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NOT ONE MORE

DEPORTATION

NI UNA DEPORTACIÓN MÁS
CONTENT WARNING: This newspaper often runs stories that include the experiences of trauma too often shared by those living homeless, unhoused, or in poverty in this city. We’re including this content warning because the stories throughout this issue may be especially activating for some readers. Many of the pieces involve descriptions of traumatic experiences including domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, queer/transphobic violence, in addition to the violence of states and false borders. We encourage you to take your time reading through these stories, and to be gentle with yourselves.

 COVER ART: Loteria by Xavier Lepe
 Artist bio: I’m first generation Mexican-American.I was born and raised in California from immigrant parents coming from Jalisco and Guanajuato. Been making art my whole life and just started a little online shop on Tuscon which you can find at machetazo.bigcartel.com and find some future art and things on instagram: @pinche.policia

HOMELESS SAN FRANCISCANS STILL HAVE HOPE THAT ORGANIZATIONS CAN MAKE THEIR LIVES SHINE AGAIN

Galajo

The challenge of how and when continues to be the dilemma of a society that is desensitized to the crisis of homeless people. People in a crisis of homelessness have great physical, psychological, spiritual, and emotional stress. Being exposed to life on the streets and the uncertainty that comes for them to confront inclement weather and the scourge of hunger, cold, disease, drugs, white slavery, hate, violence, and other manifestations of social decomposition that degrade and violate them.

The government bureaucracy and its indifference to administrative reforms to prioritize assistance to our homeless community is disappointing and frustrating, even though we do not know if it is committed by omission or commission. But what we do understand is how people in a crisis of homelessness are turned away, a deep anguish, wherever their cries for help are drowned in despair and a depression that confines them to survive or die trying to be rescued. Simplifying the process for homeless people to get help should be everyone’s commitment. In this way, we can start to heal the person in distress, always in a dignified and less bureaucratic way and with the firm commitment to provide assistance and help our homeless communities re-enter life in society.

Eradicating poverty and homelessness is a challenge and task for all individuals, and private and governmental institutions. The insensitivity of people who live in a society that faces the challenges of individualism, consumerism, social networks, and other deformations affect the sense of solidarity.

The violence, public insecurity, drug trafficking, corporate greed, and displacement through gentrification alters the dreams of our local communities, because their goals become more unattainable, opportunities disappear, and a cycle of frustration begins. Consequently, a different future arrives, with poverty and pain. Thus in many cases, people begin to become destitute.

The suffering of people trying to find a “home”, a job, and help from our government offices sharpens and populates people’s ideals of living. Meanwhile, society comes and goes, looking at these homeless people every day, forgetting their faces and ignoring them. They see them as shadows that should be taken care of by the government and charities, and not as their responsibility. “I pay so much taxes and these streets do not disappear!”

People do not want to help these homeless people, because it delays their own life plans. They look at these people as a bad example, as something that could happen to them if they do not move away from poverty and everything that means emotional and social weakness in the search for wealth or demands of modern life. Thus this society continues its path, looking, listening to our homeless, without any empathy as they get used to the “normality”. Which is not good from any human perspective.

Racial hatred, xenophobia, and the most inhuman and insensitive indifference of the people who look down on them and throw them a coin of contempt is another very powerful reason that makes people not stop to think that each shadow is a life, a human being at a disadvantage and who needs protection and help. For all this we must change the policy of having to fill out long questionnaires to get help when we are in a crisis. The people staffing these bureaucracies say “in a month we will see if you have a place to sleep, or an appointment for medical treatment, or some place to eat, or some training to continue being productive until you achieve your stability and resume your lives again.”

While the people in a crisis of homelessness need help that same day, the bureaucracy delays and distances them, affecting not just individuals. The saddest thing is an entire family in despair—they may once have had a home, a job—but the adversity that could also reach us forced them to live in homelessness.

These people and their shadows wander around the city looking for a place to call home. Every day, every night people find ways to shelter at the train stations, at the bus stops, parks, by garbage cans. People sleep on the buses that serve as home for a couple hours while the route lasts, then get off at the end of the route to take the next one, waiting for dawn to come, then return to being the shadow that wanders looking for the next “home”, or a hand that helps them get out of this labyrinth, always aimlessly.

