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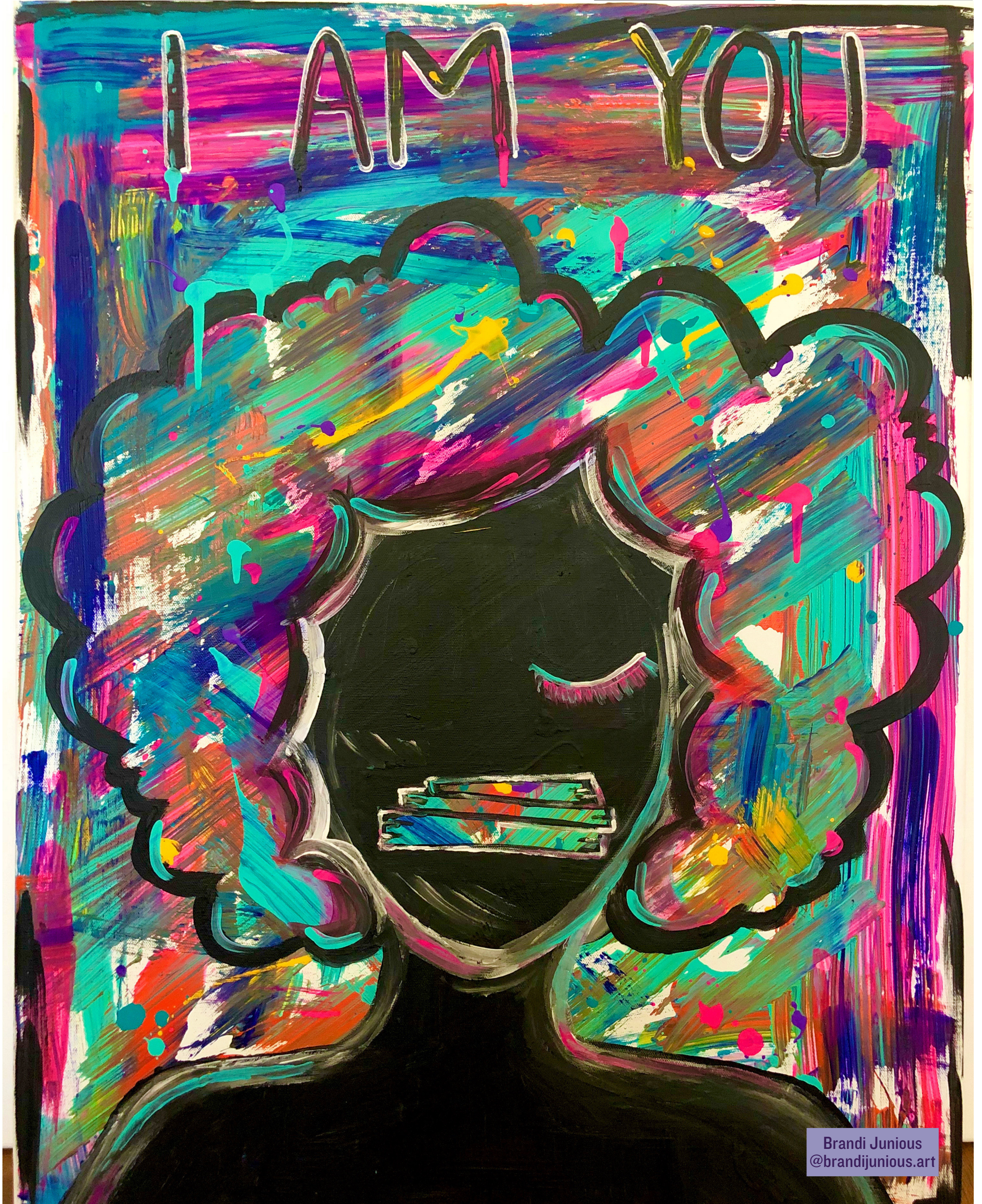
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Brandi Junious @brandijunious.art

SHELTER WAITLIST UPDATE: AS OF MARCH 1ST THERE ARE 1,008 SINGLE ADULTS ON THE WAITLIST FOR SHELTER IN SAN FRANCISCO

CITY'S APPROACH PRODUCES MORE HARM, MORE THAN IT REDUCES

On January 16, 2018, The City and County of San Francisco launched the Healthy Streets Operations Center (HSOC) in order to better coordinate the City's response both to homeless encampments and, according to a 2019 report from the SF Controller's office, 'behaviors that impact quality of life, such as public drug use and sales.' Instead of effectively addressing the needs of unhoused San Franciscans, what emerged was a harsh system, led by law enforcement, with an emphasis on criminalisation and displacement. By August of 2018, the City's coordinated response to homelessness had become, in effect, the City's coordinated response to the complaints of housed folks, and valuable City resources, including Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing's Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), were being dispatched and directed based on complaints to SF's 311 customer service system. San Francisco has more than twice as many SFPD homeless response officers as there are members of HOT, and a seemingly endless supply of Public Works cleaning crews, so much of the city's response to encampments has ended up being encampment sweeps, with no offers of adequate

alternative shelters.

This 311 complaint-driven Guns and Garbage Trucks displacement model has survived for so long, largely because the main metrics used to measure 'success' have been quarterly tent counts, the number of service referrals made by HSOC, and the volume of homelessness-related 311 complaints. Without a corresponding reduction in overall homelessness, any reduction of the number of tents on San Francisco's streets reflects a reduction in the visibility and safety of unhoused San Franciscans. Service referrals are meaningless unless they end in actual connections, and the acceptance rates of shelter and services offered by HOT have plummeted under the current model. The connection rate of service referrals made by SFPD officers has always been abysmally low, and making them the main first responders to homeless-related calls has negatively impacted the effectiveness of all city departments involved in addressing homelessness.

In a city full of harm reduction heavyweights and heroes, much of what the *continued on page 8...*

VIOLENCE AGAINST HOMELESS PEOPLE PART 2

Shyhyene Brown

A few years ago I wrote an article on violence against homeless people to give you guys a glimpse of how homeless people are treated. Now I'm about to give you a true eye opener on this subject.

