

INDEPENDENTLY PUBLISHED BY THE COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS SINCE 1989



MINIMUM SUGGESTED DONATION TWO DOLLARS.  
STREET SHEET IS SOLD BY HOMELESS AND LOW-IN-COME VENDORS WHO KEEP 100% OF THE PROCEEDS.  
VENDORS RECEIVE UP TO 75 PAPERS PER DAY FOR FREE.  
STREET SHEET IS READER SUPPORTED, ADVERTISING FREE, AND AIMS TO LIFT UP THE VOICES OF THOSE LIVING IN POVERTY IN SAN FRANCISCO.

# STREET SHEET

REMEMBERING CHARLES DAVIS VENDOR #728	3	SWEPT ASIDE: THE VIOLENCE OF SWEEPS IN SF	4	COVID WIDOW ON HUNGER STRIKE IN SAN FRANCISCO	5	9 YEAR OLD SAMEEN COMBATS HOMELESSNESS WITH ART	6	A NON-POLICE RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS	7
--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---



LISTEN to STREET SPEAK: Episode 5 takes you inside San Francisco's Shelter in Place hotels.

[streetsheet.org](https://streetsheet.org)



# AN UPDATE ON OUR CITY, OUR HOME

Anisha Tammana

Over two years after Proposition C passed, funds for homeless and housing programs are finally beginning to be released. 61% of San Fransican voters voted in favor of the proposition in 2018. The following legal battle over the contentious Prop. C resulted in a Court of Appeals decision last year that upheld the Prop C victory, allowing a “homeless tax” for wealthy corporations with revenue over \$50 million. The existing funds from the tax, having been in reserve, are now meant to be released in phases, with the immediate priorities being to relocate those who have been residing in the SIP hotels.

The Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing and the Department of Public Health have made recommendations regarding the allocation of funds. These proposals, however, only suggest using 29% of the available funds to actually provide beds for those who are houseless, living on the streets.

The Our City Our Home oversight body has been supervising and making recommendations on how the Prop C funds can best be used to create long term solutions for homelessness in San Francisco. The recommendations made by the OCOH committee have been heavily focused on ensuring beds for SIP and non-SIP people who are experiencing homelessness. The DPH and DSHS immediate recommendations simply would not provide enough beds for people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic. Rather than using funds that could be used for housing on homeless outreach teams and behavioral health, shifting funds from the carceral system to these programs will be a more effective use of money that is currently being used to criminalize homelessness.

OCOH’s recommendations would allow for over 1,000 people to be housed immediately. The committee also has stressed the importance of maintaining support for homeless individuals in the Safe Sleep villages and extending funding for these programs.

For more information regarding OCOH contact Jennifer Friedenbach at [jfriedenbach@cohhsf.org](mailto:jfriedenbach@cohhsf.org).

The oversight committee meeting and public comment occurs on the third Tuesday of every month. For info on how to attend, <https://sfcontroller.org/meetings/220> and click on the agenda for a Zoom link.



## POETRY CORNER

### Classless Society by Mira Martin-Parker

Suits, ties, collars, cases, well-worn wingtips, tennis shoes, pastel tops, pearls, a pearl grey blazer, pumps, nylons, open toes, khaki pants, a blue button up, a printed dress, a sweater set, a Kate Spade bag, white shoes, white slacks, white hair up in a twist, jeans, sweatpants, during the daytime, downtown, a shopping cart, a military bag, yellow skin, matted hair, a flower, a smile, a cardboard sign, just trying to get home.

### With a Smile by Mira Martin-Parker

I work in a room the size of a broom closet and I am happy.  
My clothes are full of holes and I am happy.  
I eat beans for breakfast and beans for dinner and I am happy.  
A pack of peanuts with my paycheck and I am happy.  
A 3-cent raise, some personal days and I am truly happy.  
I am happy, I am happy  
lordy lordy, I am happy  
peanuts praises, beans and raises  
I am happy.

## DONATE TO KEEP STREET SHEET GOING STRONG!



SCAN ME

[coalition.networkforgood.com](http://coalition.networkforgood.com)

## WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

### VOLUNTEER WITH US!

PHOTOGRAPHERS  
& VIDEOGRAPHERS  
& TRANSLATORS  
& ARTISTS  
& WRITERS & POETS  
& COMIC CREATORS  
& COPYEDITORS

### DONATE!

LAPTOPS  
& DIGITAL CAMERAS  
& AUDIO RECORDERS  
& SNACKS

### CONTACT:

[STREETSHEET@GMAIL.COM](mailto:STREETSHEET@GMAIL.COM)

## COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

The STREET SHEET is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition’s work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: they bring their agendas to us.

## 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.

Editor, Quiver Watts (they/them)  
Assistant Editor, TJ Johnston  
Vendor Coordinator, Emmett House

Our contributors in this issue include:

Mira Martin-Parker, Lawrence Hollins,  
Anisha Tammana, Stella Kunkat, Rev.  
Victor H. Floyd, Jennifer Friedenbach,  
Ramona Mayon, Sameen Prasad, Olivia  
Glowacki, Zach K, Nicholas Garrett,  
Mary Crisis, Leslie Dreyer

### My Valentine Love by Lawrence Hollins

Love is: sharing and caring,  
giving and forgiving  
Love is: loving and being loved  
walking hand in hand  
talking heart to heart  
Love is: seeing through each  
others eyes laughing  
together, weeping together  
praying together and  
moreso staying together,  
Love is: your Best Friend, your  
King or Queen, your dream  
your everything,  
Love is: God, and God likes  
loving, now that’s  
what I call love!!!