The bureaucratic municipal system was created for other times and not the challenges of today. Without initiative and only with the bureaucracy, they organize their systems theoretically and without interest in the experiences of those they claim to be serving. The prejudices and demeaning stereotypes that are used against homeless people are immeasurably unacceptable. We need to connect in good faith, to incorporate and seek creative, dignified, and compassionate solutions to heal and protect the person in crisis.

The experiences of survivors of homelessness must be the cornerstone to understand this deep and complex social problem. The wealth of experience in how to overcome homelessness must be summoned, and programs designed to help homeless people should be designed with their voices and opinions at the center. Homelessness is often used as a pretext in political campaigns but when promises are not kept people become detractors, attacking the laws and programs meant to help homeless people should be designed with their voices and opinions at the center.

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

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When the first case of Covid-19 was reported, no one felt or knew how far it would spread or impact our lives. No one would have known that it would affect us so much, health-wise, economically, and even mentally. As I write this, the impact of this pandemic has been felt across borders, affecting everyone regardless of age, sex, religion or even social status. What we used to see as a normal routine became a luxury with the beginning of lockdown and self-isolutions. Businesses got shut down, companies had to switch to Work from home and life was not the same again. After the first wave, we lost our loved ones, families got broken and there was a whole level of disconnect among families, friends and even colleagues.

We all know the cost of living in America demands that you have to work hard and no one is exempted from this. Being a winner is all about making sacrifices in any situation. I knew this perfectly well before the virus took over the world. And the news of the first case in China hit me the most. As a result, I started doing more research and reading about this virus. I was shocked to know how much it could impact us. I was very careful and wanted to make sure that I didn’t get infected. I took all the necessary precautions and tried my best to avoid getting infected.

The forgotten hungry and homeless nowadays are found everywhere. There are thousands of them in San Francisco and 200,000 in the U.S. Many of us are here because we have nowhere else to go. We are in a world in which everyone is supposed to be equal; after all, we breathe the same air. But the poor, the homeless and the hungry immigrants cannot feel that life is very fair when the monarchy—who are too wealthy—hold too much of everything. Everyone should have a home to live in and nobody should go hungry or have to wear ragged clothes. Immigrants remain undocumented, the poor become poorer and the rich become richer. That is a very sad thing to say in this country at this time. I feel for them, for I am one of them!

They forget that we are homeless, not harmless, not helpless, not helpless, not dangerous. We will work, we will steal. We are looking for compassion, not violence; seeking employment, not harassment; gaining hope, not property. Life is so free, yet so restricted. With all the joy in this world, I am excited. The ones that I had gotten used to yet we go hungry. We sit in silence as all passing eyes watch us. All their children little: save school, play, learn and have fun togethers while our children have no homes, no schools, no play and no hope. They are made prisoners of sadness and sadness slowly creeps in.

Every day we see them, very well fed and dressed children with expensive toys to play with, yet our kids live in abject squall. It’s not their fault—they’re just victims of poverty.

On the streets, I have been hit and hurt, sexually assaulted and sexually discriminated against. It has got to a point where I can no longer feel pain. I know tomorrow they will do it again, laugh about it and call me names, but with a good heart and clear conscience I will still pray for them. I know the sun will shine for me, for us all, the homeless. We wake up every day praying and hoping that soon all this will change and we’ll be seen as human beings again. The cold nights, people walking past, not caring at all, no food, no shelter, no one to press. The days are long — all this will come to an end. I wake up at night crying and asking myself if I really deserve this, but honestly, no one does!

From the deep down in our hearts, we ask for your compassion. Please do not just walk past us with noses raised and eyes filled with hatred, while we look down si- lently weeping. Feel pity for us as we have a lot to endure—the harshest of winters and the scorching heat of the summers.

Please show a bit of respect because we are also part of this city. We might be in the poorest of slums, but we are still part of it.

Don’t just walk past, look at us please.

Thank you to those who show mercy and visit us despite our poor health and poverty. You make our days better and our nights warmer. We are people, but first and foremost we are human and should be treated well, be not be — it costs nothing and goes a long way towards bettering the world.