Ok now here is the ice-breaker. No one wakes up in the morning and says "I want to be homeless" or "I wonder what homelessness is really like" or "I wonder how people are gonna treat me while I'm homeless". No one does. And it's a shame how modern day housed people can sit there and have malice in their hearts toward homeless people.

See homelessness is not by choice and everyone who is homeless has a different story on how they became homeless.

So let me ask you this question: is it right for a housed person to downgrade, belittle, better yet inflict bodily harm on a homeless individual. I asked 100 people this same question and most of them said "no", it's not right, and something has to be done. Some said the violence is because of the situation and the last of them said they didn't want to comment.

See every day a homeless person is getting hurt mentally, emotionally, physically, and nothing is being done for or about it.

See what people fail to realize is that being homeless has its downfalls; one of the downfalls is worrying about your belongings, worrying about your safety and well-being. The last thing homeless people should need to worry about is violence inflicted upon them. I have a lot of people that I know of that are homeless and the majority of them have had some types of violence inflicted upon them. Even those who have not personally experienced violence know someone who has, or has known someone who died because of violence against homeless people.

Whether people know it or not violence of any kind impacts a lot of people and a community and family members. Some of the impacts are sometimes very little to extremely out of this world, such as emotional or physical stress, financial burden, psychological trauma. Family members stay up late nights worrying if their loved ones are being harmed or killed. That's just a little thing about the downfalls.

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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 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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WORKGROUP MEETINGS

HOUSING JUSTICE WORK GROUP
Every Tuesday at noon

AT 280 TURK STREET

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

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO OUR WORK GROUP MEETINGS. Our new office has an elevator for anyone who can not use the stairs. Simply call up and someone will come escort you.

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

And what hurts even more is when violence is done the people who do it get let free, or it's brushed to the side hoping that no one will notice that it's been done. Or better yet it becomes someone's statistic.

Even though I'm housed now I still interact with homeless people on a everyday basis. People come up to me crying their eyes out asking me "when is this violence going to end towards us," or saying "I'm done with this shit, I give up cuz nothing is being done about it." For example, a lady not very long ago came up to me, telling me her husband of 20 years died from getting run over by a car while riding his bike. She had been on the phone with him when he was hit, and the last thing her husband said to her was that he loved her and to stay strong. It was a hit-and-run situation. Come to find out the person who hit her husband was captured and later released on DUI charges.

Another incident just recently was

my situation, where someone I called my daughter came into my house and jumped on me for no reason. Now I don't feel safe in my spot and I can't sleep at night.

Now I'm going to ask the general public and the Board of Supervisors: "How can we come together as a community and help stop the violence towards the homeless?". How can we hold the past District Attorney responsible for his failure to take violence against homeless people seriously? And how can we educate the current District Attorney so he doesn't make the same mistakes. How can we make our community a safe place for homeless people and for everyone?

In closing, our community should be a safe place for everyone, including homeless people, to live, because you never know if it might be your kid next, or better yet your loved one period. ■

MAKING HISTORY FOR BLACK HISTORY

Emmett House

We set out for months to put on a 2020 African-American centered event for Black History Month at the Coalition on Homelessness. Being my first time planning such a big event made me extremely nervous, but I was relieved to have the help of our peer organizer Tracey Mixon, who led the event with me. This was our first event planning, so yes we were nervous!

We were glad to join hands with Hospitality House as well. Since moving offices from 468 Turk to 280 Turk, sharing a space with our longtime ally Hospitality House in the struggle (the Director of which helped to actually form the Coalition on Homelessness). It feels like we're coming full circle, back with the people who helped to create the Coalition, in community collaboration to bring attention to the disparate impacts of homelessness on our Black community.

On 2/20/20, we held our event and were very pleased to see such a big turnout. We first congregated at the Coalition and held an open mic where we held space for African American members of the community to speak about Black San Francisco, family histories of the Fillmore, and stories of displacement, gentrification, and eviction which led to the sharp decline in the Black population here. While we make up less than 5% of the general population in San Francisco, Black folks make up 37% of the homeless population here. People shared speeches from African-American leaders, some recited poetry

of their own, and one of our very own unhoused Coalition activists sang a Sam Cooke song ("A Change Is Gonna Come") for us — all while sharing a meal of traditional soul food cooked by Coalition members as well as donated jambalaya from Brenda's. We enjoyed listening to each other's stories, songs, and poems while eating together and nourishing our bodies and spirit before our march to City Hall.

The plan was to simply march to City Hall with our newly created "Black History: More than a Month, but a Movement" banner, and chant through as we march through the farmer's market to the steps of City Hall. However, a few unexpected events happened, which we took as opportunities to counter dominant narratives of stereotypical Black images. For example, we only walked a block out of the Coalition to the corner of Golden Gate and Leavenworth when we saw a young Black man being harassed by SFPD. Blue and red lights flashed as four officers idly watched as one "boy in blue" slammed a brother against the cop car. Collectively, we decided to pause our march and stand at that corner until the police were gone. We chanted, "When human rights are under attack, what do we do? Stand up, fight back!" We kept our eyes on the police interaction and while we were unable to stay with the Black man as he was taken off, we were able to prevent any further wrongdoings at the scene by being present and taking up space.

Our march continued. We chanted loudly and with power as we marched through the farmer's market and turned heads. People chanted with us, smiled, and told us to "keep up the good fight," even though we had barely just begun! As we approached City Hall's golden dome, we were greeted by yet again, more racist iconography, this time in the form of Ellen Lee Zhou, who had a canvas poster of her infamous billboard depicting an African-American woman in a red dress with her feet propped up on her desk, surrounded by money, smoking a cigar, daydreaming about slavery. Zhou, a republican candidate for Mayor stands by this imagery, which is supposed to be current Mayor London Breed.