# CHARLES DAVIS IN MEMORIAM

Rev. Victor H. Floyd

For many years, Street Sheet has educated me and led me to an understanding and deeper love for my unhoused neighbors. In my context as a pastor, Street Sheet is a sacred text, an on-the-scene report from the front lines where Need and Greed do constant battle. The way our beloved San Francisco is set up, Greed has the advantage. Need is left to justify the very existence of the People of Need. Our Mayor and Supervisors misconstrue the nature of Need, often quite willfully. That same willful misunderstanding is transmitted through the local media, spreading prejudice and scapegoating with the help of various homeowner associations and Nextdoor. This cancerous misperception of unhoused people infects even the most progressive of San Francisco's faith communities.

To connect my congregation to the homeless community, I contacted Kelley Cutler, self-described "General Shit Stirrer" at the Coalition on Homelessness. I wanted her help introducing a Street Sheet vendor to my Pacific Heights congregation. In the style of Dolly Levi from "Hello, Dolly!", Kelley matched us with the perfect person: Charles Davis.

When Charles showed up, we thought it was okay to call him Charlie. He soon disabused us of that practice, yielding to the fanciness of Pacific Heights. Charles sold Street Sheets during coffee hour, the time after Sunday morning worship services devoted to conversation and, let's face facts, catching up on all the best gossip. We arranged for Charles to sit at a table with his stack of newspapers. During the service, I would invite the congregation to meet Charles, and he would often chime in spontaneously, something like "If you can contribute more, I could sure use it."

Charles developed relationships in the congregation. Robin, who was studying to become a social worker, offered her services. Charles would show up at her internship to say hello and inquire about his assistance options. Robin is now a full-time social worker at the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Palo Alto. I found it completely adorable that Charles, a small man, gravitated toward Laura and Brian, the tallest people in our congregation, a married couple with small children. They invited Charles to eat with them on Christmas Eve, and he got to know their kids. When their children received the news of Charles' death, they had questions. Would God know what he likes to eat? Will there be enough ice cream for Charles in heaven?

My last time with Charles, he had just been accepted into the City's hotel program. When I called the City to advocate for him, I experienced the dismissive treatment too many unhoused San Franciscans are used to. They told me they would help this time, but don't ever ask for their help again. Charles packed up his things in several large plastic bags, and he came to meet me

near the church. I helped him go shopping for ramen and ice cream. We waited together, ice cream softening, until the City's representatives showed up to take him to the Tilden Hotel in a Paratransit van. He died there, in his hotel room.

A couple years ago, Charles interviewed my colleague, Rev. Joann H. Lee, and me for Street Sheet — "The Three Musketeers of Calvary Church" (December 1, 2019). Charles planned to join Calvary, but never got around to it. But all of us at Calvary consider Charles part of our church family. His death was a shock. We plan to memorialize him once we can meet safely again in person. Consider yourself invited.

Charles and I seized few opportunities for him to tell me about his life—his upbringing, his family, his hopes. He wanted, more than anything, to be housed and live a stable life. Charles campaigned zealously for Prop. C: Our City Our Home. He was devastated when the Mayor refused to endorse it. He was demoralized after Prop. C's passing when it became ensnared in the litigation of Greed. Charles did not live to see Prop. C vindicated in a court of law, but we will carry the torch for Charles and all God's children. The

corporations of Greed have finally been ordered to help, and next they'll claim hardship (as if), having been downsized by COVID-19 and the many employees who have relocated away from San Francisco. The number of homes standing empty has never been higher. This is the sad irony, the fruits of the garden planted by Greed.

As the coronavirus sends all the Chicken Littles and Henny Pennies into the shrillness of scarcity thinking and performative anxiety, I call on every San Franciscan to cultivate a deeper sense of empathy. Walk a mile in someone else's shoes. Imagine what it's like to live on the street, in a car, in a tent, and to have your stuff swept away by the DPW in the wee hours of the morning. Realize the



## REMEMBERING CHARLES VENDOR #728

Quiver Watts, Street Sheet editor

At our staff meeting this week, one of my co-workers reported that our office's call-forwarding system had been sending him calls at 3 a.m. from a person calling himself "Angel," calling to yell about his frustration that he has not yet been placed in housing. We all laughed and decided that these calls must be coming from Charles Davis beyond the grave (before, of course, fixing the call-forwarding function). It probably seems a bit cold to be laughing so soon after Charles' death, but I don't think he would mind; what he lacked in tact, Charles made up for with honesty, exuberance and a snappish temper, which made him sometimes difficult to work with, but more importantly, made him a survivor.

San Francisco's homelessness response is all centered around the myth that homeless people deserve nothing, that anything the City offers is an act of goodwill and charity rather than a social responsibility to make up for the economic violence done to our neighbors. Many people have very much internalized this false narrative, but not Charles. He knew what he deserved: he deserved housing, he deserved a job, he deserved respect, and he was gunning for anyone who dared deny him.