Luna Nova

None of us have been able to stabilize again.

If you’re reading this letter indicating when we would head back to work, it was still in limbo. I thought I was lucky that this would only last a few weeks but there was no such thing.

I got to America, it would be all worth it in San Francisco, so I made my way here. I didn’t want to go back to my country. I had a few friends who worked in science, technology, engineering and mathematics who were interested enough to extend their stay by being involved in STEM. I understand these subjects are quite a good deal for students with such qualifications. I was able to continue with my studies.

I wish I had taken one of them. I tried many ways to extend my stay including getting married for business purposes. I was not lucky enough. U.S. citizens just to get papers, then later get divorced. I was stuck into thinking that was the easiest way, but it turned out to be the biggest mistake.

I looked for a gay man as a partner, since I was alone and being in the USA, that was perhaps the easiest part of the process. Luckily, I found Luna through a mutual friend (I only had like two friends). We met a couple of times and talked about the busi- ness where I had studies and I met her afterwards associated with it. We started going on dates soon enough just to be seen together, took photos and posted them all over social media to show how much we were in each other’s lives. Within no time, we had moved in with him and we were officially a couple. At that moment, I did not know who was fooling whom. No days passed and we had to officially start the business, that’s where my money started being an issue. I asked for $10,000 for the whole process but there were to be other expenses involved along the way. Under my belt. It was a do or die situation, and crazily enough, I went for it.

I was able to train with my "hand- to-be," and the amount went down to $8,000. Well, this was a good deal to pay for water, food, rent and social media. Days became weeks, and my world started spinning in a different direc- tion. I did not know anyone else, and my time as a student in the USA had lapsed. singing out, I was not able to find myself again. I tried to stop, but the effects continued and I finally made the payment. The payment was the key. Within no time, we had to get out of the USA. I did not have any money left. I was homeless without a doubt. For various reasons, no one would take me in, and the streets became my home to this day.

Why can’t the government just offer an option for immigrant students to stay and study? Why can’t the government allow immigrants to come in with the proper qualifications and documenting their work? Why can’t we live without making it difficult? Why can’t we stop running away from our problems and making our lives in the dust of pastures here without having to suffer like this? I wish I could answer all these questions running in my mind every night. I lay my head to sleep...
Anonymous

Back in South Africa, just like any other part of the world, education is considered the backbone of our country’s economy. Most governments invest in it, and the fruits can be seen in producing well-educated graduates who help run various sectors. As a young girl, I always dreamt of studying abroad, and kept on applying for sponsorships. One day my dream came true and I landed my chance in San Francisco. I went through the necessary academic and medical procedures to avoid any delays and I started my schooling abroad. The school covered most of my tuition, I had a host, and all I had to do was study. Being the social person that I am, it was not before long that I started making friends. The process of making friends and everything, I got a boyfriend from Diego. We got to liking each other, and that’s when I learned that Diego was rich. He’d drive to school and could easily afford everything that I thought was a luxury. I started hanging out with him a lot and that was a huge problem with my host. The situation got so bad that I walked out and went on to live with my called boyfriend. At first, everything was smooth and quiet, but then little by little there were small parties here and there at the house. The small parties became frequent, and then one day disaster struck due to COVID-19 complications and I was left alone with all the debts. I had not earned before, and with very little savings from my previous job and a few loans from friends and family. Within a few months I was able to raise the agreed amount and paid V in cash—I should have read that as a sign that this was not heading in the right direction.

Days after I had made the payment, my worst fear became reality. V went missing. His phone was off and attempts to trace him through his few close friends bore no fruits. No one seemed to know his whereabouts, or maybe no one was willing to help. I got the feeling that the few was just a scam that they all run as friends, that the studio apartment where we were living in was just a temporary house for him to be able to dupe me. I tried asking the landlord and apparently V was not even his real name, he had used different documents.

I sunk into a world of desperation, anger and depression. I didn’t know anyone in San Francisco apart from this kind-hearted man who turned out to be my worst nightmare. The worst part of it all was that V had even stolen my passport so that he could buy drugs. It had not occurred to me that the police to the passport was not an option because I was already living in America illegally. It was a way to pay rent or buy food, I had to leave the house and head for the streets.

