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STREET SHEET

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STREET SHEET IS RECRUITING VENDORS! HELP US GET THE WORD OUT BY HANGING OUR CENTERFOLD AS A POSTER IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD!

CAR CARAVAN TO #KEEPSIPSOPEN 6



Art by Max Vosevich Keller

COFFEE AND CARE FOR RV DWELLERS AT STONESTOWN

Solange Cuba

Due to the pandemic, many people have lost their jobs and their homes, leading many families into unsheltered homelessness. Organizers with the Coalition on Homelessness (COH) have been reaching out to vehicularly housed folks who live on Winston Street and Lake Merced Boulevard next to San Francisco State University, aiming to provide support and permanent solutions to people living in RVs. Vehicularly housed residents told the COH that they face several daily challenges, including a lack of access to drinking water, difficulty dumping and clearing their wastewater tanks, unending fears of being hit by a car and the recurring dread of street cleaning every Tuesday at 6:45 a.m.

On street cleaning day, these residents have to move their RVs to avoid being ticketed. Many began to park at the nearby Stonestown Galleria mall in front of McDonald's for approximately 20 minutes, allowing them to go back before they lost their parking space. After a few weeks, mall security told RV dwellers that they don't have the right to park there, even though they had bought food, because the vehicles were too large. Once, the mall even called the police to evict them from the parking lot.


Carlos Wadkins, a COH human rights organizer, met with the mall's head of security and the property manager this summer to advocate for folks

to be able to use the spaces, and the mall agreed to let residents park for 20 minutes as long as they buy some food from McDonald's. Last month, COH launched a fundraiser to buy breakfast for these vehicularly housed folks, so that every single family that needs to park during street cleaning can do so for the next two months—and maybe just as importantly, have community support.

"Something as simple as buying folks a McDonald's breakfast once a week can seem relatively insignificant, but the stability of being able to safely make way for street cleaning every week without being harassed by security or police is really important," said Wadkins. "It was really heartening to see so many people contribute to allow us to help provide that stability."

Maria, one of the RV dwellers in this neighborhood, told us how challenging it has been to live on the streets during this pandemic without any support. The mother of two children, 6 and 9 years old, told us how hard it is when her daughter repeatedly asks when they are coming back home, because she is tired of camping every day.

For the time being, while RV dwellers like Maria are organizing to protect their rights, at least they have a place to park on street cleaning day. ■



Freedom Flight

As I look out the window sill here,
I see birds circling high above the ground.
Free, floating as high as he wants,
To be ever so gently,
Free, free, free.

Now if I could trade places with that bird that soars,
Never to be trapped inside these doors,
I'd fly high and free to unknown places,
Above treetops and snow-capped places,
Free, free, free.

But I am just a man stuck here on the ground,
Maybe never meant to soar high and peacefully free,
From sea to shining sea,
Free, free, free.

Now if there is a God above, only He may one day be the
Judge, To let me fly ever so high and gently free,
Above the stars and galaxies, or to burn in hell eternally,
Never, ever,
Free, free, free.

Written by John Dwyer, my MiracleFriend, when he was incarcerated in San Bruno County Jail #3 in 1986, for a drug offenses. Told to Linda Hoff on phone. By his own admission, he didn't "straighten up" after release as he was still "too wild."

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COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

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

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

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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Miracle Friends is a project of **Miracle Messages** (miraclemessages.org), an award-winning 501(c)3 nonprofit that helps our unhoused neighbors rebuild their social support systems.



HOTELS HEAL:

Lina Khoeur

KEEP SIP HOTELS OPEN

Disease does not care about class divisions or housing status. If you leave anybody vulnerable to COVID-19, you increase your whole city's vulnerability to COVID-19. When you increase access to stable, humane housing, you increase the health of your city. When you support and prioritize the health of your friends and community members who are experiencing homelessness, you support and prioritize the health of your healers in the hospitals and the health of those organizing in the community.