Although we disagree on many of Breed's policy, there is no excuse for racist or sexist imagery in our political sphere. We took this as another opportunity to counter the racist imagery and chanted steadily, "Black Lives Matter, Black Lives Matter," taking over the crowd, turning heads, and disrupting the racism of Zhou and her campaign. This finally brought us into City Hall where we lobbied the offices of six different elected officials: Mayor London Breed, the supervisors who are on the Budget Committee: (Sandra Fewer, Shamann Walton, Rafael Mandelman, Hillary Ronen, and Norman Yee). Also present was Dean Preston, supervisor of District 5, where First Friendship is located.

We packed each office with dozens

of unhoused activists, Coalition members, folks from Chinatown Community Development Center, and others who rallied around the following demands:

Full-service replacement family shelter for First Friendship. The money has been allocated, yet for three years we have been waiting while families continue to sleep on mats on the floor with no showers, no storage, and very limited hours of operation.

Deep and flexible housing subsidies for families to exit homelessness. Deep, meaning comparable to the cost of living in San Francisco, and flexible, meaning tailored to the family's unique circumstances which include domestic violence, health issues, and ability status of the family.

A formal apology from the City of San Francisco for the urban renewal of historically Black places like the Fillmore and Bayview which led to the massive displacement of African Americans from homes into homelessness, and from San Francisco to elsewhere.

Some people who joined us were first timers lobbying. Miquessa Willis, one of our new Coalition members, spoke about being homeless with her two-year-old son, despite a \$30 per hour construction job. It was her first day with us, yet she spoke directly to people in power at City Hall with a coalition of support surrounding her. Miquessa's voice was so powerful, she was pulled aside numerous times by journalists who wanted to elevate her voice and story. This weekend, Miquessa was quoted in the international news source, The Guardian.

We had a unified message and demands which were crafted in collaboration through our open Housing Justice meetings (which take place every Tuesday at noon at the Coalition!). We flexed our people power through the streets, disrupting police harassment and racist antebellum-age iconography, to bring attention to the racism that Black and Brown people face everyday in this country. The racism which infected our City, uprooting years of cultural legacy through gentrification, urban renewal, and re-development. We will keep fighting, keep rewriting history while making our own until there is a day when my Black skin will not render me second-class citizenship. ■



Homeless advocates Tracey Mixon, Emmett House, and Leotine Collins

CALTRANS SETTLEMENT TO HOMELESS PEOPLE: \$2 MILLION REPLACING LOST MEMENTOS: PRICELESS

TJ Johnston

Unhoused people in the East Bay will be compensated by Caltrans for property that the state agency damaged or destroyed in encampment sweeps, thanks to a newly reached legal settlement.

A class-action lawsuit that began in 2016 is nearing its conclusion after the California Department of Transportation agreed to pay \$2 million to reimburse homeless people for lost possessions and employ someone to recover their items and connect them to services. Three people who were unhoused at the time filed the suit, along with The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights in the San Francisco Bay Area, the East Bay Community Law Center, the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California and the Wilmer-Hale law firm.

In settling the case, unsheltered folk in Oakland, Berkeley and Emeryville will win new protections when Caltrans clears encampments. One of them requires Caltrans to post the exact date of upcoming clearances.

“For years we heard complaints of people who told us they had to stand by helplessly while Caltrans crews threw belongings they treasured into trash compacting garbage trucks,” said Osha Neumann, supervising attorney at the East Bay Community Law Center. “Sometimes people with disabilities were given only a few minutes to move everything they wanted to save. We hope, with this settlement, those days are over.”

But how it might affect San Francisco

residents when Caltrans tags along with City departments in similar operations is not yet clear.

Patrica Moore, known to her community as “Mama Bear,” one of the plaintiffs, was living under Interstate 580 in Berkeley on March 17, 2016, when Caltrans workers unexpectedly arrived at her camp and threw away her cot, sleeping bag, clothing and food. The agency’s usual procedure was to post a notice four or five days before cleaning the area, according to the suit. But Moore said that Caltrans workers gave the residents only 20 minutes to gather their belongings, before seizing the stuff themselves. They almost threw Moore’s bike in the compactor, too, before a friend of hers prevented them. She reported falling to the ground from exhaustion while trying to save her stuff.

“It felt like they were in a war against us,” Moore said when recalling the incident.

Now housed in Berkeley after 10 years on the streets, Moore became unhoused when she was sidelined from



image credit: Leslie Dreyer

her work as a physical therapist, and she now moves around with a cane and a walker. In previous sweeps, she has lost her ID, Social Security card, art supplies and photos of her family.

Moore said no one should be as traumatized as she felt during the sweeps. She had a message to anyone who wants to report encampments or public employees assigned to remove them: “Treat us like your neighbors, not your enemies.”

Caltrans’ practices in encampment sweeps has also been noted on the other side of the Bay. In San Francisco in 2016, a photo of a walker thrown in Caltrans crusher went viral.

The department was also on hand with the California Highway Patrol, San Francisco Police Department and San Francisco Public Works when they took away Crystal’s personal effects in San Francisco’s Bayview District last year. Most sentimental among her possessions were a marble urn containing her father’s ashes.

“My brother gave it to me years ago. My dad died 15 years ago and I’ve been carrying them around,” she told the Stolen Belonging project last year (Disclosure: This reporter is a member of Stolen Belonging, an art and advocacy project documenting the loss of possessions — from survival gear to cherished mementos — during encampment sweeps).

“They were at my friend’s house. My friend said he was going to toss them because he didn’t have the space for them or whatever. So, I went down and got them and I’ve been lugging them

around, and it’s a heavy ass urn. I was thinking about just taking them out and keeping them in a bag, putting them in a paper bag or something, but it’s your dad. You can’t really do that... I really miss him.”

Crystal also suggested that staff who conduct sweeps or deal with the homeless population undergo “a training program to instill some type of morals or some type of system for these people.”

When asked how public agencies could compensate people for taking their belongings or otherwise be accountable, Crystal said, “You see a dumpster and all your shit going into the dumpster anyway. You could have \$50,000 worth of stuff and everything will go in that dumpster or compactor or whatever. So, I don’t know, compensation-wise I would want ... If it was a dollar amount... I mean, my dad’s ashes alone and those pictures and stuff ... I don’t know. It’s crazy.”