Back in 2018, when I first started editing the Street Sheet, Charles Davis showed up often demanding that we start a cashless payments program so that vendors could take Venmo instead of just collecting cash. He said that San Franciscans didn't carry cash anymore, that his old gig at Real Change (the street paper in Seattle) they were taking cashless payments, that we had no excuse to not keep up with the times. The program was hard to set up, but Charles lit and kept a fire under my ass, asking me about it every time we saw each other for months and insisted that we needed to make it happen. It is thanks to him that our Venmo program exists, pulling in significant income to our vendors through their cashless sales.

Charles also contributed to the Stolen Belonging project, spearheaded by artist Leslie Dreyer and run through the Coalition on Homelessness. He helped conduct interviews with homeless people who had lost their belongings in sweeps, documenting the precious photos, family heirlooms, hand-me-downs that they had lost to Public Works crushers. In the first video put out by the project you can hear Charles speaking to the problem, saying "homeless people out here, a lot of

PAGE 3

FEB 1, 2021

STREET  
SHEET

abundance we possess, inherently—the things that haves can never lose. Greed has a chokehold on our fair city, but we can experience moral healing when we let go of scapegoating the homeless community and stereotyping those who have not as somehow damaged goods. No one is damaged goods in the kingdom of heaven! I can only have faith in that sentiment, but Charles knows it now and eternally.

Rest in power, my sweet, chatty, redheaded "stepson" Charles. I thank God that you left this world while sheltered and well-fed. Your life mattered. God used you as a blessing. You leave behind friends transformed by your very existence. Now you know the secret of God's promises, and your reward is better than unlimited ice cream. Pray for us left here below. May we do right by you. ■

Rev. Victor H. Floyd

Calvary Presbyterian Church (USA)

San Francisco

them have property and stuff that they bring that's their only belongings, and when they get taken, it's like a part of their life is taken as well." He was fiercely committed to getting justice for people targeted with the inhumane practice of sweeping encampments, and he also fought actively for systemic solutions like Proposition C, which will house homeless San Franciscans and keep at-risk people housed.

Charles wasn't always easy to get along with, and shortly before the pandemic sent us into lockdown, we had to ask him to take a break from the program until he could avoid initiating confrontations with some of our staff members. It had been a long time since I'd seen Charles, but I thought of him often, and while losing people is all too common when working in homeless communities, his loss has hit me hard.

Charles did not deserve to die without a permanent home, and he knew that was true so deeply in his heart. He fought hard for a San Francisco in which everyone has a safe place to live, and we will hold him in memory as we carry on the fight for housing. ■



# SWEPT ASIDE

## the Ongoing Violence of Encampment Sweeps in San Francisco

Jennifer Friedenbach

# COVID STRIKE

*Parts of this essay have been removed due to space limitations, but you can read the whole story with more critical details on her blog at [www.ramona-mayon.com/blog-this](http://www.ramona-mayon.com/blog-this)*

Linda is a young, petite, Black woman who had just lost her boyfriend to an overdose. This tragic, preventable death is a particularly hard one for loved ones to carry, the "what ifs" and the "if onlys" running wild. For Linda the "what if" and "if only" was housing — she believed her boyfriend would not have died if the housing promised to him had been delivered.

Her boyfriend was homeless, as she had been previously. A particularly harsh supervisor from San Francisco Public Works — the department known simply as "DPW" — had rolled through and promised to house him, told them they would be removed from their spot at San Bruno Avenue and Alameda Street, and warned they needed to be ready. This worker came days before a planned "resolution," which is not what should happen, nor does he have housing to offer, to threaten and cajole, calling himself "homeless enforcement." What is supposed to happen, is that Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) members should come, assess, offer services and do work to place people weeks leading up to a resolution. There should be written notices that are helpful, such as who to contact for help. Then DPW should only come after to clean things up, following behind for any garbage.

Linda, deep in grief, got some friends to help and pulled her husband's belongings together, with the plan to bring them to the storage, to sort through those she would return to his family, and those belongings she would keep. He was an artist and had drawings he had made for her, also jewelry that he had gifted her, letters he had written. Many things she felt were little miracles that had somehow survived the ravages of homelessness. Her boyfriend, Jay, died on a Monday, and when the DPW workers showed up again the day after, despite that grief, she had already with a group of friends pulled his stuff together neatly on a cart. The DPW supervisor started in,

mentioning that he knew her boyfriend had died and that he warned them he was coming and that they needed to have it together. She argued that it was together and tried pulling the cart away. The DPW supervisor shouted that "the next person who takes these things will get cracked in the face" and "I don't have any problems hitting women." Linda continued to pull on the cart to get the treasured belongings away, now hysterically crying, and the supervisor knocked the cart over, just missing Linda, and the belongings dumped out everywhere. The

workers started picking up items, mainly making sure Linda saw what she was losing, and then tossing them away into the garbage, not even bagging and tagging. She watched letters, artwork all go into the crusher, crying all along. Saving only one message from Jay printed on a gazebo nearby, she in the midst of her grief had to bear this abuse, and the verbalizing of assumptions about her due to her housing status, such as her using dope. Linda said she could tell that some of the other workers were uncomfortable with their supervisor's behavior.