My name is Lina Khoeur. I currently live on occupied and unceded Ramaytush Ohlone lands. I am a member of the Do No Harm Coalition and a fourth-year medical student at UCSF, where I am learning from and providing care for our communities. As a healthcare provider, a researcher and an organizer, I have studied the impacts of city policies on our unhoused community and our city's health.

We continue to work to meet the increasing challenges of a pandemic, economic instability and climate crisis, all of which feed into each other and manifest as the diseases I see in the hospital, in the clinic and in our community. As a city, we all hope for a healthier future, and it takes radical imagination and transformative justice to get there.

The first step, and the baseline, is to make sure that everyone's basic needs are met.

As part of the Do No Harm Coalition, I, along with hundreds of other providers in San Francisco, applaud the City's efforts to relocate current shelter-in-place (SIP) hotel residents to permanent housing. And just like each of us continues to anticipate, adapt to, and creatively meet the challenges of COVID-19, we must continue to create and implement solutions that center our city's healing. What if we all worked as hard to eradicate the causes of homelessness as we all are working to eradicate COVID-19? Just as social distancing and wearing masks is a preventative measure, expanding shelter-in-place hotels is a preventative measure.

Mayor London Breed, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, and the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, you have all made life-saving progress in bringing together different agencies, folks managing hotels, secondary service providers, care coordinators, and healers in the creation of SIP hotels. This work saves lives. As people are relocated into permanent housing, newly empty hotel rooms need to be made available for people who are still on the streets or in congregate shelter. And more hotels should be



acquired by the City to ensure every community member experiencing homelessness has the option for safe shelter.

SF community, the challenges you face are too urgent for you to slow or stop the work. By the time a patient has come through the hospital doors, there is only so much that I can do. Even as a medical student at the beginning of my career, I have already had to discharge more patients onto the street than I ever wanted to, often with crucial medications for kidney failure, heart disease or infections. I never know if they will be able to stay healthy, if their medications will be stolen or

confiscated in sweeps, if they will be able to get long-term, sustainable health care. I still worry about what I did not and could not do for their whole health. But SIP hotels have done what I could not do alone: In these hotels, I have seen patients with diabetes keep healthy blood sugar levels for the first time, stay on crucial medications for addiction treatment, and get long-term mental health care. Our community has the power to create and implement solutions that heal COVID-19, that close the wounds of classism, racism and neglect that harm all of us. We keep each other safe. Expanding SIP hotels keeps us all safe. ■

OP-ED: HOMELESS PEOPLE SHOULD GET VAXXED

Jordan Davis

This is the most difficult piece I have ever had to write on the issue of homelessness and supportive housing. Like all of you, I tend to be very hesitant about bureaucratic hurdles that keep people from being able to access housing from homelessness, and through this, I still will be in the vast majority of circumstances.

However, the resurgence of COVID-19 due to the delta variant and widespread vaccine refusal has forced my hand, and it has created a situation where so many people—myself included—have no more patience for those who want to endanger others and prolong the pandemic.

It is time for the City — specifically, the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing — to require all homeless and formerly homeless clients to be vaccinated for COVID-19 as a condition of accessing services and housing, except for very rare medical exemptions.

This will undoubtedly be controversial. With the full vaccination rate among unhoused people at only 39%, there is definitely an equity issue with access to the

vaccine, despite that it's been widely available since April. Providers need to do all they can to help vulnerable people access vaccination and meet them where they are at. However, we can no longer tolerate vaccine refusal given the ongoing pandemic.

I live in a single-resident occupancy hotel used for supportive housing. I know that there are unvaccinated people living in my building — some of them even told me themselves. But just like the City is requiring everyone regardless of vaccination status to wear masks indoors while taking half-measures in terms of vaccination mandates, my building's management is cracking down and threatening to evict people for not wearing masks, while the bigger danger to immunocompromised people like me is people walking around my building unvaccinated, masked or not.

Many people, including myself, don't want to keep wearing masks forever; I want to get back to enjoying things, and I want the city to continue to build back better. However, we need vaccine requirements at all levels of society to end this pandemic; masks can't do it alone. Vaccination re-

quirements for various illnesses, such as polio and the measles, have existed for a long time for children who wish to go to school, and given the nature of this virus, this is no different.

