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STREET SHEET

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REIMAGINING WHAT A FIRST RESPONSE LOOKS LIKE:

A Presentation and Q+A on the CAHOOTS Model

Stella Kunkat

Sparked by the national reckoning with police violence a particular response model, established as an alternative to police is getting renewed attention: Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets, or CAHOOTS.

What started in late 1969 in Eugene, Oregon as a mental health crisis intervention model – “for those who didn’t trust the cops” – eventually developed into citywide mobile crisis and medic response system, institutionalized by the Eugene Police Department and the non-profit White Bird Clinic in 1989 and later extended to the entire Eugene-Springfield Metro area. Since 2019, CAHOOTS is working with multiple cities throughout the U.S. to implement similar response systems.

On August 17, the Coalition on Homelessness invited Tim Black, director of consulting for White Bird Clinic, for a Zoom presentation on the CAHOOTS model and a Q-and-A session – which was particularly fruitful. The CAHOOTS mobile team is dispatched through the Eugene police-fire-ambulance communications center, as well as the Springfield non-emergency hotline. As Black explained to us, calls are categorized into four broad areas: wellness check, public assist, transportation, resource connect and suicidal ideation. These broad categories allow for a response to a wide variety of situations, such as conflict resolution and mediation, as well as death notice response with grief and loss facilitation.

During the Q-and-A session the audience voiced a particular interest in the way CAHOOTS personnel are hired and trained. As Black explained, as far as hiring goes the background or education of an applicant does not matter. When it comes to the training, CAHOOTS requires responders to complete 500 hours of field training before officially working full time. Black further explained that each mobile crisis team is made up of two people — either a nurse or an EMT, and an experienced mental health crisis worker. Additionally, a question came up around implicit bias training requirements: Black replied that CAHOOTS has only recently adopted it as a mandatory part of the training.

Another particular topic of interest during the Q-and-A session was how CAHOOTS interacts with the police, including questions such as, when does CAHOOTS call police for support or how CAHOOTS handles police interference. According to Black, CAHOOTS has been

able to work without interference from police for 31 years, and officers know that there is no need for them if they see CAHOOTS in the streets. If anything, Black adds, patrol officers don’t want to interfere and are happy to hand over the responsibility to CAHOOTS. However, Black adds that initially local police were resistant to the CAHOOTS alternative as they did not like to be watched or criticized. The Eugene Police Department accepted the program only because it would save money and take calls away from them. Over time, CAHOOTS demonstrated that violence is largely determined by the responder — usually a police officer — and not the situation; when situations do escalate, the primary factor is generally alcohol, not a mental health diagnosis or other substances.

CAHOOTS teams only call the police for support if all de-escalation steps have failed and if safety cannot be guaranteed. Black mentioned that out of 24,000 calls for service, only 311 were made to ask police for cover. In a situation where a weapon is present, CAHOOTS does not step in until the weapon is secured or until the person is willing to put it somewhere where it is not on them. Often CAHOOTS is nearby a situation and tries to witness whenever possible, and as soon as the weapon is secured, CAHOOTS steps in.

CAHOOTS puts a particular focus on differentiating themselves from the police. As Black shares, CAHOOTS never requires a last name or the physical address from the person calling — the cross street and clothing description is sufficient. Importantly, meeting basic needs and harm reduction takes priority during all operations. Further, CAHOOTS vans are not equipped with sirens or lights in an effort to not become part of the crisis and to set themselves apart from ambulance and police vehicles. In its interaction with members of the community, CAHOOTS meets them at eye level.

When it comes to a response to unhoused members of the Eugene community, CAHOOTS are limited in the resources that they can provide to homeless people beyond transportation, resource connection and mediation. According to Black, they are in the process of advocating for and involving people with lived experience as they don’t have many people employed who are formerly homeless. ■

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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.

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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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Thank you so much for your support.

We look forward to another amazing year!

RE-FUND OUR COMMUNITIES: SAN FRANCISCO BUDGET VICTORIES, 2020

Jennifer Friedenbach

San Francisco, like many cities, is in a challenging place economically with over 200,000 workers on unemployment, a \$1.5 billion deficit due to loss revenue, and exponentially higher needs for city services such as rental assistance, health care, child care and other city essential activities. San Francisco has a very unique budget process, where the legislative branch receives the budget from the much more powerful executive branch and has the opportunity to cut things out of the Mayor’s budget in order to fund other things they deem as higher priorities.

The Mayor’s budget included cuts to city services, as well as reductions in worker wages. Most of the cuts were in the Mayor’s Office of Housing – which was scary – as well as cuts to children’s programs. The Board was able to restore those cuts, and in the end, was able to fund additional services. This was absolutely necessary to many San Franciscans survival – funding for food so children and elderly people don’t go hungry, or funding for rental assistance so folks can either stay in their homes or move off the streets are crucial.

