to navigate landlords, policy and the politics of housing. I was grateful to have two of the most coveted things in the SRO "single room occupant" market, a kitchen and bathroom of my own. I treated them like gold.

The harsh environment wore on my spirit after so long. The build was extremely haunted (it was almost a hundred years old!). And both living and dead occupants came with serious challenges of addiction issues, street survival tactics and moving things around. And when someone living joined our invisible friends we would know by way of smell. This again would greatly scar my sense of humanity. Knowing people would die and no one would notice until the stench of death waifed through the halls.

Our managers were kind of slummy, and didn't do things fair. Thankfully in time things changed and case managers were added because living conditions got so bad. Wellness checks were instituted to make sure someone was checking on people, and we had better help navigating the adult side of things. This should show that people need rehabilitation and care to transition from street living to housing living sometimes. I was still able to find comfort and funds making and selling my art in the city.

Due to unfortunate circumstances I lost my place but I had it for at least 5 years and it was a good run for my first place. I was involved in a terrible accident which would keep me hospitalized for at least 6 weeks. I was homeless after that and had to start the process all over. After time in mental intuitions and rehabilitation houses, I got into a shelter and on a waiting list for housing. I was able to because of my dual diagnosis and help from the food stamp office and an intensive case manager. It was a bit of a wait and no one was sure how long it would be. I was harassed by staff and constantly being reported for trying to be clean and keep my space well or doing laundry. The system is made to harass and discourage you for trying to do well.

I was going to school in the evening wanting to do better, and there was always someone questioning why. Some time later I was blessed with a special waiting list for a room. It wasn't the greatest and I didn't like it but I wanted to get out of the shelter so against my better judgment I took it. I was attacked and harassed for a whole year by neighbors and the staff was useless and mean. We were under constant violation and threat for things that normal housing would never have to deal with. For example having clothes on the floor. Police were in and out, and again more ghosts. Going to school and the little farmers market were my escape from the building. Trying to get the situation addressed by management always resulted in blame on me. Finding legal help was impossible, but eventually things changed and got better. I'm grateful that things worked out that I was able to get housed and now I live in a better place and I'm sober. I'm also left with many scars that make trust hard.

There was a waitlist hotline created under the Ed lee system. If I would have gone that way it would have taken 3 weeks to get into a shelter and I wouldn't have been able to stay in long as I needed to to get housed, because under the Care Not Cash of the Gavin Newsom mayoral term, money has been funding certain types of beds. There's no incentive to keep people housed or sheltered. But if you can find ways to weave through the system's gates you might get a place to live. If I wasn't so injured I don't know if I would have gotten the help I needed the way I did. I thank God for giving me the resolve to keep going and putting wonderful people in my life to help me get there. The road was intense but I made it though. ■

WHY WE NEED AIR CONDITIONING AND WIFI IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Jordan Davis

As I write this, it is Labor Day, and I am struggling to get through this overly hot weekend, especially as a tenant in a 100+ year old building master-leased for formerly homeless folks. Furthermore, as the COVID-19 crisis continues, we are urged to stay at home, but what happens if home is too hot for us.

And speaking of COVID-19, as an activist, I must advocate for supportive housing rights remotely, but this often is complicated by the fact that Zoom meetings being data-intensive, and thus, I must shell out $55 a month to log into an Xfinity Hotspot, since my building, like many older buildings, do not have our own WiFi hotspot.

Through all this, I really think that housing for the formerly homeless needs to have both air conditioning and free WiFi, and the city needs to make this happen.

Now, I know, you, the reader, may think these are frivolous luxuries and we should just be glad we have a home. And in the few years I served on the Single Room Occupancy Task Force, such ideas would be pooh-poohed by landlords and their sympaticos, who would then lambast me for being "unpragmatic" and "radical" no matter how the issue was framed But with the dual crises of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, we must meet the moment and realize that air conditioning and WiFI connectivity are now essentials for our most vulnerable tenants.

As San Francisco has historically had milder summers, many of our older housing stock was not built for SoCal style heatwaves. And while we must do everything we can to reduce the impacts of climate change, air conditioning will become a necessity in the future, and since there is a significant senior and disabled population in our buildings, these individuals being vulnerable to hot temperatures. The non-profits could be held liable if somebody died from heat stroke.

Furthermore, the need for air conditioning also exists in the context of San Francisco's minimum heat law, which was passed in response to a scandal involving SRO slumlords. However, there is no maximum heat law, and a November 30, 2019 article in the San Francisco Examiner detailed the struggles of tenants in overheated buildings. Not only does the city need a maximum heat law, but they may need to re-evaluate and potentially take a scalpel to the current minimum heat ordinance, which has caused problems in my building with tenants who live near the heater complaining about the excessive heat exacerbating their health conditions.

As for WiFi, this may seem like a luxury, however, if you see people on the street hawking so-called "Obama-phones", which provide free cell phone and limited data service to low and lower income people, you will see that the phones offered in the last few years are smartphones, which were once considered luxuries, but has become more necessary for jobs, services, and healthcare. Many more SRO tenants are using smartphones, and since the COVID-19 pandemic and physical distancing requirements, access to the internet and bridging the digital divide has become even more crucial.