Stolen Belonging also interviewed another San Francisco resident, who wanted to be identified only as Derrick. He also had stuff taken away by Caltrans and City employees when he set up camp on 16th Street. He lost essential items, such as clothing, his sleeping bag and his ID, to the agency. But Caltrans also threw away photos and letters from his late mother.

“The letters or cards that I had, I was saving until hopefully I could either get a storage unit ... I don’t know when I’m going to get inside again,” he said. “They could never be replaced. It just meant more to me than a zillion dollars. It’s stuff like that ... it’s priceless.” ■

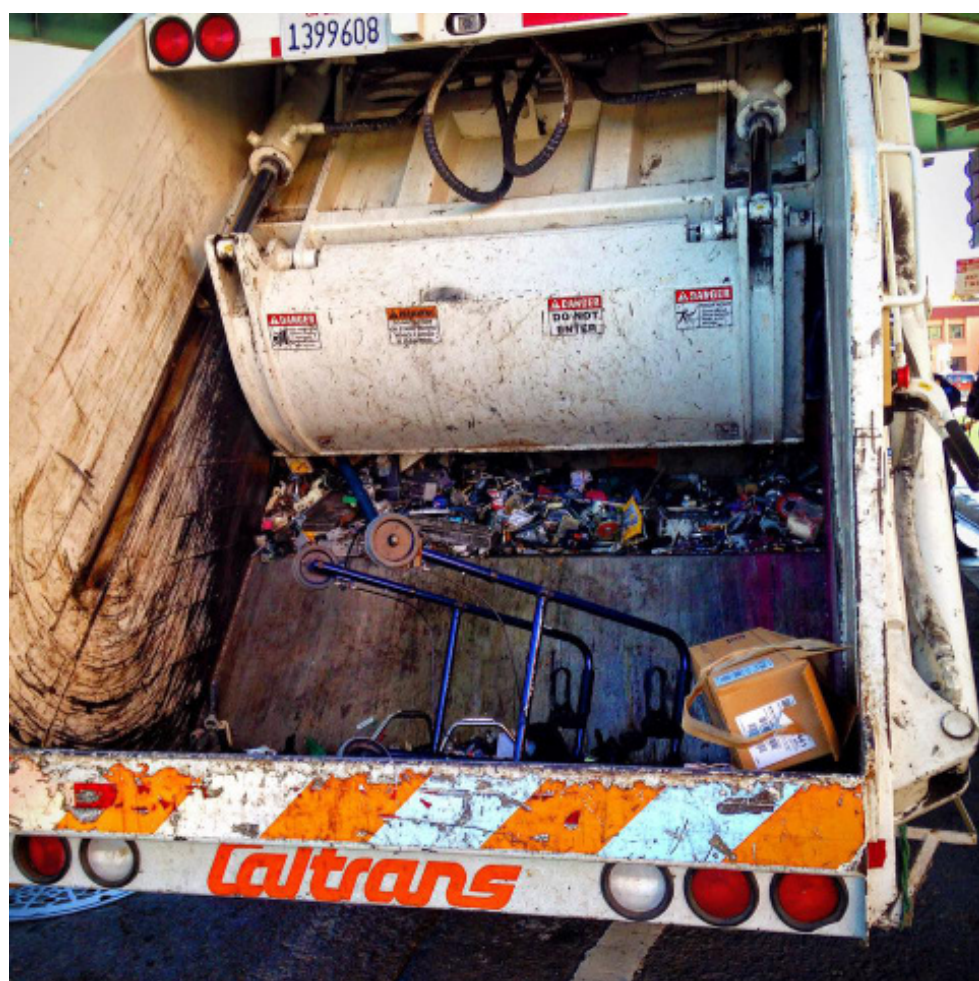


image credit: Kelley Cutler

BY ANY MEANS: HOMELESS DEFENSE STRATEGIES WHEN “OFFICER FRIENDLY” WON’T HELP

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STREET
STREET

Carl Jones

It’s easy to take things for granted when you are housed each night: having a bed to sleep in, control over the temperature around you, access to a bathroom or kitchen, having personal belongings at close reach, or having some control over the disturbances around you. Even if you don’t have control over these things, you have protected rights under California law, all of which are far more accessible to a person with the privilege of housing and the resources that come with it.

But what if you didn’t have any of those things? What if none of this was guaranteed? What if the “long arm of the law”, a.k.a. the police department, ignores you? How much can California Penal and Civil Code help you if you don’t have access to an attorney or the resources needed to attend court, depositions, etc?

For our unhoused neighbors, the law of courts is often nothing but meaningless rhetoric. They know well that laws are not enacted to protect them, and in fact, are usually put in place with the opposite intention. People who are homeless have to survive with the law of the street, which is roughly, “protect yourself by any means necessary.”

Housed people who can shave, speak fluent English, dress in expensive clothes, and have access to oral care are going to be treated vastly different by law enforcement. This is precisely where the difficulty lies. For those of us who are housed, and especially those of us with white privilege, our experience with law enforcement will likely be radically different.

We might vote for increasing funds for the San Francisco Police Department, thinking that they protect our community and serve us. People looking at Prop B’s “Earthquake and Fire Safety” measure may not even see the fine print, which dupes voters into giving the San Francisco Police Department \$121 million.

If you’ve only experienced police in a helpful capacity, maybe you would actually support a measure like this, instead of those that Mayor London Breed has yet to implement to increase homeless housing and shelters.

Police abuses in our community are rampant though, and largely affecting minority populations. From 4 a.m. encampment “sweeps,” to bullying, harassment, and neglect, there is a long list of misconduct. This might sound shocking, but there is a long history of facts that speak to this truth.

Back in February 2014, six San Francisco police officers were charged with drug dealing, extortion, illegal searches, and stealing — much of which was caught on camera. In November 2015, two SFPD officers were caught on video brutally beating a man

screaming for help. This is not to mention the unarmed killings of so many people of color in our neighborhoods, which added to the outcry of the national #BlackLivesMatter movement.