The last time we faced such budget woes was the Great Recession. We are still paying for the budget cuts enacted then. We lost about 30% of our shelter beds, 50% of our homeless drop-in capacity and \$40 million in direct service cuts to behavioral health services. Whole programs shut down, and we started seeing the impacts of decreased behavioral health almost immediately in our unhoused community.

The Coalition on Homelessness plays a key part in these negotiations each year. We fight to cut things out of the budget that harm our members, while trying to get things funded that either create exits out of homelessness or prevent people from becoming homeless. This work goes almost all year. We do a lot of research – getting input from unhoused folks, gathering data from front line service providers on system capacity, and carefully craft a set of budget recommendations.

This year, this work got an amazing boost from Black Lives Matters movement, resulting in local campaigns being birthed and dozens of hours of public testimony. More was cut from the police department then we have ever seen, however it was nowhere near the 50% to 100% cuts community was asking for, with less than 7% cut to SFPD, and no officers were laid off. However, there will be a shrinkage of the force as officers retire and new academy classes cancelled. This funding did add up. The other thing that was a result of the Black Lives Matter

movement, is that the funding cut by the Mayor went into a fund to directly lift up Black lives and provide some restitution. What is unique is that a task force, made up of 100% Black people will decide where that funding goes. The Board of Supervisors then added funding to it. The Mayor cut \$120 million from a variety of enforcement-related departments such as SFPD (\$20 million a year), District Attorney, Probation, and Sheriffs, over two years, and \$72 million will go to health – such as environmental and mental health, while \$42 million to workforce and Black-owned business. The Board cut another \$26 million from SFPD alone, and made cuts to Sheriffs and other departments as well.

This led to a robust addback pot. However, one of the things the Mayor did was pass a budget that reduced city worker wages without having the authority to do so. The various labor unions would have to go back to workers and then to the bargaining table and that would take more time than they had. The Mayor dumped this on the Board, while publicly declaring war on her workers by using her microphone to shame them for not giving up wages and failing to acknowledge they have taken a six-month pay cut. This created a hostile environment that made negotiating difficult. Budget Chair Sandra Fewer came up with an alternative way to fund the salaries through using a fund dependent on the gross receipts tax passing, but the Mayor wasn’t happy with it. Funds for emergency funds for nonprofits were also included, along with funding for Black organizations. The Mayor will likely sign the budget, but took a jab at the Board for doing this.

Meanwhile some important organizing had been taking place, with several “defund the police” efforts underway. At the Coalition on Homelessness we concentrated on figuring out creative ways to elevate the voices of unhoused families. We set up coloring kits for unhoused families to send “letters from the pandemic” with creations of their “dream homes.” We collected over 100 of these letters and brought them to Fewer’s office. We also had a listening session where about 20 unhoused family members got a chance to speak directly to Chair Fewer and Vice Chair Shamann Walton about their budget priorities. This was a beautiful moment of transracial solidarity with Black, Chinese and Latinx San Francisco families sharing the impact the housing crisis was having on their families. Lastly, we had a bell-ringing action where hundreds of people safely walked by and rang a bell for housing in front of City Hall.

In the end, these efforts were suc-

cessful, and we won over 400 housing subsidies, not just for families but other populations such as youth, seniors, people with disabilities, folks with HIV, trans community and more. In addition we were able to win unhoused people hotel rooms for families and youth who don’t qualify for federal disaster assistance which is mostly targeting elderly people. The Board also funded alternatives to policing which will be key to get further reductions to the carceral system – County Jail No. 4 at 850 Bryant is now closing even earlier – and there are many more places where our criminal injustice system

2020: OUR COLLECTIVE BUDGET VICTORIES!

SUMMARY WINS

- 400 housing subsidies serving almost 600 people that can either move out of homelessness, or avoid becoming homeless.
- 175 unhoused family members and youth who don’t qualify for FEMA will get hotel rooms.
- 135 unhoused people will get opportunities for gainful employment
- Over 100 people will get legal assistance to stave off displacement and eviction
- Funding to create alternative to police response.
- Total funds redistributed towards ending homelessness due to our collective efforts in next year’s budget (*number reflects annualized amount in second year): \$11,773,008!*
- HESPA**
 - Housing Subsidies!
 - 100 Senior Disability Deep Housing Subsidies to keep households housed and to house homeless households
 - \$750,000 funded for first year and \$1,000,000 for second year
 - 60 HIV Housing Subsidies to keep households housed and to house homeless households
 - \$450,000 funded for first year and \$600,000 second year
 - 100 Displaced Tenants Housing Subsidies to keep households housed and to house homeless households
 - \$750,000 funded for first year and \$1,000,000 for second year
 - 40 Flexible Housing Pool Subsidies for Families serving 120 people
 - \$1,275,000 funded in first year and \$1,700,000 in second year
 - 10 Need Based Subsidies for Homeless Families serving 30 people
 - \$500,000 in both years

is bloated and far too dependent on a punitive approach that does not lift people out of poverty and destitution, but usually exacerbates issues like trauma, mental illness, debt, joblessness, homelessness and other social issues that have been too often resulted in a law enforcement intervention.