This is why San Francisco needs to have free WiFi throughout the city, however, a near term solution would be to require supportive housing buildings to have a free to access (but password protected) hotspot for their tenants to be able to log into from their devices.

Supportive housing, especially in SROs used as such, are provided very little, and it is time the city meets the moment. ■

New SFMTA Tow and Boot Discounts for People Experiencing Homelessness & People Who Are Low-Income

Michelle Lau & Anne Stuhldreher, San Francisco Financial Justice Project

When MiQueesha's car was towed, she lost more than just her transportation. MiQueesha was one of over 1,800 San Franciscans living in their cars, a number that is unfortunately increasing. As MiQueesha told the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) Board of Directors earlier this year:
"I couldn't afford the tickets, and then I lost my registration. And then I couldn't register my car so I'm getting more tickets. And then I lost my job. It's like a downward spiraling effect."

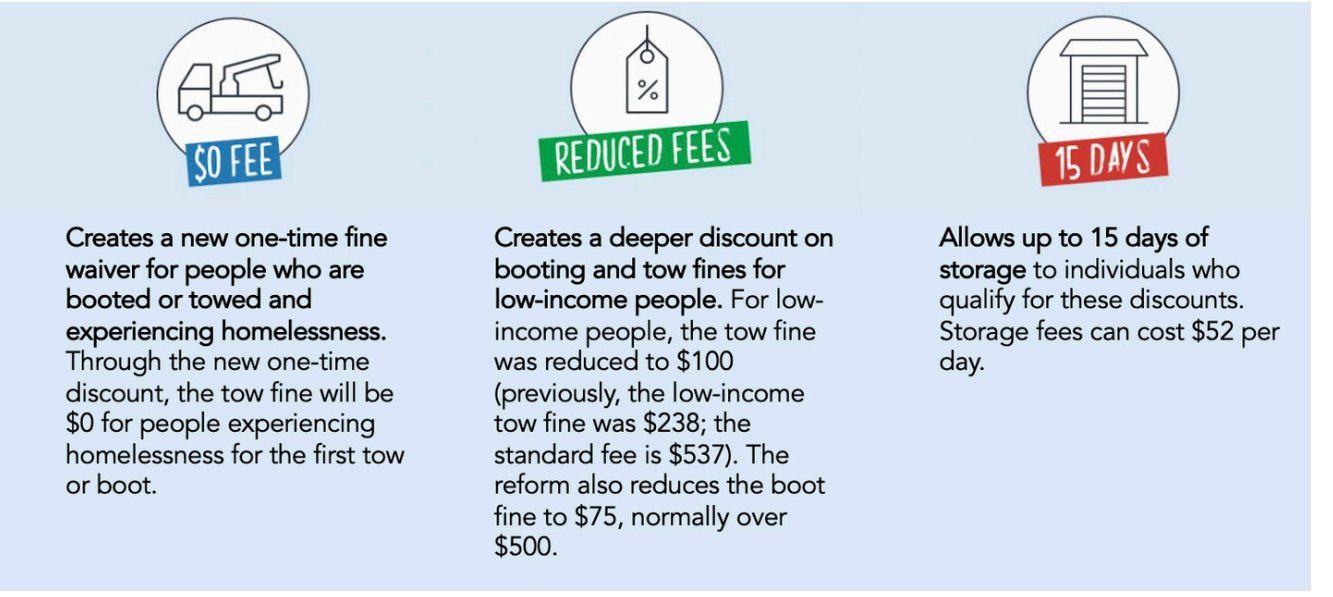
MiQueesha is not alone. The cost of a tow in San Francisco is the most expensive in the country, starting at $537 before the added price of tickets and storage fees. Even with current discounts available for people who are low-income, the cost is still often out of reach. Approximately ten percent of towed cars are never retrieved, presumably because people cannot afford to get them out.

The San Francisco Financial Justice Project has heard from community organizations and residents that when people cannot come up with the money to retrieve their car after it is towed, their situation goes from bad to worse. They lose not only their largest asset, but also often their employment and sometimes their shelter.

"It started a never-ending cycle of debt and poverty," said MiQueesha. "If I was able to keep the car, I would have been able to keep my job."

That's why we're excited that the SFMTA's budget for the new fiscal year includes new tow and boot one-time fine waivers for people who are experiencing homelessness and expands discounts for people who are low-income:

A new one-time fine waiver for people who are towed or booted and experiencing homelessness. Through the new discount, the one-time tow fine will be $0 for people experiencing homelessness for the first tow or boot. In addition, eligible people may also have storage fees, flatbed fees, and other fees waived. People experiencing homelessness are eligible for this discount if they have contacted one of the City's Access Points in the last six months. Access Points help people experiencing homelessness. People who have not yet contacted one of the City's Access Points can still qualify by scheduling a short phone meeting: call 415-487-3300 x7000.