A group of community organizers calling themselves the Frisco Five organized a widely supported hunger strike outside the San Francisco Mission District police station in April 2016, resulting in the resignation of SF police chief Greg Suhr. Years later, you can still find signs on store windows and local murals depicting Alex Nieto, the unarmed 28-year-old who was killed after San Francisco police fired 59 bullets at him while he was eating a burrito. A permanent city monument was recently approved in his honor and memory.

We tend to think that law enforcement will take pity on our most vulnerable residents, but that isn’t always the case. This past month, I had the displeasure of engaging with police after witnessing and de-escalating a violent attack on a homeless person’s life. To say that SFPD’s response was unhelpful, is an understatement.

The incident left me in shock. I was extremely rattled by witnessing the attack, but even worse, I was appalled by the response from those we had called on to help. A couple of days later, I decided to check back on the encampment. While I was experiencing PTSD from the violence I saw, the survivor of the attack and his friend seemed to treat it like any other day of the week. I mentioned that I came by to check in and make sure they were OK:

“Thank you very much,” he said. “Pero, I appreciate it with my heart, but we’re fine.”

I showed him a link to the video I took of the aftermath, including my statement to the police.

...“That can be good, yeah, because they give me some paperwork, the police. I can get a new visa with immigration... I got my papers already, just in case one day I need it. I need that one...”

I was very happy to see the injured man out of the hospital and recovering. However, the police displayed a concerning lack of investment in the well-being of the person who had been attacked, resisting my requests to have them take down my statement and interrogating the survivor rather than prioritizing emergency medical care. The response from the police after I left that night concerned me. I wonder what happened when SFPD was finally off-camera and able to say and do whatever they wanted. Did they try to deport him? Why did the topic of immigration even come up? I’m glad he had his papers ready.

Police departments often prey upon vulnerable populations, especially immigrants

and people of color. Disabled people like myself also have reason to fear police violence. Prominent disability activist Leroy Moore opened my eyes to the threats that surround me as a person with disabilities when he released the *Broken Bodies, Police Brutality Profiling Mixtape* in 2011.

All of this got me thinking: if law enforcement fails us, what can we do to make sure that our unhoused neighbors are safe?

I decided to meet with a neighborhood veteran who lives outside a vacant, out-of-business hipster bar. Don is normally a very gentle man, a bearded white male in his mid-60s, usually spending his daytime hours reading beneath an umbrella. I asked him what tips he might have for fellow unhoused neighbors to protect themselves from attacks.

In order to stay safe, he told me he takes certain precautions. “I keep a...basically it’s a club; a pipe. And pepper spray. It was given to me by a young lady I know; she was concerned about me.”

When asked what he recommends to other folks trying to stay safe while sleeping outside, Don said, “that’s a tough call, because I believe there’s strength in numbers, even though I don’t do it. Probably run with somebody else; have a companion of some kind... Be aware of your surroundings, be aware of what’s going on around you. If you’re asleep, obviously you can’t do that. But if you see somebody coming that might

be a problem, be prepared for it.”

Don also told me he has had his own first-hand experience being attacked in the Tenderloin.

“I was attacked, and knocked out of my chair. Right in the middle of the street during the day. And I was fighting with this guy. I can’t get up and stand up and fight, but I was swinging it out. He was trying to grab some of my stuff and... This was about maybe 3 o’clock in the afternoon, there’s traffic going by, I’m out in the middle of the street, my chair’s tipped over, all my belongings is there...” He told me he benefited from the intervention of strangers, saying “several people came to the rescue, a car came swooping down...a guy jumped out; a couple guys came from across the street from God knows where and started duking it out with this guy. And uh, he got away; he took off.”

I was extremely heartened (and surprised) to hear about his experiences of receiving help from random strangers. In a culture that appears to have the general motto of “look the other way,” I was amazed to hear stories of people coming to the rescue, and even providing physical defense. Speaking with him, I felt a wave of pride in my city that I had not experienced in a long time. “Hell yeah,” I thought, “San Franciscans really *can* kick ass.” On the way back from the interview, I felt just a little bit safer in the neighborhood. ■

WHAT CAN WE DO TO SUPPORT OUR UNHOUSED NEIGHBORS IN THE EVENT OF HARASSMENT OR AN ATTACK? HERE IS A LIST OF WORKING SUGGESTIONS:

Call 911 and ask for an *ambulance*. Insist that an ambulance comes and state that “*someone* is being attacked and is severely injured” Whatever you do, do not say “a homeless person” is being attacked - that only gives emergency personnel the opportunity to treat that person’s life as less valuable and respond slower.

Be *Safe*. Make sure you are a good distance from what is happening, and consider your options. Is the person using a weapon, fists, or a gun? If it’s the first two, you might get away with yelling out, “POLICE!” or a similar scare word to get the attacker to stop. However, if they have a gun, it’s best to stay out of sight.

If you are at a safe distance, try and record the incident with your phone. Sometimes law enforcement has been known to steal phones, in which case you can upload your video real-time using the ACLU app.

Know your rights. Do not consent to a search and do not answer questions that you don’t have to. Ask if you are “being detained,” if an officer is trying to intimidate you or doesn’t seem to want you to leave.

Do court support for the victim(s), if you can. Communicate with victim(s) and try to find out what they want / need for you to support them.

Connect with organizations like the Anti-Police Terror Project, ACLU, and CopWatch. They have tons of useful information on their website, including the APTP First Responders Training Guide.

NEWSOM FUMBLES STATE OF THE STATE SPEECH

“After all, every homeless Californian, living on a boulevard of broken dreams, is a casualty of institutional failures — a person who’s fallen through every possible hole in the safety net.”

On February 19, 2020 California Gov. Gavin Newsom gave his State of the State speech, focusing in large part on addressing homelessness. In many ways this was brave, as politicians have been ignoring this issue on the state and federal level since mass homelessness hit the country in the early 1980s, figuring that the issue was unwinnable. The following Sunday, former SF Mayor Willie Brown criticized the move in his column for the San Francisco Chronicle. Speaking from a political perspective that failed to recognize human suffering, he noted that Newsom was making a political mistake trying to address an issue that he won’t be able to make much of a dent on. Of course, Brown missed the real point. Newsom will not make much of a difference because he, like many before him, is not doing enough. Instead of going big and bold, he is just tinkering and talking fake solutions that will not solve homelessness, or even make a visible difference.

