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STREET SHEET



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LLAVES DE CASA, NO ESPOSAS

CRAZY MIXED-UP WORLD

BY TARIQ JOHNSON

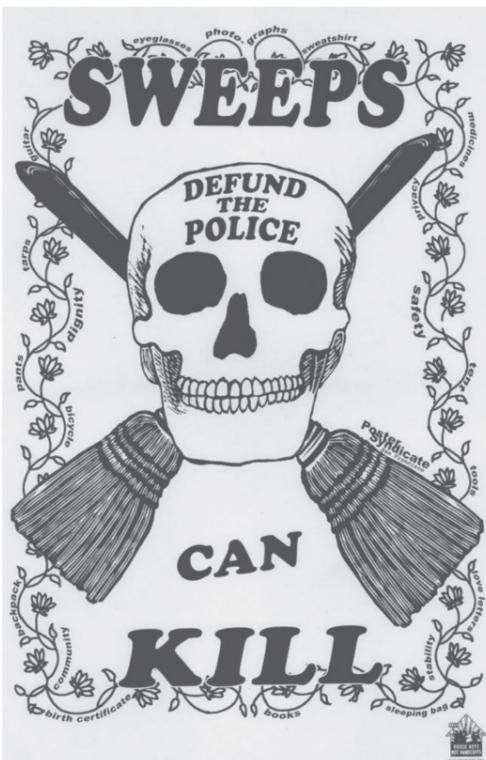
Let's look at how it all began
 Because nobody knows how it's gonna end
 So let's strive to do the best we can
 In this crazy, mixed-up world we live in
 God is my witness and my best friend
 In this crazy, mixed-up world we live in
 I gotta breathe and be grateful for every breath
 Because the only thing promised in life is death
 We have to struggle to survive, and it's hard to trust friends
 In this crazy, mixed-up world we live in
 Through all the ups and downs and crazy twists and turns,
 You get the best things out of life from what you have earned
 It's my trust in God 'cause he's my best friend

Join the Coalition on Homelessness

At the Harvey Milk Memorial Library
 Wednesday, July 20, 12:30-2 PM

Attend our Human Rights Workgroup Meeting and **take action** to fight the human rights violations of people experiencing homelessness.

Food will be provided



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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.

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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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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!

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POLICE KNOW ARRESTS WON'T FIX HOMELESSNESS. THEY KEEP MAKING THEM ANYWAY

BY MELISSA LEWIS, REVEAL

There is a tension that's playing out across US West Coast cities, as the combination of a mental health crisis and a decadelong real estate boom have created a new, especially vulnerable, especially visible generation of the unhoused. They're "unsheltered", meaning they live in cars, tents and makeshift shelters on the streets, rather than in shelters. Over the decade between 2009 and 2019, unsheltered homelessness continued to grow in California, Oregon and Washington, even as it declined in major cities outside the West Coast. And as the unsheltered increasingly live on streets in residential neighborhoods, their new neighbors have turned to one place for help in particular: the police.

In the Lents neighborhood of Portland, Oregon, residents gathered at a public forum last June to voice their concerns about the city's growing population of homeless individuals.

Over the last decade, rent grew twice as fast in Portland as the rest of the country, and the estimated number of people experiencing homelessness increased by nearly 30 per cent. The effects of those dynamics were on full display in Lents, one of the city's most racially diverse areas and among the neighborhoods where home prices had been rising the fastest.

Encampments had sprung up in parks and along bike and walking paths, and the tension between housed and unhoused residents simmered. Residents desperately wanted someone to address the litter, drug use and mental health crises they'd seen.

Months earlier, the residents had expressed their frustrations to a police commander. This time, their guest was the commissioner of Portland's Housing Bureau.

Lents resident Martin Johnson complained about the trash left in yards and on streets. "We clean it up. They come back, we clean it up. They come back," he said. Johnson noted that he and his wife both carry concealed weapons.

"And if it happens in my yard, there's going to be a problem," he said. "So if we don't come up with a solution, you're gonna have some deaths around here if people are going in people's yards."

A few in the crowd cheered, or murmured, "Amen."

"That's the truth because we are frus-

trated, totally frustrated," Johnson said.