A big part of these successes is the behind the scenes work done by Chelsea Boillard, an aide to Fewer, who comes out of the community and is skilled at moving competing interests towards a common goal of justice. If all of this holds, the budget will head to a full vote by the Board of Supervisors in mid-September, but there will be no more public hearings. ■

- 15 Flexible Housing Pool Subsidies for Transitional Aged Youth
 - \$626,204 in both years
- Emergency Housing!
 - 100 homeless youth will have emergency housing in hotels
 - \$620,000 in emergency housing funds for TAY
- 25 Hotels rooms for Homeless Families
 - \$676,804 for both years
- Employment!
 - About 135 homeless individuals will receive employment services
 - \$750,000 in year one and \$1,000,000 in year two
- Total HESPA Funded Year 1: \$6,398,008
- Total HESPA Funded Year 2: \$7,723,008

OTHER HOUSING JUSTICE WINS
17 families living in SRO’s can move into decent housing
\$700,000 in both years

60 Transgender Deep Housing Subsidies to keep households housed and to house homeless households
\$450,000 in first year and \$600,000 in second year

More than 100 households have access to tenant legal defense to stave off eviction
\$750,000 for tenant right to counsel in both years

Human Rights Wins
Part of this funding came from cutting Police Department and Sheriffs – 3 of 4 new academy classes cancelled, overtime was cut, and officers addressing homelessness through HSOC were put on reserve.

\$2,000,000 in year two was funded to develop alternatives to police response.

HOUSING NOT BARRICADES

RETURN TO SENDER: HOUSE THE BAY RALLIES AGAINST UC HASTINGS SETTLEMENT

Jiffy Phan, House the Bay

“Homes not barricades!! Homes not barricades!!”

These are the words chanted by protesters marching through the streets of the Tenderloin. Some were carrying police barricades, while others held signs that read ‘DEFUND SFPD,’ ‘Rent is Theft’ and ‘Black Homes Matter’. Others were equipped with medical supplies and sustenance, and in the back you could hear the Brass Liberation orchestra playing their instruments brightly to the beat of the chants.

Community organizations such as House the Bay, Gay Shame, Coalition on Homelessness, Senior and Disability Action, Do No Harm Coalition, Every 28 Foundation, and more joined together for a march and rally on August 22 to decry the settlement between UC Hastings and the City of San Francisco, which promises to remove all tents with no offer of housing. While the coronavirus pandemic and bad air quality from raging wildfires pose a threat to our health and safety, those participating still chose to be at the rally. We chose to come out and march for the homeless people who have no other option than to breathe this air and to shelter themselves in the streets with the high risk of infection from COVID-19.

Our city is our home, yet the City has abandoned our people living on the streets. The same streets where our public officials continue to criminalize poor and vulnerable people. The same streets where police brutality and anti-Blackness continue to show up. The same streets where the City’s solution to homelessness during the pandemic

is increasing police enforcement and barricading public sidewalks during encampment sweeps. Time and time again, our society has shown no mercy to homeless people.

No one can thrive in a corrupt system created by racist policies. Despite the lack of housing resources, UC Hastings Chancellor David Faigman articulated that his goal with the lawsuit is to “clear the streets,” which will leave thousands of homeless Tenderloin residents at increased risk of sweeps, COVID-19 and unhealthy air. This city has been so gentrified that the only people we see now are those who are struggling to survive in a lively city that has slowly transformed into a ghost town. Meanwhile many people with privilege can look away and leave San Francisco behind because they have access to a home and a remote job during the pandemic.

“I love San Francisco, I love my City, but this city has failed me,” said Couper Orona, an unhoused San Franciscan and disabled firefighter who serves the local homeless community as a street medic. “Our City leaders, [they] need to get the fuck up and stop fucking around.”

San Francisco’s mayor, London Breed, has used her power to take no action but to send police to criminalize unhoused people for the ways they survive on the streets. Not only has she refused to implement Proposition C, which should have opened 4,000 units to homeless San Franciscans, but she has also failed to implement the unanimously passed Board of Supervisors ordinance to open 8,250 hotel

rooms to our unhoused neighbors during this pandemic. Instead, we see police barricades all over the neighborhood to block unhoused people from accessing the most rudimentary

by this—but I am sorry. Because let’s be clear about what is happening here: UC Hastings raised tens of millions of dollars to build a new building at 333



shelter. Our community cannot stand by the injustice created by Mayor London Breed and UC Hastings. Homeless people deserve better! We want housing for all, we want funding to go towards community services instead of SFPD, and we demand a moratorium on all sweeps.