Homelessness is solvable. It isn’t an incurable disease. The fix is to house poor people. How do we pay for that? We can either cut current state services or we can tax the rich.

Back to Newsom. What exactly is he proposing in his speech? He certainly is not outright proposing to tax the rich. However, the speech is not short on ideas, so we are going to tease out what he is proposing here.

REDUCING POVERTY

Newsom stated there are 1.3 million fewer folks living in poverty. This is fantastic news. The poverty-fighting initiative Newsom led was to double earned income tax credit, and while it does not extend to undocumented workers, cash in the pocket of some is better than none. However, it should be noted that California still has the nation’s highest poverty rate when you take housing costs into account. Statewide, 18% of our residents live in poverty. If you are looking for a bold move to end poverty you will not find it here in this speech.

HOMELESSNESS

Newsom tries to appease both sides of the homeless debate, taking cues from state Sen. Scott Wiener, trying to sound compassionate while recognizing how bad it is for housed people who have to witness poverty.

“As Californians, we pride ourselves on our unwavering sense of compassion and justice for humankind — but there’s nothing compassionate about allowing fellow Californians to live on

the streets, huddled in cars or makeshift encampments. And there’s nothing just about sidewalks and street corners that aren’t safe and clean for everybody.”

Let’s deconstruct this a bit. I am going to zero in on the word “allowing”. What does that suggest? Well instead of acknowledging the reality, which is that homeless people are forced to live on the streets because the cost of housing overcomes their income, we as a society, with our liberal values, are allowing people to live on the streets. So what is the reverse? The reverse is not allowing, which indicates a criminal justice approach. This is classic Newsom. He carved out his career path through divisiveness and crafting social controls on the poor, and the deliberate phrasing of his wording allows him to clothe harsh policy in a loving embrace.

TEMPORARY SOLUTIONS TO HOMELESSNESS

Newsom has been focused, much like Trump, on shelter, despite his anti-shelter record from his time as mayor. Here in San Francisco, he cut the number of beds in shelters by 30% and drop-in center capacity by 50%, all while advocating the criminalization of unhoused people. However, something changed since then: a court ruling out of Boise, Idaho halts the ability to criminalize homeless people who are not offered anywhere to go. Shelter qualifies. So likely, Newsom realized he needs to expand shelter in order for cities to legally continue to conduct sweeps.

But of course if folks have shelter, they are still homeless. The health outcomes are not much better. If it is done well, it is a step up for homeless folks. But often times, it does not work because disabilities such as PTSD prevent people from being able to stay in congregate shelter. Also shelter costs a lot, sometimes even surpassing the cost of housing. Homeless folks would rather just have the opportunity to have housing.

The other thing about shelter, is that shelters fill up if there is no housing to move into. We could be like New York and massively expand our shelter system and the millions of dollars will keep adding up, sucking all other homeless resources into it. We would rather support a shelter system that gives temporary respite on the way to housing, and recognizes it is not for everyone.

MAKING STATE LANDS AVAILABLE

“Today, we are making 286 state properties — vacant lots, fairgrounds, armories and other state buildings — available to be used by local governments, for free, for homelessness solutions.”

Now there is not much we can use of

these lands in SF, but across the state they may be helpful. We have already used some state lands, thanks to legislation passed by Assemblymember Phil Ting under freeways. However all of the state land would be used for temporary uses, again, not permanent. The counties would have to go through the legislature to turn state lands into housing.

ONGOING FUNDING

Newsom mentioned on-going funding. It is thrilling that Newsom is now recognizing this. Weird thing is, all his budget proposals are one time. So I think this was aspirational. In order to address homelessness, we need on-going dedicated funding. There is a huge disparity between rents and incomes and that is not going away any time soon.

MOVING CURRENT HOMELESS SPENDING INTO NEW FUND

“In the budget I just submitted, I proposed a new California Access to Housing Fund, and, with it, a whole new way of investing in homeless solutions.”

This is a very strange one. Apparently, the new buzzword is “regional collaboration” which is about as jargon-filled as you get. Governments are organized by county, state and federal, so everything flows that way. We are not sure what it means, or what problem it is trying to solve, but it would allow nonprofits to apply directly to a new level of government for funding. What it appears to do is create a whole new bureaucracy between state and local administrations, and more bureaucracy means another cut of the already way too tiny \$750 million in funding. So yeah, we are not feeling it, and we are not sure who is - the Assembly Budget Committee does not seem to be, and neither is the state Legislative Analyst Office, which has deep concerns.

On the sunny side, this funding could be used for prevention, rent subsidies, housing units, board and cares and social services, which are all badly needed. Of course \$750 million would pay for about 375 new units, or about 24,000 housing subsidies in market rate units to get folks off the streets. To give context, according to Point-in-Time (PIT) counts we have about 150,000 homeless people in California. The PIT is considered an undercount, and the best federal practices suggest multiplying by 2.8 to get at the number of souls experiencing homelessness each year, which would bring us to 420,000. Plus this is not all new funding, he is rebranding emergency funding that is already supporting shelters across the state, so if the funding is moved, likely some of those shelters would have to cut beds.

EXPANDING

CONSERVATORSHIP

“Look — clearly, it’s time to respond to the concerns of experts who argue that thresholds for conservatorships are too high and need to be revisited.”

So the real experts are mental health consumers, who have consistently opposed conservatorship. The problem is not that people are service resistant, it’s that no help exists that meets their needs. In other words the system is resistant to serving people. When Newsom was Supervisor he paid lip service to treatment on demand, but he didn’t do anything to make that a reality. When he became Mayor, he slaughtered behavioral health treatment — cutting \$40 million in direct homeless and behavioral health services in SF. The high visibility of acute mental health and substance use issues on the streets today is a direct result of Newsom’s cuts. Now he claims those suffering need to be conserved because they are supposedly refusing non-existent or inappropriate services, and he wants to make it easier to lock these same individuals up.