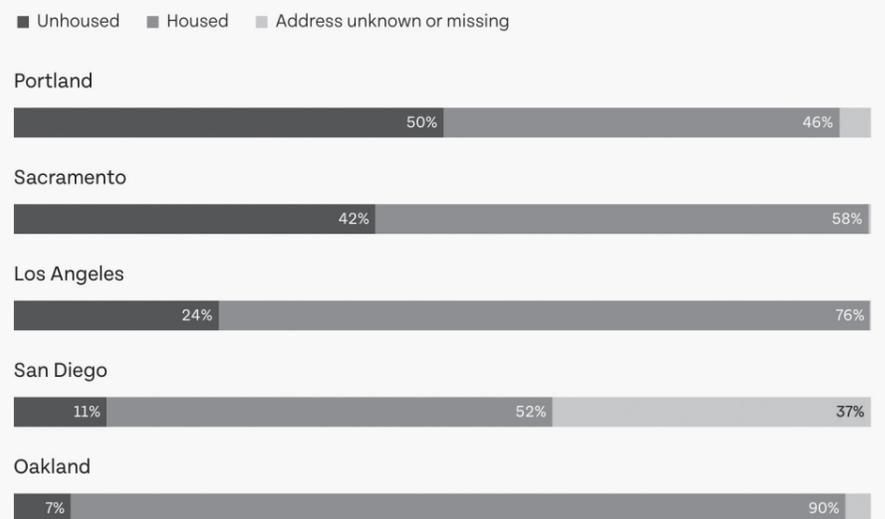
This is a tension that's playing out across West Coast cities, as the combination of a mental health crisis and a decadelong real estate boom have created a new, especially vulnerable, especially visible generation of the unhoused. They're "unsheltered," meaning they live in cars, tents and makeshift shelters on the streets, rather than in shelters. Over the decade between 2009 and 2019, unsheltered homelessness continued to grow in California, Oregon and Washington, even as it declined in major cities outside the West Coast. And as the unsheltered increasingly live on streets in residential neighborhoods, their new neighbors have turned to one place for help in particular: the police.

Most of the time, these emergency calls aren't to report crimes. In Portland, for example, most police calls about homelessness from 2018 through 2020 were to report "suspicious" people or to ask an officer to check on someone's welfare. Still, these interactions often end with an unhoused person's arrest, and in Portland, half of arrests over a four-year period were of homeless people.

Arrest data from Portland and five other major West Coast cities show that the neighborhood outcry is fueling the vast criminalization of the homeless for largely nonviolent violations, according to an analysis by Reveal from The Center for Investigative Reporting. It's a phenomenon that is generating unaffordable fines for unhoused individuals, sapping police resources and failing to address the core problems fueling homelessness.

Police in These West Coast Cities Disproportionately Arrest Unhoused People

From 2017 through 2020, unhoused people made up at most an estimated 2% of the population in each of the following cities.



Notes: The Seattle Police Department did not provide arrest data before 2019 and wasn't included. Sources: Reveal analysis of police data obtained via public records requests, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Housing Inventory Count, U.S. Census Bureau Geocoder. Credit: Melissa Lewis/Reveal

THE ANALYSIS FOUND:

- **THE UNHOUSED ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY ARRESTED.** But these arrests are less likely to be for serious crimes. Although the homeless population in all the cities reviewed was less than 2 per cent of the overall population, they accounted for anywhere from 7 per cent of arrests in Oakland, California, to about half of all arrests in Portland. Unhoused people were less likely to be arrested for violent charges than housed people in every city Reveal examined.

- **THE INFRACTIONS THEY ARE ACCUSED OF REFLECT THE REALITY OF LIVING OUTSIDE.** Across the cities, unhoused people frequently were ticketed for things like loitering and drinking alcohol in public. In San Diego, police used one municipal code violation more than any other from 2013 to 2020: a law, intended to force residents to clear their trash cans from the street, that has been transformed to cite and even arrest unhoused people for taking up public space with their possessions.