UC Hastings should not get to determine the City’s response to the needs of our unhoused neighbors. Our march wound through the Tenderloin and paused in front of UC Hastings where a law student addressed the crowd.

“For the two years I’ve received countless e-mails from my school about how they aim to be a “leader in anti-bias education”—and yet UC Hastings has been and continues to be nothing but a hostile and racist presence in this community,” said Ava Agree who is studying law at UC Hastings. “I am not surprised

Golden Gate Avenue, and to pay for it, they’d like to fill it with eager, white, young do-gooders

like myself-- and they decided the only way they’d recoup their investment would be by removing our unhoused neighbors.”

Marchers passed out flyers to passers-by about the action and about how to get involved with our ongoing organizing work. Along the way a few confused cops showed up, but were unable to reclaim the barricades we took. The march for Housing not Barricades continued. The band played louder, we held our banners and signs higher, and dozens of cars honked as they circled City Hall.

As we prepared the sound system for the next speakers, we transformed the barricades into a house at the foot of City Hall. The barricade walls were adorned with our signs, and a giant tarp became the roof. The completion of the installation in front of City Hall is symbolic of what we are fighting for and the direct action we need in our community. Everybody deserves a safe place to stay during the pandemic. ■



All centerfold photos by Heidi Alletzhauser // <https://heidialletzhauserphotography.pixieset.com/>

BARRICADES

WE ARE NOT A NUISANCE

Dasom Nah, Senior and Disability Action

Most of this year has gone by, but unhoused people in San Francisco are still on the streets. COVID is already turning people's lives into numbers. Deadly racism has been turning Black people into memories for all of the history of this country. Isolation and loneliness in the time of global trauma is taking our remaining bits of sanity and health. And now UC Hastings is trying to turn peoples existence into what? Public nuisance?

We at Senior and Disability Action are horrified by the disturbing lawsuit by UC Hastings during the GLOBAL PANDEMIC, no less. UC Hastings! Where are your priorities when for you, humans are a nuisance, when the actual issues of the virus, pollutants and smoke are still unsolved?

Think of the barricades. That is an image of war, of separation, of segregation. Of tanks and cops in riot gear. All the while 35% of unhoused people in California are Black, with the overall Black population in California staying at 6%. All the while half of homeless people in San Francisco have disabilities. This is not just about barricades, this is about racist, ableist and ageist terror!

We are at the verge of a housing crisis of an unprecedented scale. That means thousands if not millions of people who are currently housed being housing insecure. Black, Indigenous, People of color, Disabled people and elders are more likely to be low-income, often living on SSI and unable to afford housing in San Francisco. Living without shelter, quality food and healthcare; and now COVID, fires, rising unemployment — causes and exacerbates many disabilities, physical and mental. We already let disabled people and seniors, Black and indigenous people, people who are born and raised in this city, go without housing. What would that mean for the near future for all of us??

We are not a nuisance. We are the public! And we will not let them try to pit the public against each other! The only way out of the crisis of the U.S. is for us housed and unhoused people to work together. We will fight for deeply affordable housing, we will close streets to cars to increase accessibility, we will ask for trauma-informed mental health care, and we will demand for people to be housed in empty apartments and hotel rooms!!

When City officials throw barricades, we say "Hell No! Housing not barricades!" ■



MH FIRST: An Alternative to Calling the Police in Oakland

Alastair Boone, Editor of the Street Spirit

The Anti Police-Terror Project is offering a new kind of support for those in crisis. Just call (510) 999-9MH1

Don't call the cops on homeless people. This is a common refrain amongst advocates, and one that has grown louder over the past few months. But when you are witnessing someone in the midst of a mental health crisis, this is easier said than done. As most cities do not have the resources to address the specific needs of people in crisis, the choices are daunting: intervene yourself, call 911, or do nothing at all.

The Anti Police-Terror Project (APTP) has stepped up to change that. On August 28, they launched MH First Oakland: a hotline to call if you are experiencing a mental health crisis, or witness someone else who is struggling to manage their mental health. The hotline is not just for unhoused people — anyone who needs support is invited to call. The number is (510) 999-9MH1.

The hotline is staffed by a group of volunteers made up of doctors, nurses, mental health professionals and community members. Upon calling, a volunteer will answer the phone and talk you through what's happening using a conversational style: Are you safe? What kind of environment are you in? Are there police on the scene?

The volunteer will also assess your physical health to determine whether a condition like hunger, dehydration or low blood sugar is masquerading as a bigger problem. Callers will not be interrogated about their name, age or race, Cat Brooks — one of the founders of APTP — says, as this can put people in crisis more on edge.

Once the volunteer understands the basics of the situation, they will determine what should happen next. They may make a safety and mental health plan with the caller, discussing situation-appropriate changes that can be made, as well as setting a time for MH First to call back and follow up.