Linda was careful to point out that the belongings were not soiled — an excuse DPW often uses to throw things away. I was not there to witness this event, but I talked to four other people who were, and they all said the same thing and

worse. Some not feeling comfortable with me repeating, as they were still outside and vulnerable to the whims of state — or, in this case, municipal government — abuse.

I did see the aftermath of DPW actions Wednesday morning, where they showed up, again, improperly before HOT, claiming themselves to be "homeless enforcement" and ripped the tarp down that served as an awning off of a van. They threw away the belongings before the occupants had a chance to wake up, and were told to "put their fucking clothes on" by DPW. They took everything outside of the van, leaving only the garbage. Included in what was taken were the tools of the van occupant, who used them for work. There were about 50 people camping in this area. Many had been removed from other sites, all of whom I talked to wanted housing. A couple had housing, but the placement was inappropriate and could have been easily solved with a transfer, others were "housing referral status" and had been waiting for a long time for housing placement. This operation could have been carried out in a dignified way — I have seen that before. Instead, it was the very opposite. It was traumatizing, unsettling, and ineffective. There was no partnership with the community to assist, there was no transparency, there was mistreatment and a bad timeline without proper notice. Many of those staying there had been told to camp there by City officials.

All of this hardship could have been avoided, and the outcomes could have been so much better. Instead, the message to campers from the city was loud and clear: "Your life is without value." But Linda's life does have value, and her life is beautiful and precious, as

was her boyfriend's. San Francisco needs to make sure she knows that. The best way to show that is through actions that demonstrate compassion. The City should offer safe and permanent housing to every person struggling on the streets. ■





# WIDOW ON A HUNGER FOR HOUSING RIGHTS

Ramona Mayon

in a pandemic. Again, back to court. They paid for the motel room from March 19 to June 13, 2020, then moved us to the FEMA trailer. I am completely at a loss to even really talk about that except to say there was no medical care, none. This place was promoted in the media as being “medically supported.” It was not. My husband got a spider bite and it really affected him. I sent texts with pictures to the on-site “nurse” (who did the daily temp checks around the camp). She replied with apologies that there was no doctor to see him.

He died three days later in my arms, a hard and painful death. No one came to help me nor even contacted me one single time after I left there. I couldn’t even get the last load of laundry returned with his — and my — favorite clothes in it. People in prison have more care.

The first three months after his death, I stayed with a daughter north of Truckee until her landlord threatened her with legal action. I decided to join the camping club “Thousand Trails” and camped in Manteca, Nicolaus, Morgan Hill and Hollister. The experience proved what I had suspected all along: that people were being cheated out of decent campground set-ups by the so-called homelessness industry. Then, as fate would have it, my SUV sprang a serious oil leak. The only thing I could do was make a mad, midnight dash for San Francisco along the mountains, coming up the Pacifica way, running at night to avoid the traffic. I managed not to blow the engine and was so relieved to roll onto the Great Highway on October 15 just after 2 a.m. It felt really, really good to be back on the beach where my husband and I had lived from 1997 till 2012, the first decade in a black Bluebird school bus and later on in an RV. Our children all think of the Sunset avenues as their childhood home.

So how did I come to be on the Great Highway (at Santiago) on a hunger strike, now day no. 22? Almost as soon as I got back to the city, I ran into an old friend who was in a trailer, with a collection of other RVs and a few tents nearby. She had a generator so I could charge my power pack and it felt good to hear her tell others about how she knew me when I was raising my kids in an old black school bus on this very same beach. To get around the back pain I was suffering being in the SUV all the time, I put my tent up at the edge of the encampment to spend days in it, while still sleeping in my SUV, for safety reasons obviously. This move put me on the HOT team’s radar. I found it interesting that as long as I was asleep in my car, I was of no interest to them. I was signed up the first time for “services” on November 16, two days before the sweep at Balboa and Great Highway. There had been one worker who left his card and told my friend there was to be a sweep on Wednesday (November 18). I simply didn’t put my tent up the

next day or the next, but rather waited it out. On Wednesday, I showed up right after daylight, about three minutes before it started. I filmed the whole thing and it was, of course, disturbing. (Photos at [www.supportsurvival.home.blog](http://www.supportsurvival.home.blog))

I was especially outraged by the way the City employees weren’t adhering to the law about the removal of tents, and instinctively knowing as well that offering the Moscone Center, set up as a congregant shelter, in a pandemic, would not pass muster under *Martin v. Boise*, I was at court filing paper day before Thanksgiving. To kick things off, I asked for an order to show cause why no sanitary services had been provided per the CDC recommendations and the City’s own written guidelines. I asked for the City to be restrained from further sweeps until after the pandemic was over. In spite of the judge graciously moving the meeting up to working on Zoom, instead of CourtCall, and devoting 50 minutes to my complaint, expressing grave concerns about the lack of posted 24-hour notice on the tents, there was “no relief” to be had (mostly, the recent Hastings Law School settlement seemed to be why). I knew the matter was far from over, so I simply put my tent back up, this time next to my friend’s trailer. I was right. December 10, 2020, the same group of employees came back, doing the same exact thing: no notices, no offer of services, no concern they are being filmed, and the only offer of shelter is the Moscone Center. This time I took my tent down in front of them, stored it in the top carrier, and began to have to use my SUV again full-time. I am on SSI for scoliosis of the hip and two herniated discs, all seen on the MRI, etc. I have no business sitting in a car 24/7 and then complaining I am losing even more of my mobility. Going numb, in fact.