Life out here is not easy and every passing moment exacerbates whether to just surrender myself to the authorities and deal with the consequences or continue living in these streets. Thanks to loccy and others like us here we support and encourage each other hoping that one day things will get better. It’s so painful when you have to go through what we go through because it’s a very sick greed. Being a member of the LGBTQ community doesn’t make the situation any easier. Sometimes we have to do sex work in exchange for even a plate of food. Please, help us find a place we can call home.

Anonymous

I am an immigrant from Uganda, Africa. I came to San Francisco five years ago to attend a cousin’s graduation. Everything was going so well and I decided to extend my stay in the United States without proper documentation. As everyone else left for Uganda, I made that terrible mistake of staying behind. It was an awesome experience. The U.S.—San Francisco and other places that I visited—is far more developed than Uganda. It was my first time visiting. I was excited and did not see any reason to get back to our living conditions in our small struggling economy and opportunity-deprived Uganda. I was having first-hand experience of “The American Dream!” Little did I know all hell would break loose. My advice to anyone trying to do this: Don’t.

I was able to secure a low income job at a restaurant while still being hosted by my cousin, who at that time encouraged me to stick around and promised to help get me documented. The pay was something I had not earned before, and with very little savings from my previous job and a few loans from friends and family. Within a few months I was able to raise the agreed amount and paid V in cash—I should have read that as a sign that this was not heading in the right direction.

Around March I received a letter from my husband got a visa and came to the United States. He was one of them. My advice to any other immigrant looking to come to America: Use legal means. There are so many victims of immigration, ill-fated relationships and homelessness out here and we all have one wish: to be assisted to get documents to be able to work in America, or just have assistance go back home.

Michael

I came to America as part of a LGBTQ group seminar 3 years ago. Coming from Africa, this was the best moment of my life. Filled with excitement, we began the journey and on getting here I wasnt disappointed at all. I was happy with what I saw with the commands and one thing that was around wasn’t that bad, at that moment.

Time passed and I was supposed to head back to Africa, but decided to stay around even though I had a plane ticket to return.

With a few referrals I finally got a host—his name was V and he also promised to assist me with documentation to be an American citizen.

I thought this was a good deal and, although I had to pay a fee at a price, I thought it was totally worth it. We planned out how this would work and even agreed on the payment. I gathered together my savings from my previous job and a few loans from friends and family. Within a few months I was able to raise the agreed amount and paid V in cash—I should have read that as a sign that this was not heading in the right direction.

Days after I had made the payment, my worst fear became reality. V went missing. His phone was off and attempts to trace him through his few close friends bore no fruits. No one seemed to know his whereabouts, or maybe no one was willing to help. I got the feeling that the few was just a scam that they all run as friends, that the studio apartment where we were living in was just a temporary house for him to be able to dupe me. I tried asking the landlord and apparently V was not even his real name, he had used different documents.