If the circumstances are more urgent, they may send out a dispatch team composed of a mental health

professional, an EMT or RN, and a security liaison. Each of these individuals has a specific job: the EMT or RN will check vitals, the mental health professional will work with the individual in distress, and the security liaison will manage the presence of community members and law enforcement. In these situations, MH First may also draw on partnerships with local clinics and hospitals. If calling 911 is the only option, they will dispatch a security liaison to ensure the person in need is not criminalized, and that they get the help they need (Due to COVID-19, MH First is not currently sending out dispatch teams. They will initiate this process once it is safe for their volunteers).

The MH First Oakland hotline is currently open on Friday and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., but you can call 24/7. If you need to call during off hours, they encourage you to leave a voicemail including your phone number or another way to reach you. You can also reach out for help on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook at @MHFirstOak.

"If someone sees someone in crisis and they don't want to call the cops, they should call us. If they see cops responding to someone in crisis, they should call us," says Brooks. "We really want to focus on time, de-escalation, compassion and care. That may mean the volunteer is on the phone with someone for hours, and that's OK. Law enforcement wants to deal with these situations ASAP, which usually requires force or incarceration."

Meeting mental health crises with force has deadly consequences. According to a study by the Ruderman Foundation, half of people who are killed by police have a disability, and the majority of those people are living with mental illness. Other studies have shown that people living with untreated mental illness are 16 times more likely to be killed by law enforcement than others who are approached. Furthermore, mobile crisis services have proven to be more cost effective than police

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BEWARE THE BUDGET CUTS, CAMERAS, AND CIVILIANS: ON THE FUTURE OF POLICING IN SAN FRANCISCO

Madeleine Matz

Near the seven-hour mark of the July 8 meeting of the Board of Supervisors' Budget and Appropriations Committee on the San Francisco Police Department budget for the next fiscal year, I realized I simply could not go on. After two long presentations, dozens of questions from supervisors and almost five hours of public comment, the end was not in sight. I was exhausted.

This was, for some organizers, the goal. Many of the over 400 callers used a script, provided by the San Francisco Democratic Socialists of America's AfroSocialist Caucus, and asked for the same things as most other commenters. Like people around the country, they are fed up with policing, and in reiterating their demands to "defund, disarm and disband" SFPD they hope to impress upon decision makers that they are part of a much larger movement. In the wake of George Floyd's murder at the hands of five Minneapolis Police Department officers, protests against racist police terror have spread around the country. Many people, especially young Black and indigenous people

of color, are done accepting the lie that reform, cultural competency training or more diversity in police departments prevent violence. SFPD is no different from Minneapolis police or any other metropolitan police force, and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors Budget and Appropriations Committee meeting demonstrated the clash between the incrementalism of many of the policymakers and calls for immediate abolition from the public.

Committee members Norman Yee, Hillary Ronen, Sandra Fewer, Shamann Walton and Rafael Mandelman were joined by SFPD chief William Scott, Supervisor Dean Preston, Deputy Budget Director Ashley Groffenberger from the Mayor's Office and others. The meeting consisted of presentations from Chief Scott and Nick Menard from the Budget and Legislative Analyst office followed by dozens of questions from the supervisors present and nearly twelve hours of public comment.

All of the supervisors, as well as the Budget Analyst's representatives, asked Chief Scott pointed questions about different categories of the SFPD budget. Walton wondered aloud about the importance of mounted

police, who ride horses in some city parks and come with a price tag of over \$2 million, while Preston complained of high spending on overtime. Yee, Ronen and Fewer expressed their frustration with the slow pace of civilianization, the process by which jobs formerly assigned to sworn police officers are reallocated at a lower cost to civilians.

In response to these questions and complaints, Chief Scott emphasized time and time again that "SFPD reforms [should be seen] as the framework for budget increases." He claimed that the personnel increases, including the hiring of deputy chiefs and other upper level management, constitute "structural support for reforms." However, we know that the SFPD cannot be reformed. Years of harassment and violence directed at unhoused, marginalized and poor people have displayed that there is no training that can fix the injustice inherent to policing or to San Francisco's many racist, anti-poor or anti-homeless laws. As the Coalition on Homelessness and other advocates have pointed out time and time again, SFPD "punishes the poorest" through a system of policing that uses violence and harassment to make the lives of the unhoused

the Chief's logic. It was clear that they were ready to demand budget cuts. Prominent among many of their requests was the desire to shift police away from responding to homelessness.

Indeed, Fewer, Ronen and Preston expressed their discomfort with the inclusion of police in the Healthy Street Operations Center (HSOC) and Homeless Outreach Teams (HOT). Even Mandelman, who had little negative to say about SFPD, wondered aloud if police were always best suited to aid unhoused people in medical distress or those experiencing mental health crises. HSOC especially took the brunt of the supervisors' complaints. Over \$4 million per year is spent to staff HSOC with SFPD officers, an expense which Fewer, Ronen and Preston suggested should be altogether eliminated. Mayor London Breed has also echoed these demands, saying that cops should not respond to calls about nonviolent unhoused people.