“Possessing and protecting property... seeking safety...and privacy” is why I sent for my RV to be delivered to the Great Highway (via AAA) on the day before the first big winter storm in the mountains. It arrived on December 23, 2020 at 2:30 p.m. to the “real” residents coming out their houses yelling obscenities and telling me they were calling the police. That went on about 45 minutes as I plastered the side of my RV with hand-lettered signs saying “COVID Widow on Hunger Strike.” My husband’s ashes and all our belongings are finally back in my care and I have NIMBYs screaming their hate consciousness at me because of unconstitutional exclusionary zoning practices that have empowered them in their hate.

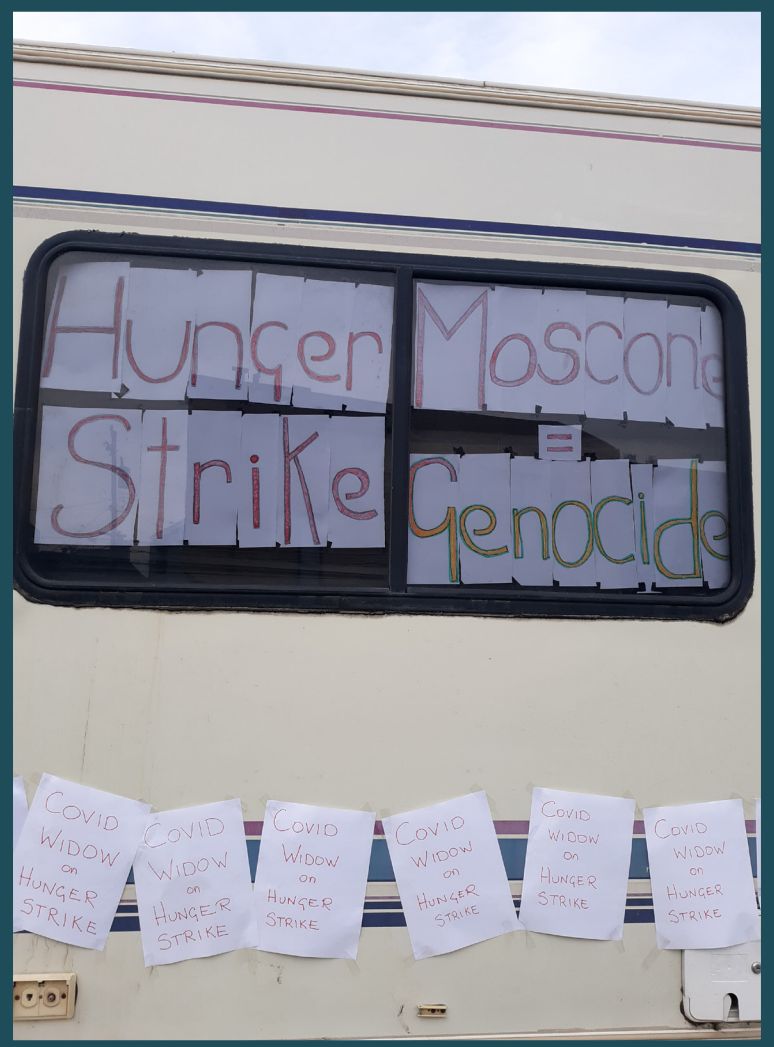
Of course I am on a hunger strike! What alternative do I have?

The second TRO request garnered me a filed paper from SFPD saying they have no plans to tow (although it’s more likely to be SFMTA who tows). The police also came out and told the neighbors I have a gameplan and that they think it’s a real pity no one will “step up and help” me. So let me tell you what the City’s HOT team has offered me: small bags of toiletries; individual size bottled waters (two at a time); a pair of socks; directions to a shower downtown in the Tenderloin; knowledge of a charity that “might” pay for smog and DMV fee; asked me to email them an estimate of what it would take to fix my RV so I can leave SF; an offer of a nurse to look at the stitch left in my nose from the accident; an offer to set me up with a grief counselor; an offer of a spot at St. Mary’s winter shelter (only 67 people and my car can be left parked on the street); an offer of transport to the downtown Moscone Center, maximum

capacity 400 people and their pets. That’s 800 opportunities to catch COVID-19. The services that the municipalities are being paid by the federal grants to keep our vulnerable communities safe — or at least safer — are without oversight or organization, much less accountability, just a constant wash of money and a regular outcry for more unsupervised money because the problem is getting worse.

And that’s what I became unhinged over. That’s why I am on a hunger strike. Because of the HATE of vehicle dwellers (a minority) by those who live in regular houses (the majority). I have lived in FEAR 22 days now simply because I live in an RV. Because “they” want to take away the safety and comfort I have found in the last three weeks being back in my home, even if it’s on the side of the road waiting for the necessary work. Like living in an RV is a crime. Oh wait, it is in San Francisco.