- **THE UNHOUSED OFTEN ARE ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH OLD OFFENSES.** Some of the most common offenses reflected particular challenges for someone living outside: failing to appear for court dates and keeping up with the terms of their probation or parole. In more than 40 per cent of the arrests of unhoused people in Portland, the only purpose was to execute a warrant, most often

for failing to show up for a court hearing. Unhoused people and their advocates say it's harder for them to get to court dates, and unaffordable penalties just perpetuate the cycle.

Reveal found the driving force behind arrests often isn't proactive police enforcement, but residents reporting that a person is making them feel unsafe, refusing to leave the area, or leaving trash and other items behind. In Portland, Reveal's analysis shows at least 60 per cent of calls that police dispatchers categorize as "homeless-related" aren't explicitly about crimes.

Howard Belodoff, an attorney who advocates for unhoused people, says these clashes often highlight the need for a more sensitive response.

"They need a place with somebody to guide them," he said. "Social workers are much better than police officers at this."

Some cities have begun programs to divert these calls to unarmed social workers. But the programs are still limited in scope and funding. Police are still largely the first line of response, and even many police officials say it shouldn't be their job.

"We realized long ago that we're not enforcing our way or arresting our way out of this problem," said Sgt. Matt Jacobsen, who leads Portland's Central Precinct Neighborhood Response team.

Continued on page 6



Tents line a sidewalk in Portland's Old Town. (Courtesy of Street Roots)

OUR CITY OUR BUDGET

BY THE COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS AND THE HOMELESS EMERGENCY SERVICE PROVIDERS ASSOCIATION (HESPA)

Our budget campaign “Our City, Our Budget” to house San Franciscans, keep San Franciscans housed and protect the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets, has come to fruition. Due to hard work and organizing, many victories were achieved for unhoused San Franciscans. For one, the second installment of funding for Our City Our Home, Proposition C, which passed in November 2018, is about to hit the streets and it will result in dramatic numbers of people having the opportunity to exit homelessness. In addition, the Coalition’s Housing Justice workgroup alongside the Homeless Emergency Service Providers Association (HESPA) campaigned for additional resources to augment Prop. C and further fill unmet needs. Prop. C generates over \$300 million a year for housing, shelter, mental health services and homeless prevention. In this budget cycle, HESPA garnered \$53 million for unhoused people over two years. In sum, we are talking about the potential to radically improve human and civil rights on the streets, over 4,000 housing opportunities for homeless people, 1,000 shelter beds, prevention for thousands of households and behavioral health services for thousands of unhoused people as well.



Unhoused & marginally housed multi-ethnic multi-neighborhood group to tell supervisors to support the #OurCityOurHome & #HESPA budget proposal. (Photo © 2019 COH.)



@ Supervisor Ahsha_Safai’s office. We are asking for critical services & housing for homeless families, youth & children and support for the HESPA & Our City Our Home budgets. (Photo © 2019 COH.)



“I just got into permanent supportive housing in the tenderloin. Even when I was homeless I always maintained employment but I needed mental health care. This budget would give that to us!” Tracey Mixon from Coalition on Homelessness. (Photo © 2019 COH.)



@D4GordonMar A mother living in an SRO with her family shares about her overcrowded living situation where her kids have to sleep on the floor. We want funding for the Sec 8 vouchers for SRO families in the #OurCityOurHome budget proposal. (Photo © 2019 COH.)

Contribute your stories to the COVID-19 Community Time Capsule

A local artist is seeking community members who are interested in sharing memories of their San Francisco pandemic experience (e.g., Shelter in Place, essential work, protests for racial justice, the orange sky day). These 30-minute interviews will inform a narrative illustration project called the COVID-19 Community Time Capsule, created for the San Francisco Public Library local history archive. If you are interested, please email oneil.hazel@gmail.com with your availability. Interviewees will be compensated for their time.





OUR CITY OUR HOME

HOUSING ACQUISITIONS

At least 825 units will be purchased with funding for operating costs for adults, families and youth

PERMANENT PRIVATE HOUSING MARKET SUBSIDIES (FLEX POOL)

650 adults, families and youth will have rental assistance to afford their own place

TIME LIMITED HOUSING SUBSIDIES

265 adults and youth will have an opportunity to move into housing, with rental assistance for a period of time with the expectation they will be able to take over the rent on their own after a couple years.