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Africa is a beautiful land full of resources, tourist attractions and diverse culture, but still lacking opportunities to live and work. I used to save funds for a place to visit and look for greener pastures. Either illegally or legally, we find a way in without the imposition of meaning. One's advice is to always choose the legal way coming. Ivelly also doesn't have enough to start and you might struggle with the police, life, and the streets themselves. One of these days we'd catch up with you faster than you can even imagine. I wish I would have someone to help me off the back foot on that plane. I hope to share what goes on beyond borders and serve as a lesson for anyone heading across. When I was living in San Francisco, one of the most expensive cities in the U.S. back home, I would say I had a good life. It was not very comfortable, but I was well-sheltered, well-dressed and had enough on the table. But I still dream of how life was better for my friends living abroad, and I got a chance to experience the American culture and meet many interesting and young people. I lived with him for a while, until her husband got a good job opportunity and they moved to New York. I couldn't move with them since they had already done so much for me, so I stayed in San Francisco and tried to make it on my own. Slowly, bills started piling up and I couldn't keep up with the rent, so I was evicted and had to live with friends for a while. These so-called friends would occasionally demand a small contribution of mine, but I managed to hang on with some help from my friends and I got a job. I managed to hang on with some help from my friends and I got a job. I kept on working, and eventually got enough to rent a place on my own. I was amazed at how working hard could change my life and get me out of the toughest situations. This is what my parents taught me. I am grateful, Ivelly, that there are few organizations at least that's how I feel. I am grateful, Ivelly, that there are few organizations that might provide me with the necessary support, when sometimes all we need is a shoulder to cry on. You never find this in the streets. I hope this and other people's stories that we share may reach you, readers. Please share this and maybe it will touch somebody's heart and change their life. Thank you, good people!
I am undocumented, and so is my son. We are 'illegal' because our coordinates don't match our birthplaces, because my legal dual American citizenship is an abridgment in my travel papers for years and I had to run to save the two of us. Running meant leaving behind my country, my family, the place where I had my staying in the marriage and thus being completely isolated. I had to run because I was subjected to on a daily basis. My son, who was under so at the time, was constantly bullied by his father, my husband. He was bullied for not being perceived as loud and nostrovaxing in the ability to seek justice, protected him as best as I could, but that was increasingly inadequate, so I took the two of us to a lawyer friendly part of Mexico in having won my husband's confidence that he had no choice. I had to run. I pushed myself down deep within myself in order to keep him happy and make him believe I was absolutely compliant to the sexual and physical violence I endured, taking a nasty job to do so. I had to survive being told every day that the only way out of the system was to have my husband in jail, so I would care if I was dead. I believe this still to be true. If I had stayed with him in Asia, he would have broken me, physically and emotionally, minimally punished, if at all, and no one but my own care would have.

I still have to cope with people not understanding that for most of my life I have seen the particular country we lived in as a danger- ous, or lacking in the ability to seek justice, in fact domestic violence was totally legal in the jurisdiction until recently relatively healthy. When a law was passed to protect against spousal violence illegal, it only made illegal by civil, not criminal, law. The reality was that the husband could not be charged with assaulting his wife. I was forced to meet an untold story. I have lived in the state, and every time I opened my mouth. It is always made absolutely clear that no matter how long I have been in the U.S., I am not American, that I do not accept that, and that neither of us are wanted. I am not even a second-class citizen; I am not a citizen at all. I am not allowed to drive, I am not allowed to finish high school, not to have documentation, and I have had trouble getting him into a hospital, of course not ever being able to access a domestic violence charity and look for help. So I went to San Francisco, and after being driving the bridge into Outer Sunset, I had the feeling that things might just be ok. I think that perhaps there's a code book because this great liberal city on the Bay has that sort of thing on it. If people don't believe it, it gives people the sliver of a prospect not just surviving, but also possibly thriving. It gives people the space to feel safe so they can possibly feel in a society that demonizes them, the survivors trying to survive situations that would otherwise be fatal.

At least it used to. Mayor London Breed’s new “Take Back the Tenderloin” militaristic push has left both me and my son feeling absolute terror that we might be the next victims of the ‘clean up’ of society, as the compas- sionate politicians see the downtown areas as being driven in a direction that is against everything City of life of poets, hippies, and refugees from all over the world, the city knows it at the hour of everything, we are perceived as non- victimize, but the influx of the rich and successful has led to a city of two. We have now a polarized ‘have’ and ‘have not’ and the ‘haves’ do not feel much like sharing. San Francisco is fighting for its very soul, but so is much of the world, and it is an acceptance and independence is so strong here that we have a chance of keeping San Fran- cisco the kind of place that remains a shining beacon of hope amid a sea of dark hatred.

I was lucky. When I went into San Francisco, I was able to secure a place at a state school, but to save our lives. We were allowed access, despite being undocumented, and given food, school lunch, acceptance and under- standing. For the first time since I had been in the U.S., I had been understood and was welcomed by people cared for, and wanted to protect us both, and for the first time we were given assistance. Eventually we gained a housing subsidy via a domestic violence charity and therefore a chance at survival. We now live in the Tenderloin, and are very happy in our apartment.