My point is, though, and that’s what I will be asking the court next, why aren’t there services for me? I qualify by age, by poverty, by disability. What I need will actually prevent me from ending up in a doorway and cause me to be housed for the rest of my life. Why doesn’t the City help? And why is it OK for the neighbors to be this angry, to have thought it OK to have outlawed me and my vehicle from “their streets” for being “over-sized?” Where are the parks for people like me, who refuse to live in anything but their RV? That’s the question I want my hunger strike to ask. The streets are full of us, and it’s only going to get worse. The status quo is over. RVs are the solution to the housing crisis. Just give us parks. Give us services. Give us dignity. ■





# TO SAMEEN ON HIS 9TH BIRTHDAY, THANKS!

Olivia Glowacki

*"The first time I saw a homeless person I felt very sad. I think everyone should have a home because of these reasons... hurricanes, tsunamis, floods, robbers, and COVID-19. These things can kill you. Homeless people are treated poorly in the streets by others. I think everyone should have a home because everyone deserves one." - Sameen Prasad*

Children are observant and have a heart for others that supersedes bureaucratic politics and the cruelties of capitalism. Before his ninth birthday, Sameen Prasad saw what millions in the Bay Area — including many who are triple and quadruple his age — chose to ignore every day: the devastating effects of poverty. And he chose to do something about it.

Sameen and his parents were hiking and talking through how homelessness can exist in a city with such wealth and income inequality. After discussing the dearth of affordable housing and how poor and homeless people are villainized, Sameen started brainstorming what he could do to positively impact and help people experiencing homelessness. As a young artist, he started a birthday fundraiser to make drawings of people's pets for a small donation to the Coalition on Homelessness.

The campaign started with friends of Sameen's mom requesting portraits of their

pets. For those without furry friends, Sameen also created original doodles depicting impressive scenes like the one below entitled, "Octopus Vs. Godzilla." As of this writing, Sameen has raised over \$1,200 and drawn over a dozen doodles dripping with distinguished artistry!

The Coalition doesn't accept any city, state or federal government funding so that we can stay true to our mission of centering the voices of those experiencing homelessness. This funding can do a lot for our scrappy nonprofit. We print over 60,000 copies of Street Sheet every month which our poor and homeless vendors get for free and can sell for a suggested \$2 donation. We have at least one vendor who makes overnearly \$1,000 each month from his paper sales! We also use funding to pay homeless outreach workers. One of the most fundamental activities at the Coalition is outreach, which is where we go out on the streets to encampments or shelters, wherever homeless folks are congregating, and form relationships with people experiencing homelessness. Our outreaches establish a two-way street with folks we're talking to. Not only are we able to give out information like where a person can get a hot meal or a shower, but we engage in public education on "Knowing Your Rights" as a homeless person, which can come in handy when engaging with law enforcement who often force homeless

people out of public space for just trying to survive without a home! We take our funding and are able to hire currently and formerly homeless people to do these outreaches, as trust is more easily established when you're talking to someone who has shared the same struggle as you.

Outreach is just one tactic of our advocacy, yet it actually drives and directs the work. What we hear on outreach, we take back to our Housing Justice and Human Rights workgroups at the Coalition, where we form campaigns that directly address the issues that come up. A good example of this is when the coronavirus first hit in March last year. We quickly formed a team of outreach workers, some of whom were homeless at the time of or prior to the time of their outreach, and with ears to the ground to find out what immediate needs were of folks on the street. Keep in mind, at this time the shelter system was closed to anyone new. If you were homeless on the waitlist for shelter, there was no option to seek refuge inside. We found that immediate needs were information about preventing coronavirus, tents for folks to take refuge from the elements, hand sanitizer, baby wipes, snacks and water since the drop-in centers and public spaces like the library were closed.

At the same time we were giving out these essential survival items, our workgroups were working steadfastly to get the City to create hand-washing stations in high traffic areas where homeless folks live and congregate. To this end, dozens of hand-washing stations were installed stocked with soap, water and paper towels where folks could have access to a sink that was otherwise closed off to them since the cafes, hospitals, or other places folks could go to freely wash their hands did not allow public entry.

But our outreach doesn't end with the initial idea. In this case, when we got the hand-washing stations, we kept our outreach consistent — reaching back out to folks and following up on how the hand-washing stations were working out in actuality. We heard back that some stations were never restocked of supplies and others that were located on a City map did not even exist. These double-checks resulted in going back to the City and pushing for more consistent restock and staffing, as well as ensuring all hand-washing stations identified on maps were present.

While this is just one example of what we do, it serves as the basis for all of our work. Another is Proposition C, a 2018 ballot measure we put on that taxes the wealthiest corporations to yield a total of \$300 million in homeless funding arose from the brilliance of formerly and currently unhoused residents of San Francisco. Also, the Shelter Client Advocates (SCA), who help shelter residents get back into shelter if they were unfairly kicked out, was first theorized by the minds of homeless people. Additionally, the SCA was one of our first external Coalition programs under the name Shelter Grievance Advocacy Program in April 1992.