343 additional beds in a variety of intervention styles, from managed alcohol to traditional abstinence based programs, step down residential beds, board and care, transitional-aged youth (TAY) residential and co-op beds. In addition, an unnamed number of beds will be acquired.



STREET CRISIS CAPACITY

Street crisis capacity was dramatically expanded with the funding of seven Street Crisis Response Teams, follow up overdose teams, tele-health and street crisis expansions. Behavioral health in shelter and drop-ins was also funded.

Care coordination for 1,500 clients and 865 intensive case management slots were funded.

Funding was allocated for a mental health service center that would serve as centralized intake had its hours expanded.

Overdose prevention was funded to have clinicians follow up with care for those who survived an overdose to prevent future overdoses and improve health

Behavioral health services for 2,600 supportive housing tenants was funded as well.

Targeted services for transitional-aged youth (TAY) and transgender population was funded as well.

Harm reduction therapy center was also funded to have ongoing care for individuals challenged by substance use.



PREVENTION

Eviction prevention legal services and back rent for 5,000 households
Eviction prevention specifically for 2000 folks living in supportive housing.

Prevention including shallow housing subsidies to keep folks in their homes for 416 veterans and 1000 justice involved individuals

Problem solving for 1000 youth, 1000 families and 2000 adults which includes money for very short subsidies or other random services to help someone get back in housing if at all possible.

Cameo house which was about to close and serves justice involved families is going to stay open with general fund dollars.

Legal services for unhoused individuals to connect them with and protect public benefits.

Direct cash aid for homeless youth was funded with OCOH funds



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Workforce Earn and Learn to help folks make money and better be able to pay their rents and stay in housing for 2000 adults, 2000 families and 1000 youth.

Workforce asks for homeless adults, families and youth were not funded.



SHELTER

Over 1,000 new shelter beds were funded, including funding for RV parks with 100 spots, new 50 bed navigation center for justice involved people, hotel rooms for youth, pregnant people, families and domestic violence victims. This included funding to permanently operate the 120 trailers at the port, and to fund 190 tent sites through 2023.



HOMELESS EMERGENCY SERVICE PROVIDERS ASSOCIATION (HESPA)



HOUSING SUBSIDIES

172 subsidies for people with disabilities, seniors and families.

Bridge housing for 25 youth who have acute behavioral health challenges.

Some of the emergency needs asks were funded with OCOH as noted above; 100 nightly hotel vouchers for homeless youth, 26 nightly hotel vouchers for families, and (FINALLY!) a dignified drop-in shelter for 40 families.



MENTAL HEALTH

A number of mental health initiatives were funded in the budget, many of which were fought for by homeless community members and their allies. A large portion of the mental health investments were part of Mental Health SF, legislation passed in 2019, and funded by Our City Our Home, Prop. C.

Behavioral Health for 75 children, 500 youth and 800 adults in shelters and drop-ins was funded.



COMPASSIONATE ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE TEAM (CART)

CART was funded at \$3 million to respond to 65,000 calls relating to homelessness that police are currently answering and to instead have an effective, safe, solutions based response to homelessness.



REDUCTIONS TO POLICE BUDGET

Very modest reductions occurred to the police department including 1 police academy, 15 vacant positions were eliminated and \$3 million in police overtime were reduced from the budget.



BATHROOMS

The Mayor cut the four 24-hour bathrooms that existed prior to the pandemic out of the budget, and these were replaced and 1 was added, and another 5 part-time bathrooms were added.

HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Police Arrest Homeless — Continued from page 3



A person sleeps on the streets in southeast Portland in 2020. Credit: Israel Bayer

Many of the offenses his team responds to amount to “acts of survival” and a lack of privacy, like cutting toenails or washing hair on the sidewalk.

“It’s not going to work, nor is it the right thing,” he said of police enforcement.

But the criminalization of homelessness has a long history in the United States. It was embedded in the first British laws ported over here – one law regulated the existence of “vagrants, idle and suspected persons” in public space. It also played a seminal role in the broken windows theory, which said that visible signs of disorder brought more serious crime and has dominated American law enforcement for decades.

“The unchecked panhandler is, in effect, the first broken window,” the theory’s authors wrote when introducing it in *The Atlantic* magazine 40 years ago.