A deeper discount on booting and tow fines for low-income people. For people whose incomes are below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (about $25,500 for a single person) or for people receiving government benefits, such as MediCal, CalFresh, WIC, Unemployment benefits, or SFMTA Lifeline, the tow fine is reduced to $100 (the standard fee is $537). The reform also reduces the boot fine to $75 (the standard fine is over $500).

This flyer has more information on how to apply: https://bit.ly/2RGGIB7. To learn more about these programs, visit: www.sfmta.com/lowincometow or call 311.

We know that families who were already struggling will be hit the hardest by the layoffs, wage cuts, and health issues stemming from the pandemic. People's limited financial reserves are now more depleted. These reforms will make a significant difference for people who need them: low-income San Franciscans and people experiencing homelessness.

We thank the SFMTA and dozens of community-based organizations for their work to push these reforms forward, including the Coalition on Homelessness, GLIDE, Community Housing Partnership, Bay Area Legal Aid, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, and many others. ■

About the San Francisco Financial Justice Project: San Francisco is the first city and county in the nation to launch a Financial Justice Project to assess and reform how fees and fines impact our city's low-income residents and communities of color. Fines, fees, and financial penalties can trap low-income residents in a maze of poverty and punishment and prevent people from succeeding. We work with community groups, city and county departments, and the courts to advance reforms that work better for people and for government. Working with our partners, we have eliminated or adjusted dozens of fees and fines to lift a financial burden off of struggling residents. We are housed in the San Francisco Office of the Treasurer & Tax Collector. Learn more about us on our website: https://sfgov.org/financialjustice/.

Cited in Plain Sight report

TJ Johnston

Black, Latinx and unhoused people in California are hit harder with citations for non-traffic infractions compared with their white peers, a legal advocacy group announced in its new report.

And San Francisco hits Black and Latinx people as hard as anywhere.

Those are some of the takeaways in "Cited for Being in Plain Sight: How California Polices Being Black, Brown and Unhoused in Public." The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area released the report's findings in a September 30 press conference.

The organization found a disproportionate impact on Black, Latinx and homeless people when police ticket them for minor offenses. They also often get ticketed for setting or sleeping in public, and sometimes for loitering — essentially standing — according to the Lawyers' Committee. The organization gathered data by examining law enforcement and county court databases throughout the state.

According to the Lawyers' Committee, law enforcement in nine counties issued 256,528 citations unrelated to traffic in the 2017-18 fiscal year. These were for infractions — not misdemeanors or felonies — and fines started from $200. While the fines don't carry an immediate criminal penalty, they lead to warrants and jail time if unpaid.

Recent protests against police killings of Black people followed severe policing of people selling loose cigarettes and SWAT teams executing no-knock warrants to fatal results of detainees.

Ticketing for acts done in public space compounds existing tensions people of color and low-income people have with law enforcement, said Tifanei Ressl-Moyer, a Thurgood Marshall fellow at the Lawyers' Committee.

"Black, Latinx, homeless and disabled Californians are constantly targeted, surveilled and fined hundreds of dollars for everyday behaviors like sleeping, owning a dog or simply existing in public," she said. "For some, failure to pay or appear in court may even lead to arrest. For others, these encounters with police can be dangerous and, in some cases, deadly."

Throughout California, the Lawyers' Committee found, Black people are 9.7 times more likely to receive a citation than white people.

In San Francisco, Black people and Latinx people, respectively, are 4.5 and 1.8 times more likely to be cited than their white counterparts.

This tracks with the well-documented racial disparity among the City's general and homeless populations. Black people make up 5% of the citywide population, while comprising 37% of the homeless population, according to the City's most recent point-in-time homeless count, while Latinx people represent about 15% overall and 18% of homeless people in San Francisco.

The University of California, Berkeley reported the City enforcing about two dozen local anti-homeless ordinances.

But unhoused San Franciscans can take heart in the City stopping the issuance of bench warrants for failing to appear in court in 2015. The following year, judges tossed some 66,000 outstanding warrants originating from homelessness-related infractions.

In an interview with the San Francisco Chronicle editorial board, then-Presiding Judge John Stewart explained the reason behind that mass revocation.

"You're putting somebody in jail because they're poor and can't pay a fine," he told the Chronicle. "We got a lot of criticism, but we thought it was the right thing to do." Today, unhoused people may arrange lower fines and other arrangements to take care of their tickets.

LCCR recommended alternatives to enforcement, such as state legislation, city moratoriums and diversion of police funds from enforcement of non-traffic violations. ■

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ArtAuction20

Art into action

The Coalition on Homelessess Presents
the 20th Annual Art Auction
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We will be hosting ArtAuction20 as a combination online auction and an outdoor art walk in the storefronts and galleries of the Mission. The auction features work from hundreds of local artists and benefits our work to end poverty and homelessness here in San Francisco.

Viewing and bidding for ArtAuction20 will happen online at

www.artauction20.com

Thank you so much for your support.
We look forwrad to another amazing year!