The details of what Newsom is talking about is shifting more power to the police to decide who gets detained in a hospital. Newsom supported a recent proposal where police can temporarily lock someone in a psych ward up to eight times before being deemed a threat to self or others -- even if doctors find no potential danger from the person. But after the eighth lock-up, they’re deemed a threat automatically. That law passed, (nobody has gotten any help from it) and there are about five other proposed laws to make the law even looser, going as far as to say being homeless is equal to being gravely disabled and meets the criteria for losing your freedom and getting locked up.

Now we don’t know which of these laws Newsom is referring to but all of the proposed laws completely miss the point and don’t really address the crisis. Folks are in mental health crisis because they have an untreated — or untreatable — illness. They should not be punished because the state has neglected their care. Anyway there are not enough beds for folks already - folks are stuck in jail because of a lack of hospital beds across the state. Plus locked beds are crazy expensive. And another thing - the outcomes are worse than serving people in a less restrictive environment. Sure, there are some tweaks to the administration of conservatorships that would help ensure those who truly need to be conserved are conserved, but that is very different from changing who should be conserved, which is what Newsom is proposing. We need to focus on getting folks stabilized in housing, and building up our community system

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SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

MAR
10

NOT A PENNY LESS FOR HOMELESSNESS RALLY

WHERE: STEPS OF CITY HALL @12-1PM

This year, the City is re-working the Gross Receipt Tax and through this restructure which will go on the ballot in November, Prop C funding becomes vulnerable and exposed to opponents who may wish to supplant the money for other causes or not honor the \$300 million revenue and spending plan as laid out in the initiative. Join us on the steps of City Hall as we DEMAND NO CUTS to Our City Our Home. Honor the will of the voters and NOT A PENNY LESS FOR HOMELESSNESS!

ACCESS: City Hall is ADA accessible. For accommodations or questions please contact Olivia Glowacki, oglowacki@cohsf.org



NEWSOM'S SPEECH LEAVES QUESTIONS, CONCERNS

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of care. That takes real money.

HOUSING

Newsom gives a big nod to SB 50 which would cut red tape for creating housing, and in doing so, eliminates local communities control and its ability to leverage additional affordable housing units. The problem is that in densely populated gentrifying areas development often causes displacement, and he fails to embrace in his speech the assurance of meaningful rent control across the state.

REFORMING PROPOSITION 63

Prop 63 is the Mental Health Services Act that passed in 2004 and taxes millionaires 1% to pay for mental health care. It was a great bill in many ways, and some of the counties had tremendous success using the resources. SF got short changed in the

formula, however, and many counties leave the money sitting there unspent in part due to negligence and in part due to unsteady stream of funding. Newsom is right to try and force the counties to spend it, and to lower the threshold of what can be left unspent. He wants to shift all the funding over to homelessness however, which is going to cut some great programs out there that rely on the funding to keep folks in housing.

MEDI-CAL REFORM

"The problem has persisted for decades — caused by massive failures in our mental health system and disinvestment in our social safety net — exacerbated by widening income inequality and California's housing shortage. The hard truth is we ignored the problem."

This is an attempt to leverage Medi-Cal dollars to have more prevention, behavioral health funding and

HOMELESS SAN FRANCISCANS SWEEP CITY HALL

Activists create chaotic mockery of city's ineffective and inhumane response to homelessness

San Francisco, CA – Community members, including homeless people and service providers, converged on City Hall on Thursday with push brooms and bullhorns and demanding solutions to homelessness. The spectacle drew attention to the cruel encampment sweeps led by San Francisco Police Department and the Department of Public Works that involve stealing homeless people's belongings and pushing people from one block to the next.

While the city denies that it carries out illegal encampment sweeps, homeless people and advocates have detailed regular attacks on homeless communities. During a sweep, police will show up to an encampment without notice and several disgruntled Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) workers will run up and down the encampment offering limited 30 day stays at a navigation center. Then DPW will come through and trash tents, medications, and personal belongings, often violating their own "bag and tag" policy which should allow unhoused folks to reclaim their stolen belongings.

"We've heard far too many stories of people losing their tents, bedding, survival material, medications, and precious sentimental items to believe that these are just one off incidents," said TJ Johnston, assistant editor of the Street Sheet and a member of the Stolen

Belonging project. "These sweeps are systematic and only serve to further destabilize unhoused people."

A coalition of unhoused San Franciscans and allies, including front-line service providers, physicians, public health professionals, and advocates are leading a campaign called "Solutions Not Sweeps", which demands an end to sweeps and asks for real services to be offered to support people in finding permanent housing. This action at city hall mobilized coalition members to fight back against the illegal and inhumane practice of sweeping away homeless lives.

"The way we currently handle street homelessness makes absolutely no sense," said Armando Garcia, Human Rights Organizer with the Coalition on Homelessness. "We can have policies that address homelessness without sweeps and criminalization."

This campaign comes after a federal court ruled that cities cannot legally enforce camping bans if there are not sufficient shelter beds available. With over a thousand San Franciscans languishing on the waitlist for a shelter bed, it is time to halt the practice of encampment sweeps and invest in permanent housing for homeless people. ■

utilizing whole person care, which uses these funds to focus in on particular vulnerable populations and have comprehensive care for them. Here in SF, whole person care focuses critical services on a group of high need homeless individuals. Newsom will have several federal waivers up this year, and if they are not signed, we will be losing a lot that we depend on now. The problem is that the federal government may not be so eager to sign them.

PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT

"15 years ago, when I was Mayor of San Francisco, in the face of long odds and stiff opposition, we established Project Homeless Connect to bring local government services directly to people. It has been wildly successful and adopted in 250 cities."

Newsom loves to portray himself as a profile in courage, standing up to

adversity and pushing unpopular stands in the best interest of his impoverished wards. This is where we can all clear our throats. No one opposed Project Homeless Connect. It is a one day services fair for homeless people. It is a great charity program that leverages volunteers and in-kind donations. Nothing more.