But changing the makeup of HSOC is not enough while we still have unjust laws on the books and the expectation of their enforcement. While the push to remove police from HSOC is unquestionably positive, we cannot forget the violence that other groups tasked with sweeping unhoused people perpetuate. San Francisco Public Works is the department responsible for the constant confiscation of belongings from unhoused people, as documented through the Stolen Belonging Project. While SFPD is the main vector of the criminalization of homelessness in San Francisco, it is not the only agency involved in enacting dehumanizing violence.

Despite the clear consensus of the eight hours of public comment and the political leanings of some of the more leftist supervisors, discussions of SFPD's budget were decidedly reformist. Using civilianization to pay people less to uphold a violent system does not make the system less violent. Having civilians answer phones or analyze data may help shrink the bloated police budget, but it is a far cry from abolition.

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people unlivable. Through different mayors, police chiefs and public scandals, this anti-homeless brutality has continued. But Chief Scott assured the committee that he has "banned bias in policing" and that therefore the budget increases of the SFPD represent greater oversight and care, rather than just more cops.

But, with the notable exception of Mandelman, the committee members seemed unimpressed by

Photo credit: Heidi Alletzhauser //

<https://heidialletzhauserphotography.pixieset.com/>

Descript: a masked person riding a "Lyft bike" holds up a sign with a Ronnie Goodman print and text that reads "SFPD out of the TL"



Are you currently homeless? Was your car towed or booted?

You may be eligible for for a one-time waiver of your towing or booting fees. Your storage fees could be waived for up to 15 days.

1 STEP ONE

You may be eligible for this one-time discount if you have contacted one of the City's Access Points in the last six months. Access Points help people experiencing homeless.

To confirm you have contacted one of the City's Access Points, **call one of the Access Point phone numbers on the back of this flyer.**

If you have **NOT** contacted one of the City's Access Points, you can still qualify for the one-time discount by scheduling a short phone meeting.

The phone numbers for the Access Points are on the back of this flyer. You can also go to the Access Points in person. The closest Access Point to AutoReturn is: Episcopal Community Services, 123 10th Street (at Mission), San Francisco, CA 94103.

2 STEP TWO

If you think your car is towed, immediately call City and County of San Francisco Impound at 415.865.8200. Go to AutoReturn (450 7th Street, San Francisco, CA. Cross streets are Harrison and Brannon) to get your car.

AutoReturn will confirm that you have been seen by one of the Access Points below in the last six months. **Please note that it may take up to one business day to verify your eligibility.**

You must be the registered owner or be on the car's rental contract in order to retrieve your car. Please bring the following to AutoReturn to retrieve your car:

- 1. Valid driver's license
- 2. Keys for the vehicle

AutoReturn can verify ownership for California vehicles. Other ways to verify ownership include:

- Valid registration
- Title, or
- Rental agreement

ACCESS POINT PHONE NUMBERS AND LOCATIONS

You are eligible for the one-time towing and booting discount if you have contacted one of the City's Access Points in the last six months. Access Points help people experiencing homelessness.

To confirm you have contacted one of the City's Access Points, call one of the Access Point phone numbers below.

If you have **NOT** contacted one of the City's Access Points, you can still qualify for the one-time discount by scheduling a short phone meeting with a caseworker.

SINGLE ADULTS CALL:

Adult Access Point Partnership
2111 Jennings Street (at Van Dyke)
OR 123 10th Street (at Mission)
OR 1138 Howard Street
415-487-3300 x7000

FAMILIES CALL:

The Mission Access Point
2971 Mission Street
415-972-1281

Bayview Access Point
1641 LaSalle Ave
415-430-6320

YOUTH UNDER 24 CALL:

Larkin Street Engagement and Community Center
134 Golden Gate Ave
415-673-0911
Homeless Youth Alliance
415-318-6384

3rd Street Youth Center and Clinic
1728 Bancroft Ave
510-936-1324

LYRIC
127 Collingwood Street
415-696-4191



TOWARD ABOLITION, NOT JUST REFORM...

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Assigning the work of SFPD to civilian personnel is not the answer to the calls to reform or reimagine policing in San Francisco.

In a recent New York Times article, progressive District Attorney Chesa Boudin endorsed a system of cameras that are being put in place all over the city by tech mogul Chris Larsen. These cameras are managed by what the article calls “neighborhood nonprofits” made up of “property owners.” Another name they go by is Business Improvement Districts (BIDs).

The UC Berkeley Policy Advocacy Project found that BIDs in California “spend property assessment revenue to enact, maintain and strengthen anti-homeless laws” through policy advocacy. They both “collaborate with law enforcement” and “directly enforce” these laws. Not only is this unethical, it is also illegal. Private citizens are not legally allowed to confiscate the belongings of unhoused people or push them from public spaces. Additionally, BIDs use property assessment revenue to lobby to strengthen anti-homeless laws and increase policing, which is undemocratic, according to the

Western Regional Advocacy Project. The San Francisco-based homeless advocacy organization reports that in 2020, BIDs in San Francisco will control over \$25 million in taxpayer revenue. Of that, over \$13.5 million will be spent on cleaning and security programs. These programs directly and violently target homeless people under the guise of good business.