So to Sameen, and all those you've inspired to donate, thank you for funding this work. Thank you for supporting Street Sheet, which gives an independent platform to and provides income for unhoused and poor folk. Thank you for endorsing and validating the voices and brilliance of those who experience homelessness. Thank you for joining us in the struggle to ensure everyone has safe and dignified housing. Happy birthday No. 9, Sameen. Much love and solidarity from your friends at COH. ■

OCTOPUS VS GODZILLA



Rex



Pinkie



## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

If you or your family live in a shelter or SIP Hotel, and have been issued a warning or denial of service, please contact our office by phone at 415-346-7685, or by email at [sca@evictiondefense.org](mailto:sca@evictiondefense.org).

More information about our services can be found at: [evictiondefense.org/services/shelter-client-advocacy/](http://evictiondefense.org/services/shelter-client-advocacy/)

# A Non-Police Response To Homelessness In Sight!

Stella Kunkat

On January 19, the Compassionate Alternative Response Team (CART) working group presented its community plan for San Francisco to end the law enforcement response to homelessness and to roll out a new community-run response team. “What kind of city would be possible if unhoused neighbors were treated as worthy of life and dignity rather than as a nuisance or a threat?” This is the fundamental question driving the CART working group’s mission to replace the police as first responders to situations involving unhoused members of the community. Instead of police, the group is calling for the staffing of well-trained and well-paid peers with lived experience of homelessness.

## HOW THE CART PLAN CAME TOGETHER

In this city, there is a longstanding pattern of police as the primary responders to homelessness-related and most often complaint-based 911 calls leading to problematic, harmful, and, yes, even deadly encounters between unhoused members of the community and police officers. For years, advocates with the Coalition on Homelessness and many other organizations have observed the long-term harm and trauma inflicted on unhoused individuals because of such encounters.

In January 2019 – notably before the national calling of “defund the police” – the San Francisco Police Commission passed a resolution that called for an end to police response to homelessness and for the Board of Supervisors to create a stakeholders’ group to develop an alternative. Under the leadership of Police Commissioner John Hamasaki, the first meetings were organized in February 2020 with the goal to design an inclusive process with community members, key City departments and elected officials at the table. Staff from the offices of four supervisors who have high numbers of unhoused residents in their districts were invited, and as an initial step the Board of Supervisors secured \$2 million in reserve for this future program.

When the pandemic hit, the process was sidelined for a few months but then reinitiated in July 2020. The Coalition on Homelessness hired Patrick Brown, senior consultant at The Justice Collective,

to facilitate the process. A large group of stakeholders – including the participating members of 28 community organizations, City departments, elected officials, un-

housed constituents, and academics – was convened. The goal of this working group was to develop a concrete plan for the implementation of a new form of community response to homelessness. In short, an alternative to police, not a form of alternative policing.

The group decided that the new model would be called Compassionate Alternative Response Team: C.A.R.T.

The working group met weekly for seven months and conducted almost 100 surveys with unhoused individuals, gathering their input on what an alternative to police response should look like. Furthermore, the group was in frequent contact with existing community response programs in the U.S., in particular with the CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) program from Eugene, Oregon. Based on that exchange, the CART working group identified a number of best practices of how to run a community-based response team.

By the end of the seven months, the CART working group had finalized a 70-page report outlining a new “Community Plan for San Francisco.”

## THE CART STREET SURVEY

As mentioned, close to 100 unhoused individuals were surveyed as part of the development of the CART plan, and personally I had the pleasure to analyze all the responses with a group of volunteers. The respondents ranged from ages 18 to 67 and were interviewed in seven districts throughout the city. The survey questions were designed to elicit a variety of responses regarding what a non-police response should entail. For example, people were asked such hypothetical questions about how merchants’ complaints about people resting outside should be addressed and how they would like to see conflicts rising from heated arguments among peers and neighbors resolved.

Reading and analyzing all the responses was truly insightful. First of all, the majority of the people that were surveyed had lots of ideas and many detailed recommendations of what an alternative should look like, who should be staffed, and what skills and services the response should have. On the other hand, there were quite a few individuals, while not necessarily having a clear vision of what an alternative could be like, definitely shared much about the shortcomings of the current police response. One of

the respondents said, for example: “Police should have been more understanding,” one respondent said. “Police should have been respectful. They don’t respect us and make our situation worse often times.” Another said they wished “not (to) be interrupted or disrespected by [the police]; not have [their] life threatened by them.”

When asked what they would consider a positive outcome from an encounter with an alternative response team, responses ranged from providing housing, food and other services to offering medical and mental health assistance to simply avoiding arrest. In short, they were open to any option that wasn’t punitive, criminalizing or shaming.

Essentially, rather than being met with an assumption-based, stigmatizing attitude, respondents expressed a desire for humane treatment and respect from an alternative response team, without force and aggression, but still with a good understanding of the traumas of homelessness. In addition, they said the team must be staffed by people with lived experience and are familiar with the community they serve. Finally, the survey participants expressed that the team should be well equipped with resources to offer, such as housing, shelter, food, hygiene, medical assistance, harm reduction services, and transportation, so that they could be helped in a drug, psychiatric or (minor) medical crisis.