Vaccines work. Contrary to what conspiracy theorists tell you, they don't alter your DNA, they don't cause autism, there is no microchip, and while there is a chance of a breakthrough infection, they are still rare and vaccination can be the difference between sniffles and suffocation. There is no such thing as "vaccine hesitancy" anymore: You are either vaccinated, in the process of getting vaccinated, or you are prolonging this pandemic and dragging us all down with you. I got vaccinated (Team Pfizer) back in March, and we the vaccinated should not have to be punished by misguided mitigation measures because of irresponsible people. Vax refusal is not skydiving; it's drunk driving.

What I have to say hurts more than the jab itself, but if we are to get out of this and protect our densely housed community, we all must roll up our sleeves and do our part. ■

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people centering



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KEEP THE SIP HOTELS OPEN TO SAVE LIVES, DEMONSTRATORS TELL MAYOR BREED

Sup. Haney says feds will probably keep paying—but in the end, the city needs to buy these hotels as permanent housing.

By Garrett Leahy
September 7, 2021

Reprinted from 48Hills

Activists and unhoused San Franciscans rallied and formed a caravan with their vehicles outside City Hall today, demanding that Mayor London Breed act to keep all Shelter-In-Place hotel rooms in San Francisco, which currently house roughly 2,000 unhoused San Franciscans, open until December 31.

The current plan from the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing is to gradually end the SIP hotel program over several months, phasing all hotel rooms out of the program by June 2022.

Activists and medical professionals said that the SIP hotel program has been life-altering, helping formerly unhoused people deal with mental stress and heal from any physical conditions stemming from living on the streets.

“If you compare the mortality rates, when we put people into SIP hotels, they drop by about 45 percent,” said Jennifer Friedenbach, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness. “Having the dignity of a door to close, the stability of a bed to sleep in, access to a bathroom and hygiene, being able to hold onto and take medications and not have them be confiscated, getting enough sleep, these are things that often don’t happen on the street or shelters, but do happen in SIP hotel rooms.”

During the demonstration, members of the Do No Harm Coalition, a coalition of medical students and

health workers advocating for public health-focused public policy, said the SIP hotel program has been an effective and humane solution during the COVID pandemic, allowing residents to better adhere to taking medication regularly as well as improving overall mental health.

“Being able to have stable housing means that people can have their medication in one place, so people can continue to take meds regularly and stay up-to-date on medicated assisted treatment, or diabetics, or liver disease,” said Lina Khoeur, a fourth-year medical student at UCSF and a member of the Do No Harm Coalition. “Being displaced or feeling that you don’t have a place to go to is unsettling. It’s hard to manage anything else when your basic needs of having a safe place to sleep are not met.”

The vaccination rate among the unhoused is low compared to the vaccination rate for San Franciscans at-large, and homeless people are at a higher-than-average risk of dying from COVID, according to a letter from the Do No Harm Coalition.

HSH previously said in an August 24 memo that it’s necessary to close the hotel rooms in advance of looming costs to the city when FEMA funds expire at the end of 2021, as well as allowing time for HSH to transfer people from SIP rooms to other housing, namely shelters.

“HSH must continue to demobilize the [SIP] program in anticipation of the pending general fund cost of operations and the considerable time it takes to rehouse SIP guests and demobilize sites,” the HSH memo read.

Friedenbach said the city’s deci-

sion to close the SIP hotels piecemeal ahead of the looming December cut-off of FEMA reimbursement funding, which has allowed the city to run the hotels at a fairly low cost, deprives unhoused San Franciscans of otherwise usable rooms which give them privacy, dignity, and the space to plan out their lives, ultimately giving them a better shot at exiting homelessness.

The city actually can keep thousands housed. That’s a political decision.

Friedenbach said the city should keep the rooms open as long as possible, transferring occupants into permanent housing while filling hotel vacancies until FEMA funding expires.