This is where the cameras come in. In his interview with the New York Times, Boudin described the cameras as a possible money saver. “It takes 10 cops to do a single drug bust, costs \$20,000 or something. And I don’t want my attorneys to be doing this for no benefit on the street,” he told the Times. With calls to defund the police abounding, it is easy to see how cameras could be posited as a more budget friendly alternative. But efficiency doesn’t mean justice. Indeed, even if these cameras allowed for fewer drug busts there is no guarantee that the remaining would not be unfairly and unjustly leveled at poor Black and brown people.

Policing must be reduced, yes, but more than that it must be reimaged. For example, even if cops were forced out of HSOC, it

seems unlikely that BIDs and their corresponding Community Benefit Districts (CBDs), would stop their assaults on unhoused people. In fact, it seems likely that they would take over an even greater responsibility in policing poverty. It is disturbing that even ultra-progressives like Boudin are looking to these unregulated and anti-democratic groups to take on roles formerly filled by SFPD, and supporting the expansion of surveillance to aid them.

To be clear, no one at the July 8 meeting referenced BIDs or the cameras. But the talk of civilianization and even the recommendation to remove cops from HSOC spoke to a narrow and dangerously superficial understanding of police abolition. If the violent, anti-homeless, anti-poor, anti-Black, anti-immigrant and anti-queer laws that govern San Francisco and the United States aren’t abolished, social workers, public health officials and private citizens might very well be deputized to carry out the same carceral practices that police once enacted.

Redirecting police work to civilians within SFPD or to neighborhood watch groups like BIDs is not abolition. Private security

guards, perpetually rolling cameras, or people without badges answering the phone at the precinct is not what we are fighting for. Unhoused, Black and brown, queer and immigrant San Franciscans deserve better. Budget cuts or shady math should not be mistaken for real change.

Towards the end of that meeting, yet another public commenter came on the line. They told a short story about being stopped in traffic and having a seemingly unhoused person without a shirt on yank at their car door. “I was scared at that moment,” the person said. “I wanted the person on the other side of my window to get help, but I knew I couldn’t call the police. Whatever happened would have been on me, and I couldn’t live with that.”

Our system is deeply and fundamentally broken. Allocating aspects of it to private citizens with even less oversight than the police is not the answer. We don’t need a new or higher tech system to marginalize the many for the benefit of the few. We need a radical reimaging of what our world can look like. We need police abolition, and we need it now. ■

MH FIRST: An Alternative to Calling the Police in Oakland

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response. As noted in a report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), on average, mobile crisis services cost 23 percent less per case and can reduce the costs associated with inpatient hospitalization by about 79 percent within six-months after the crisis occurs.

Brooks says MH First is one example of a situation where community can step in as an alternative to policing.

“Cops are trained to force compliance, to stir a scene and deal with an issue with as much force as possible. Let’s take Steven Taylor in San Leandro,” Brooks says, referring to the 33-year-old Black man who was killed by police in April in the midst of a mental health crisis at a Walmart. “They could have walked into that Walmart, cleared it, let that man do whatever he needed to do

in that moment. The moment is not going to last forever. Time, distance, de-escalation. Not badges guns or Tasers.”

Brooks laments that our society has given police so many different responsibilities: those of parents, teachers, social workers. She believes that directing funds away from law enforcement and into alternative models would make communities safer. “Let’s let cops deal with real murder and rape, and let the community care for each other,” she says.

MH First Oakland is not APTP’s first foray into community care. Back in January, they launched MH First Sacramento, and the hotline has since spread like wildfire. Brooks says this is an indicator of the program’s necessity: they didn’t have a budget for marketing or communications, so their only outreach was through flyers and word of mouth. Now, the City of Sacramento has initiated

conversations with APTP about what a partnership might look like. “The community is eating it alive, eating it up,” Brooks says.

APTP first conceived of MH First five years ago. It was a natural extension of the rapid response work they were already doing: reaching out the families of those who are murdered by police and offering support; sitting with friends and loved ones in moments of distress. But organizers wanted to figure out a way to get ahead of the problem, responding before a tragedy occurs. That’s where the idea for MH First came from. The idea has only become more relevant in recent months, since the murder of George Floyd has galvanized the movement to abolish police throughout the country.

“Because of this movement moment, people are no longer laughing at us,” Brooks says. “Thank God we were prepared to embrace this moment in a way we may not have already have been.”