## ON THE ROAD TO IMPLEMENTATION

Getting the CART program implemented will undoubtedly be a heavy lift, as it would revolutionize how San Francisco deals with street homelessness. At this stage, the Community Plan has been published, and the process of gaining wide-spread support for the implementation has been kicked off. The CART working group has met with the Mayor’s Steering Committee working on alternatives to policing and hopes to keep collaborating with that committee. On a daily basis, San Franciscans are contacting the CART working group, complimenting the cause and expressing their wish to volunteer and support CART. But support for this would have to come from all stakeholders.

With the support of Police Commissioner John Hamasaki and Supervisor Matt Haney – who is the new chair of the Budget Committee – the CART Plan has one foot in the door to success. However, there are still major challenges to implementing CART: Winning broad public support, securing the proposed total annual budget of \$6.825 million funded from additional cuts to the police budget, and initiating

ing the program by May 2021.

And even once the budget is secured and implementation is underway, the continued struggle to ensure accountability and avert corruption will continue. Making sure CART responds to the needs of unhoused individuals will demand ongoing involvement from all constituents and stakeholders. In short, the long-term commitment and scrutiny of advocates and community organizations will be paramount to CART’s success. ■

Visit the CART-SF website for more information: <https://www.cartsf.org/home>

## WHAT THE CART PLAN IS ALL ABOUT

The Plan lays out, firstly, how the current dispatch system of the Department of Emergency Management would need to be changed and what types of calls would be diverted to CART and, secondly, how the CART response team would operate on the street. Bare with me and this long list of recommendations.

### DISPATCH RECOMMENDATIONS:

- + Initially CART will respond only to C-priority (low priority emergency level) calls diverted from 911 dispatch to CART involving unhoused people on the street or in temporary shelters (see all included radio calls on page 36-37 of the CART report)
- + Once CART has received a call police will not respond
- + If it is clearly a harassment call CART will not respond with a team, but work with the caller to educate them on the current situation of homelessness
- + CART would not respond to 917 calls related to drug sales because CART interventions should remain true to addressing the social and behavioral health needs of homeless individuals, rather than doing alternative policing
- + Establishing a direct CART hotline, so that unhoused and housed members of the community can call CART directly rather than 911.
- + Eliminating HSOC, which was ill-conceived from the beginning as a tent and police-centered response to homelessness
- + Repealing the Sit/Lie Law, which targets the most vulnerable and calls for a punitive approach to homelessness

### STREET RESPONSE PLAN:

- + CART would be a Police-Alternative Response and Community-Strengthening Hub, to empower housed neighbors to more “compassionately respond” to their unhoused neighbors directly
- + Provide first aid and non-emergency medical services, substance use resources, transportation services, de-escalation intervention and interpersonal conflict resolution, street counseling, suicide prevention, and housing referrals/resources
- + CART team would respond city-wide and 24/7 with a team of two extensively trained staff who have lived experience of homelessness
- + CART would be a non-government organization funded from additional cuts to the police budget



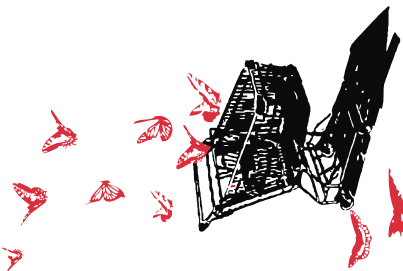
– SF Resident, survey participant



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 3481  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94188

Coalition On Homelessness  
280 Turk Street  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
415-346-3740  
www.cohsf.org  
streetsheetstf@gmail.com

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Coalition on  
Homelessness  
San Francisco

# STREET SPEAK

## EPISODE 5: Inside the Shelter in Place Hotels



This episode dives into the reality of life inside San Francisco's Shelter in Place (SIP) Hotel program. There are 2,400 formerly unhoused people currently staying in SIP hotel rooms in San Francisco, and while the City has committed to housing most of them, the details of where and how that will happen are unclear.

We'll hear first from Mary Crisis, a former SIP hotel worker who penned a damning open letter about the conditions in the hotels which you can read on their twitter page @jfchrist. Then we speak with SIP hotel tenant Nicholas Garrett about the necessity of the SIP Hotel program as well as the violations he has witnessed inside.

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

Want to get answers to your burning questions about poverty and homelessness? Have thoughts and feelings about our show? Let us know at [bit.ly/streetspeak](http://bit.ly/streetspeak)

STREET SHEET  
is now accepting submissions for our first ever

## DISABILITY ISSUE

We are seeking articles, narratives, poems, artwork, comics etc focusing on personal experiences with disabilities and well as disability justice issues.

Submissions can be emailed to  
[qwatts@cohsf.org](mailto:qwatts@cohsf.org) or mailed to

280 Turk Street, SF 94102

\*payment may be available for submissions from people experiencing homelessness, please contact the editor for more information\*

Street Sheet is now accepting submissions for our first ever Disability Issue! We are seeking articles, narratives, poems, artwork, comics etc focusing on personal experiences with disabilities and well as disability justice issues. Submissions can be emailed to [qwatts@cohsf.org](mailto:qwatts@cohsf.org) or mailed to 280 Turk Street, SF 94102. Payment may be available for submissions from people experiencing homelessness, please contact the editor for more information.