You can read the speech for yourself at the site below. There are lots of great things in there, although not near enough. There are hints that big bold things may be coming but very few details. And then there are some really bad ideas. A for bringing up the issue. C for so-so effort. F for promoting loss of liberty and leaving out what really needs to be done. Newsom can do much better, and has to do much better if he wants to turn this issue around for real.

<https://calmatters.org/politics/2019/02/newsom-state-of-the-state-annotated/> ■

CITY'S APPROACH PRODUCES MORE HARM THAN IT REDUCES

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City does when using law enforcement to address homelessness, instead, ends up being incredibly harm productive. HSOC has always trumpeted its methodology as being “trauma-informed,” but the Whac-A-Mole encampment sweeps inflict repeated, multiple traumas on those being displaced. For those who are forced to live in public spaces, sweeps cause repeated loss of personal property — including vehicles, tents and other shelter, survival gear and life-saving medications — as well as citations and arrests, placing more financial and legal barriers that can negatively affect access to services, housing, and employment.

On Thursday, February 27, at the quarterly HSOC meeting of San Francisco’s Local Homeless Coordinating Board, City officials admitted that the complaint-driven HSOC model of targeting and dispatching its resources hasn’t been effective at addressing the needs of those suffering on our

streets. According to the City’s data, 95% of unhoused folks who stayed in a San Francisco shelter or Navigation Center in 2019 returned to the streets at the end of their stay, up from 58% in 2018, and acceptance rates of services offered are at their lowest since the inception of HSOC.

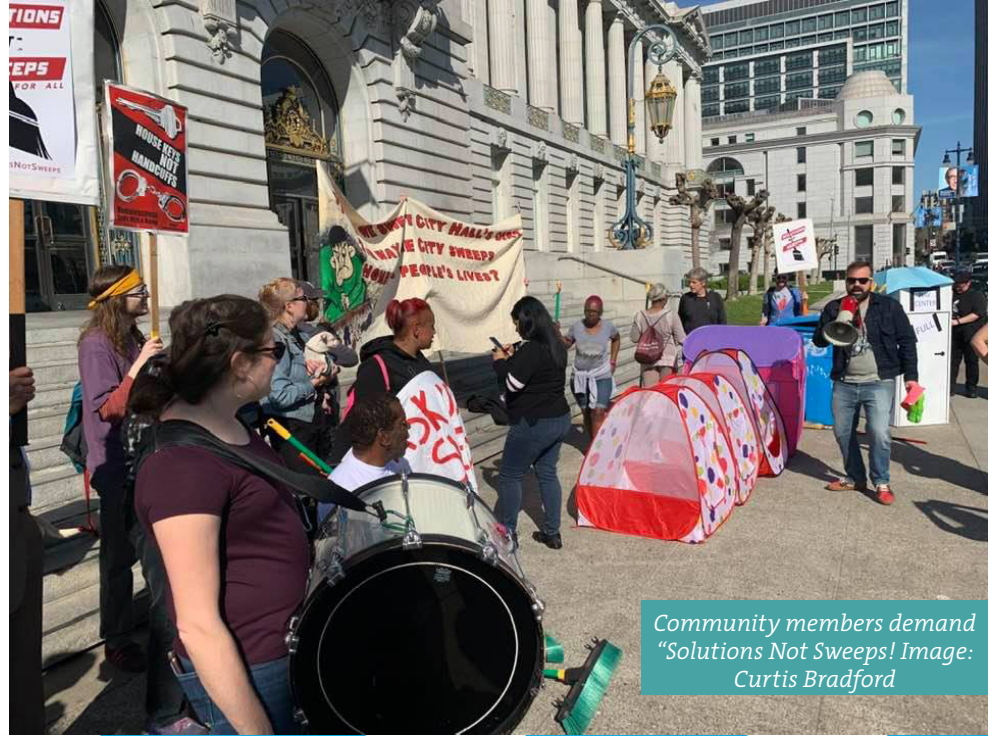
Though scant on details, HSH director Jeff Kositsky said that beginning in March, HSOC would no longer target and dispatch most of its resources based on 311 resident complaints, and HOT would be returning to its more effective, pre-August 2018 ‘zone’ model of focussing on the areas of SF most impacted by homelessness. By having HOT focus time and resources on building relationships with unhoused residents in these ‘zones,’ instead of being dispatched back and forth across the City, Kositsky said he expected to see the rates of engagement and acceptance of services and shelter climb.

For advocates, though there are still many concerns, especially around the role of law enforcement in any future HSOC model. For unhoused residents living outside of HOT’s zones of operation, SFPD and Public Works sweep crews could still be first responders, and 311 would still be receiving complaints under any model. The 311 dispatch system needs major changes

- both to what types of calls generate a response, and what City agencies get deployed to respond to those calls. Unless an unhoused individual is in distress or seeking assistance, a call to City Hall to demand more housing, shelter and services is often much more appropriate than a call to 311.

Kelley Cutler, a human rights organizer with the Coalition on Homelessness and a member of the Local Homeless Coordinating Board, has long expressed skepticism toward the City’s previous claims of success in resolving street homelessness.

“I attended a community meeting the day after the dismal results of HSOC were presented at the LHCB, and SFPD and City staff continued to present HSOC as being a successful program that will address their concerns by helping the people living on the street in this neighborhood,” She said. “If they were being honest they would have just told community members that they plan to continue to send out law enforcement to displace people because the City doesn’t have the resources to help them.” ■

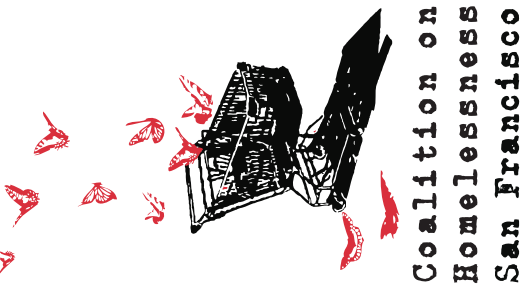


Community members demand “Solutions Not Sweeps! Image: Curtis Bradford

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