MH First Oakland is currently working with around 30 volunteers. According to Daniela Kantorová, a clinical psychologist who is one of the coordinators for the program, hundreds have already expressed interest in receiving volunteer training. New volunteers will be trained

gradually, and with time they may be able expand their hours. Kantorová and Brooks both stress that they want unhoused people to be part of their volunteer base.

“We need to be open to learning, because the unhoused community are experts on their own lives,” Kantorová says.

Volunteers work in shifts and are responsible for being available to answer the phone or be dispatched during their allotted time. ■

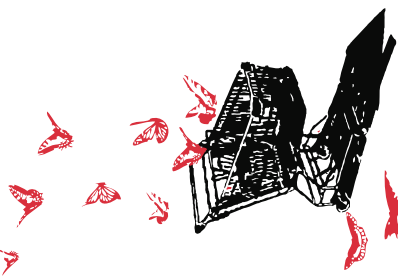
To get involved, check out the MH First Oakland page on the APTP website, at www.antipoliceterror-project.org/mh-first-oakland.

Alastair Boone is the Editor of Street Spirit, the East Bay’s homeless advocacy newspaper.

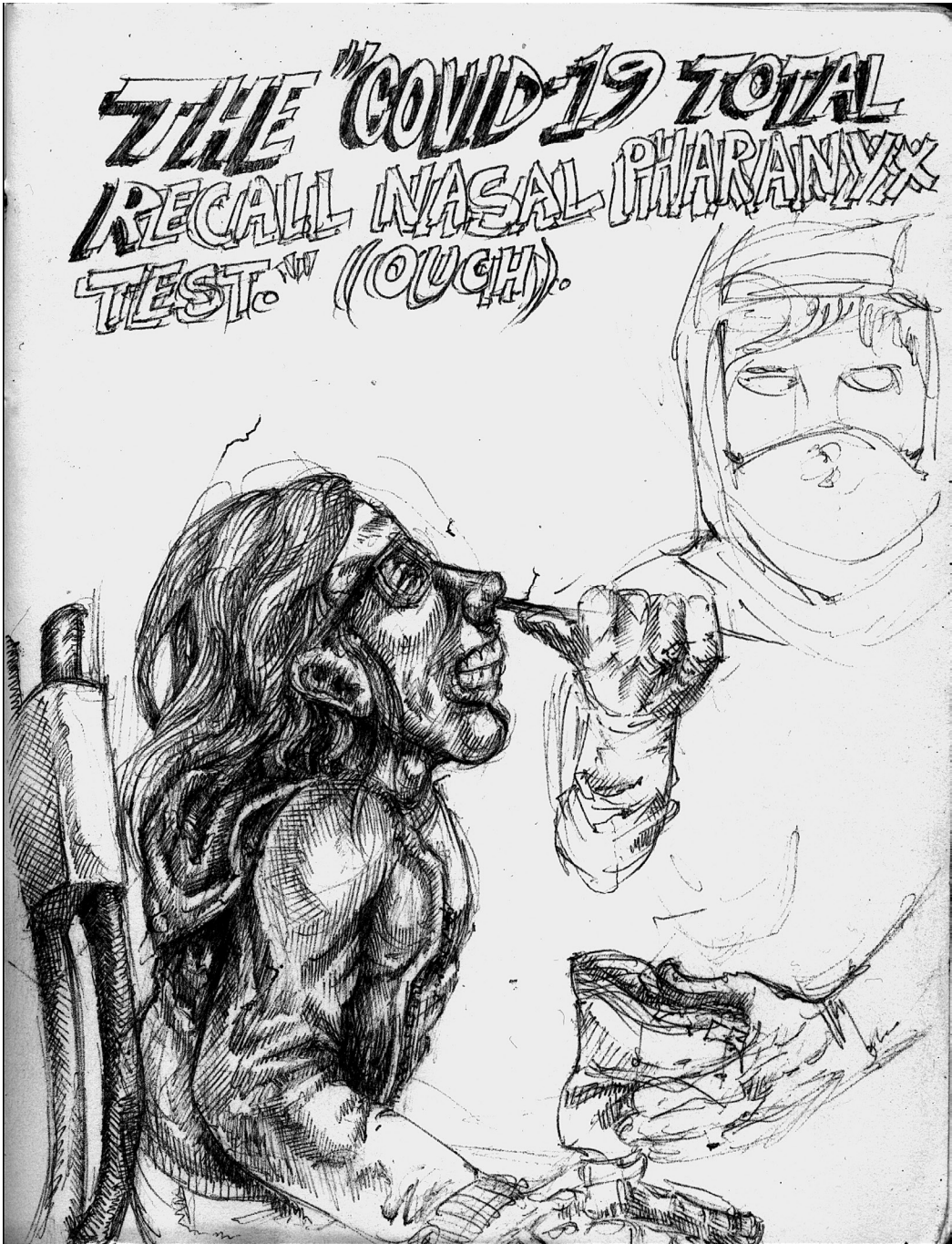
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