That has continued today.

According to research by the National Homelessness Law Center, at least 100 US cities, including Portland, have laws against lying down or sleeping in public places. Although ordinances regulating living and sleeping outside are challenged in city halls, state legislatures and courts across the country, it’s still rare for cities to lean away from policing as the primary response.

This is at least in part because, without alternative options, residents will call their police departments to complain about homeless people – and the police are obligated to come.

HOW WE DID IT

Reveal obtained arrest data through public records requests from Port-

land, Oregon; Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego and Oakland, California; and Seattle, Washington. Arrestees were categorized as unhoused only if their home address data contained a keyword like “transient,” “homeless” or “general delivery,” or if their address corresponded to an emergency shelter. For a complete list of addresses categorized as unhoused, visit Reveal’s GitHub. If the field was empty or said “unknown,” the arrestee housing status was categorized as “Address unknown or missing.” Otherwise, the arrestee housing status was categorized as “Housed.” Address information was absent from 37 per cent of San Diego arrests, 11 per cent of Seattle arrests and less than 4 per cent of Los Angeles, Oakland, Portland and Sacramento arrests. Additionally, because Seattle could provide data only from May 2019 through 2020, it is omitted from charts comparing arrests across cities.

HOW THE CYCLE WORKS

In December 2019, a business owner called Portland police to report people sleeping in the business’s parking lot, inside a truck filled with shopping carts and trash.

“I’m getting ready to open for business and it just looks super creepy,” the business owner said in the call.

That same month, another man said he wasn’t sure if calling police was appropriate, but there was a “tweaker dude” outside his apartment complex asking everyone who came by if he could use their phone.

“He’s at the front entrance aggressively asking, ‘Hey, I need to use your phone. Hey, I need to call Bryce. Hey, you know Bryce?’” the caller said. “And he’s got this pretty aggressive dog with him, too.”

The Portland police likely aren’t the

best equipped to address the fundamental issues at play. Advocates who work with the unhoused say that in a lot of these cases, police are responding to an incident prompted by the lack of mental health care and basic necessities like food and shelter.

But when police do arrive, they often choose to pursue charges for minor legal violations or run an unhoused person’s name through a database in search of outstanding warrants from previous arrests.

That helps explain why unhoused people are arrested at such a disproportionate rate. Individuals living on the street or in shelters often see their possessions confiscated or trashed during sweeps and rack up debt from fines and fees that follow arrests. A criminal record can also complicate getting a job, housing or access to social services.

Reveal’s data analysis shows the most common offenses include bench warrants, possession of controlled substances, disorderly conduct and theft. But many other frequent infractions are a direct result of laws and ordinances that target people living outside, such as illegal lodging or camping and trespassing.

In San Diego, arrests of unhoused people were more likely to entail only a charge of a municipal code violation – like violating posted park signs or drinking in prohibited areas – than arrests of housed people were.

In 2007, the city of San Diego settled a lawsuit brought by a group of unhoused people seeking to stop the city’s practice of citing them for illegal lodging. In the settlement, the city agreed to stop using the specific illegal lodging law, but that didn’t stop the targeting of the unhoused. Instead, the city found a new ordinance to use – this one, unauthorized

encroachment, was created to make sure people put away their bins after trash pickup days.

The number of citations for this violation increased by more than 500 per cent between 2010 and 2014 alone.

Ashley Bailey, San Diego’s spokesperson for public safety and homelessness, said the city doesn’t enforce unauthorized encroachment, illegal lodging or overnight camping unless beds are available in shelters. She said officers proactively offer shelter to individuals – and check for warrants – during these interactions.

“San Diego strives to balance compassion for those living on our streets with the need to address public health and safety issues,” she said.

Unhoused people are also often arrested on bench warrants issued by a judge after they fail to show up to court for a past offense.

Tristia Bauman, senior attorney with the National Homelessness Law Center, said unhoused people can struggle to make it to court hearings.

“They may not have bus fare,” Bauman said. “They may be standing in a line to obtain meal service or obtain some other survival service and, as a result, not be able to appear in court.