“Right now they’re moving people from SIP hotels into permanent housing, which leaves an empty room,” she said. “If we kept that hotel open, we could have the opportunity to have folks move in off the street. Does that mean that they will all get housing at the end? We hope so, but even if they don’t, it still means they have a few months of respite, and a better opportunity to exit homelessness—when you’re out on the street, just living day-to-day, there’s no way to do long-term planning,” Friedenbach said.

“We’re asking them to pause hotel closures until the end of the year, and close them in one fell swoop. Yes, that will be a massive effort, but we think the city can do it.”

As of mid-August, HSH is no longer transferring COVID-vulnerable people, such as those in SIP hotel rooms, into congregate shelter beds, although HSH is continuing to add cots in shelters for those without COVID co-morbidities, having already added 170 beds, with plans to add 143 beds to shelters by the end of 2021, according to Friedenbach. Most people in SIP hotels slated to close are placed into other vacant SIP rooms at hotels yet to be closed.

HSH did not respond to requests for comment.

Supervisor Matt Haney, whose district includes a large number of unhoused people, said he supports the call to stop hotel closures, saying that it’s a reasonable

bet that the federal government will extend FEMA reimbursement for states’ COVID costs, such as the SIP hotel program, as the feds have done before.

“I hope that the federal government extends the reimbursement even beyond the end of this year, and they’ve extended it a few times already, which was our prediction, and I think they’ll extend it again,” Haney said. “The hotels shouldn’t close, especially when we are still receiving reimbursement...we have three months, those funds should be used to bring people inside.”

According to Haney, who chairs the Board of Supervisors’ Budget and Finance Committee, FEMA funding is necessary for the city to operate the hotels, but he added that the city’s current plan to lease the hotels is not cost-effective, saying that it would be better for San Francisco to purchase more of the hotels to be converted into affordable housing, which is already happening for some, such as Hotel Diva, but not all, of the hotels.

“I’m not sure I’d call the SIP hotels, at the scale we have them now, cost effective without reimbursement,” Haney said. “What would be more cost-effective is to house people permanently and purchase the hotels. I don’t think it would make sense to lease the hotels at the scale we have now, permanently. We need some temporary transitional placements to get people into housing, and SIP hotels are much more effective than the shelter beds,” said Haney.

Although the board has passed emergency ordinances in regards to the SIP hotel program previously, Haney questions the efficacy of such a move at this point, pointing to a lack of clarity as to what such an emergency ordinance should entail and the mayor’s history of ignoring the board’s legislation on hotel rooms.

According to Haney, management of the hotel program ultimately falls to Mayor Breed, as the program emerged as a response to the health emergency declared by Breed in February 2020.

“I’m working with the service providers and advocates to figure out if there is something we should do at the board...ultimately these decisions are in the mayor’s discretion and her powers during the public health emergency...We passed an ordinance saying that they have to bring everyone inside, and they said no.” ■



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Thur 1-3 PM

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WRITING: We are always looking for new
writers to help us spread the word on the street!
Write about your experience of homelessness in San
Francisco, about policies you think the City should
put in place or change, your opinion on local issues,
or about something newsworthy happening in your
neighborhood!

ARTWORK: Help transform ART into ACTION by
designing artwork for *STREET SHEET*! We especially love
art that uplifts homeless people, celebrates the power
of community organizing, or calls out abuses of power!
Cover dimensions are generally 10x13 but artwork of all
sizes are welcome and appreciated!

POETRY: Our annual poetry issue is every
January, but we try to include a poem or two in every
issue. We're especially interested in poems that explore
issues related to poverty, homelessness, and community
power, but all submissions are welcome!

PHOTOGRAPHY: Have a keen eye for beauty?
Love capturing powerful moments at events? Have a
photo of a Street Sheet vendor you'd like to share? We
would love to run your photos in Street Sheet! Note that
subjects must have consented to being photographed to
be included in this paper.

SUBMISSIONS: You can email your work to
qwatts@cohsf.org or submit in person or by mail at
the Coalition on Homelessness at 280 Turk Street, San
Francisco CA 94102. Paid opportunities may be available
to contributors who are experiencing homelessness. Ask
the editor to find out more!