We both love our adopted country. I love the America that I know, and the kind society that I feel people that live in it. The loud voices of those who spout hatred and lack of understanding and acceptance, that refuse to share the bounty of our country, are just that loud, but its effect on the undocumented is intense. Since this happened, I have met people who are devoted to a more equal society, a society that includes those who are undocumented, indigenous, those who struggle with various issues that pur- ture them outside the privileged norm. My this son feel like it is possible, that one day he might be allowed to participate in society fully and equally and that all is being threatened, all that good is being dragged down by the weight of hatred and a survivalist mentality. I would still not play in a little league game, I still have to fight to access the health care I need every single day that the DREAM act will not pass, but I have hope and a place to live, and I have the help of a very kind American friend of mine and being able to live. I have no hope, and cannot even use Western Union. Venmo or PayPal without a social security number. I have lived in this country for all these years and I have no hope, and cannot even use Western Union. Venmo or PayPal without a social security number.
I had to change my name for my own safety. My family was originally from Ukraine and we were dirt poor with no freedom to move around. Everything we could to get our family out of poverty by doing odd jobs, bartending, stripping and eventually prostitution, but it was never enough.

We finally got a chance to immigrate to America as models through an online advertisement. We were told that we would be able to do everything from processing of passports to arriving and becoming acquainted in a new place. We should have known that it was too good to be true, but desperate people usually have no other options. We agreed and unknowingly signed our lives away.

When we got to the United States, the first thing they did was give each and every one of us a bill showing how much it cost to bring each one of us here plus interest, and told us we had to pay it off. They then immediately took our passports and we were a humble background. A family of six siblings and our single mother. My mother tried her best to bring us up but there was no enough for us to live. We had two meals a day. In when things got harder, I dropped out of school and was connected to a job agency who promised to get a well paying job in the United States. In my life this was the first good news I had.

The joy of going overseas, the stories told of how safe, clean, and full of opportunities there was, was all overshadowed by the reality through me. I had thought in the past that I had made it in life; that I would change my family's story. All I could think of was a chance to send enough money home to educate my younger sister, and make my family safe. It was a dream I had for years, but I had a roof and protection. We were in the middle. I knew this was the only chance I had to get away from the things I was going through. The owner threw me out on the streets of San Francisco and told me to go back home to Mexico. I had 25 pesos on me and I had to get back to Mexico. I had 25 pesos on me and I had to get away with no passports, no money, and no one to go to. I had to make a decision. I decided to stay and make a new life for myself in the United States. I had nothing to lose.

At first, I was lonely and scared. I didn't know what to do. I had no friends and no one to turn to. I had to make a decision. I decided to stay and make a new life for myself in the United States. I had nothing to lose.

After a while, I found a job working in a restaurant. I was able to save some money and buy clothes. I also started to meet other people. I found a new family. I married a man and we had a child. We were happy.

But then things started to become difficult. I was pregnant and I didn't have a place to live. I had to find somewhere to stay. I found a place to stay, but I had to work hard to pay the rent. I had to work long hours and I was always tired. I was lonely and scared. I didn't know what to do. I had no friends and no one to turn to. I had to make a decision. I decided to stay and make a new life for myself in the United States. I had nothing to lose.

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WRITE FOR STREET SHEET
For more than 30 years these pages have been filled with the stories, reporting, and opinions of folks like you who know what it’s like to survive on the streets, shelters and SROs of San Francisco.

As the City renews its attacks on unhoused San Franciscans, your voice is more important than ever. To find out how to contribute to this newspaper, visit streetsheet.org/submit-your-writing

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STREET SHEET is currently recruiting vendors to help sell papers around San Francisco. Join our team and earn money by getting the word out to readers about the realities faced by homeless people in San Francisco. The papers are free to vendors and you keep all the money you make from sales!

To sign up visit us at 280 Turk Street Monday-Friday from 10-4pm

Come Celebrate Black History Month
This is the 2nd Annual Code Tenderloin & NCLF Black History Month Workshops
Three workshop series:
Feb 8th- Theme: Black Health
Feb 15th- Theme: Black History, “Walking Through Time”
Feb 22nd- Theme: Black San Francisco

Workshops are held virtually Tuesdays in February afternoons from 3pm-4pm
Clink link to join(All is welcome!):
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81461393192
codetenderloin.org
https://www.nclfinc.org/