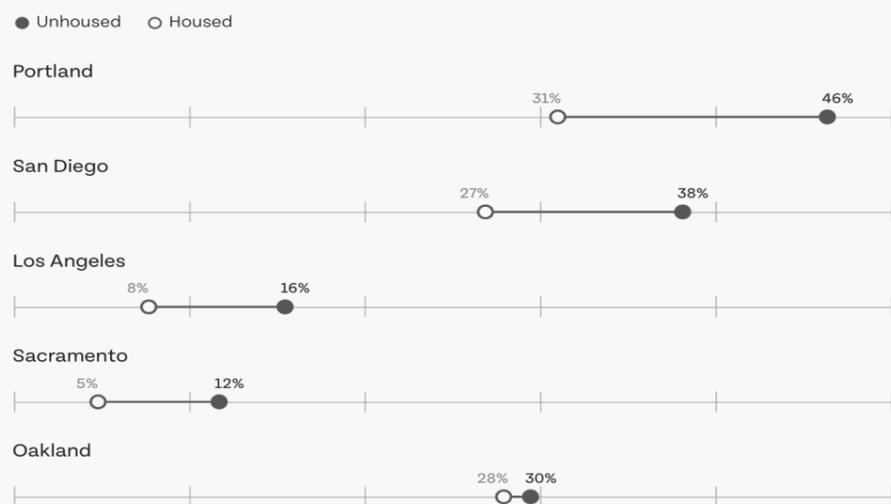
And then there are other practical concerns around being able to keep track of days and times when people don’t have access to the same technology.”

Chris VanHook has been arrested in Portland 14 times in the last five years. Some were for misdemeanor offenses, but two-thirds of the arrests were for bench warrants after he failed to appear in court or check in with his probation officer.

He said dealing with police is sometimes the most stressful part about

Unhoused People Are Commonly Charged for Violating Court or Supervision Procedure

For arrests made in 2017 through 2020, unhoused people were more likely than housed people to be arrested solely on charges of procedural violations related to previous offenses.



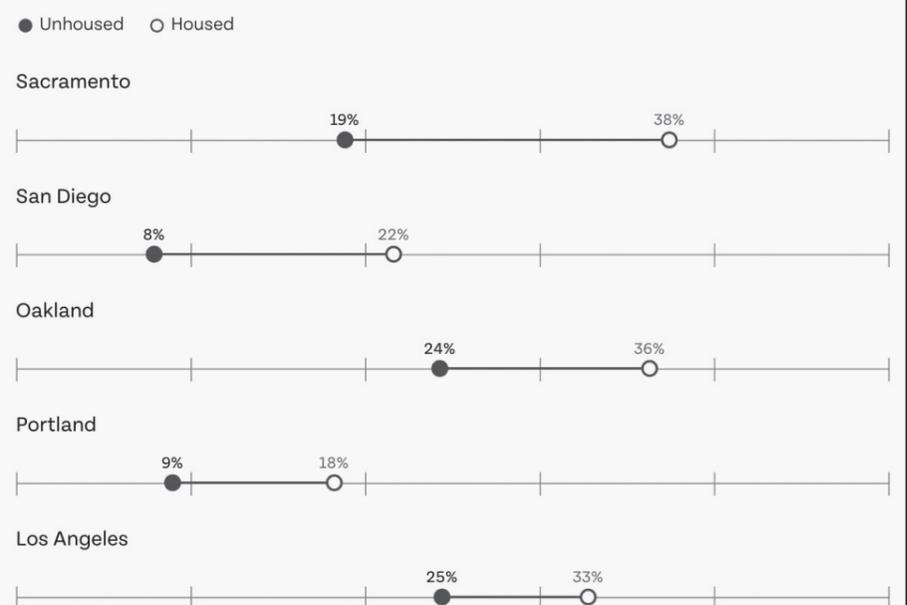
Notes: Arrests were included if all charges were one or more of the following: warrant of any type, failure to appear, failure to comply with a court order, or violation of parole or probation.