THE STATE OF THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HOMELESSNESS IN OUR COMMUNITY

COALITION ON
HOMELESSNESS

THE FACTS

- Incarcerated people are between 7 and 11
times more likely to have past experiences of
homelessness than the general population,
and between 25 to 50% of homeless people
nationwide have a history of incarceration.
- Because police frequently cite homeless
people and target them for arrest, they can
end up in jail repeatedly, further removing
them from the services and support they
need to escape the cycle of homelessness.

Homeless people are more likely to be
arrested because of numerous factors.
Specifically, homeless people are:

- Often in poor neighborhoods with higher levels of
policing.
- Caught in personal possession of drugs with greater
frequency than those who use drugs in their own
homes.
- Targeted by special anti-homeless and "quality of life"
provisions designed to entangle them.
- Frequently searched and approached due to
complaints against their very presence.

SF Jail By the Numbers

10-24%: SF Jail inmates who are homeless
on any given night.
30%: Homeless people who spent at least
one night in jail in the past year.
44%: "Chronically" homeless people who
spent at least one night in jail in the past
year.
22%: Homeless people who spent more
than five days in jail.
56%: SF jail population that is Black.
85%: SF jail population has not been con-
victed of a crime.

Source: *Applied Survey Research*, San Fran-
cisco's 2013 Point in Time Count. 2013.

- The United States incarcerates more people
than any other country in the world.
- Nationwide, most people who go to jail live in
extreme poverty before they are arrested:
Two-thirds of people in U.S. jails had an
income of less than \$12,000 the year prior to
arrest.
- Upon release from jail or prison, people are
often denied housing, employment, and
access to social programs, so even people
who were housed prior to incarceration can
end up homeless.

Re-Entry: Homelessness by Criminalization

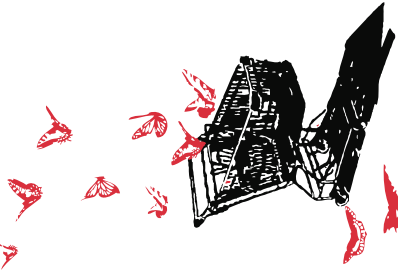
Criminalization perpetuates extreme poverty. According to the
Re-entry Council's Access and Connections Subcommittee,
people who were poor prior to incarceration often leave jail
with nowhere to go, and no way to access the social networks
that supported them before arrest. The penal system rarely
provides opportunities to connect with services or resources
that can ameliorate poverty. This is unjust. This is wrong.

**Abolish Anti-Homeless Laws, Invest in Affordable
Housing and Services, Halt Punitive Enforcement
and Defund SFPD, Grant Amnesty and Abolish
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ART AUCTION21

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Our annual Art Auction sustains our tireless work of ensuring homeless folks are centered in policy decisions in our city. This is our 21st year of our Art Auction, with over 200 works from various local artists still available for bid online!

To keep our communities safe this is an
ONLINE ONLY event so please scan this QR
code to start bidding and support the Coalition
on Homelessness! Bidding will close at noon
on September 23rd, so don't delay.

NOW through September 23rd!



STREET

SEPT 15, 2021

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Home

“(Home is) is somewhere that’s comfortable, somewhere that’s safe, somewhere to go and relax and unwind and have your family in.”

“(Having a place), it’s made a huge difference to be able to be self-sufficient, to have a place to go to, to continue to build my family and to have that security of your own space, a peace of mind. For my 9-year-old, she was about 3 at the time, that we were in the shelters and having a place, she was excited. She has her own room, and her own space, somewhere to call home, so I’m appreciative of that.”

“Oh my gosh, being in a community of strangers; it was a lot of demands on the programs we have. It was a lot of insecurity, a lot of self-doubt with myself, just trying to pick up the pieces of where I fell off, and where I went wrong. It was a hard time, but we got through it.”

“The hardest thing for me was probably sharing my personal space with everyone. I’m really picky about cleanliness and how my space is and it was being around a lot of people at any given time.”

Name: Shameka West, 32 and daughter Samira Hillman
Date: 22 January 2020
Place: Compass
Without a home: About a year but in an apartment since 2013

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