Sources: Reveal analysis of police data obtained via public records requests, the California Office of the Attorney General, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Credit: Melissa Lewis/Reveal

Arrests of Unhoused People Were Less Likely to Include a Violent Charge

For arrests made from 2017 through 2020, the gap was widest in Sacramento, where 19% of arrests of unhoused people included at least one violent charge and 38% of arrests of all other people did.



living outside, because “they don’t know how to leave people alone.” He understands that police will respond if they see criminal activity, but it makes less sense to him when people are “just sitting here minding their own business.”

In July 2021, VanHook was in Lents Park for a weekly dinner served by a local advocacy group. Another attendee called 911 to report that VanHook had assaulted him with bear mace. A reporter was near both men at the time, and no one saw an attack. Responding officers didn’t charge VanHook. But they still ran his name through a warrant database and got a hit.

He was arrested and spent four nights in jail for failing to check in with his probation officer. That charge was dropped and his probation was terminated. But he still had one other warrant, for a 2017 charge of possessing methamphetamine. The case spurred other bench warrants after he missed court dates again. He faces arrest whenever he next interacts with a police officer, even though his original drug offense has since been decriminalized.

HOW TO BREAK THE CYCLE

Some cities are developing alternatives. In 1989, Eugene, Oregon, launched what has become the model for alternatives to policing unhoused people – CAHOOTS, which stands for “Crisis Assistance Helping Out On the Streets.” The program sends an EMT and a mental health counselor instead of police and began responding 24 hours a day in 2017. In 2019, CAHOOTS responded to 20 per cent of 911 calls in Eugene and Springfield, Oregon, saving the cities an estimated \$15 million.

Portland launched a pilot called Portland Street Response, based on

CAHOOTS, in the Lents neighborhood in early 2021. JoAnn Hardesty, the city commissioner who championed the program and oversees Portland Fire & Rescue, said Reveal’s data findings were “concerning” because they show so many resources are spent on nonviolent calls for unhoused people “when Portland is experiencing record levels of gun and traffic violence.”

“Part of what compelled me to create Portland Street Response was the data showing that clearly our response to those experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis, as well as those experiencing homelessness, was not effective,” she said in an emailed statement.

The pilot program started with a \$1.08 million budget and limited personnel and hours. The program reduced police response to non-emergency welfare checks and dispatches coded as “unwanted” or “suspicious” persons – the types that represent the majority of homeless-related calls that police respond to – by 27 per cent in its first year, according to new research from Portland State University.

Researchers also estimated that if the program had been operating 24 hours a day and citywide, it would have responded to about half of the average of 30,000 homeless-related calls for service each year. The City Council voted unanimously this year to expand the program citywide and to approve a budget of \$11.5 million across two years. The funding comes from a combination of existing general funds, recreational cannabis tax revenue and revenues from the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act.

As of fall 2021, 20 states had been awarded federal grants to launch programs to divert calls about mental health or substance use crises to

teams of behavioral health specialists instead of law enforcement.

Los Angeles is using \$1.5 million of those funds to expand a pilot that diverts nonviolent 911 calls about homeless people to unarmed teams of outreach workers and mental health clinicians.

Oakland recently launched an 18-month pilot that more closely resembles CAHOOTS, dispatching teams made up of an EMT and a trained community member to 911 calls in particular neighborhoods. The program explicitly aims to address the needs of residents who are Black, Indigenous and people of color. Police in each city Reveal reviewed disproportionately arrested Black people and were more likely to arrest unhoused people in every city except Los Angeles.

Sacramento fully funded a Department of Community Response in 2021 that dispatches social workers and outreach specialists to calls related to homelessness, mental health and substance use disorders. Seattle’s program responds citywide, but for limited hours, five days a week. San Diego recently has expanded its crisis response team countywide.

Tremaine Clayton, a firefighter and paramedic who served last year as a staff member for Portland Street Response, says he thinks the programs have the capacity to change the way residents view someone in crisis – typically coded as “unwanted person” calls.

“To say a person’s ‘unwanted’ is already pretty inhumane,” Clayton said. But callers to 911 have begun to ask for a response from Portland Street Response specifically, he said. “They’re acknowledging the person as a person struggling and knowing there’s a resource that could be con-

nected to them.”

But frustration has long been the dominant emotion in conversations about homelessness at Portland’s Lents neighborhood community meetings.

During the police precinct commander’s visit in January 2021, attendees described feeling like prisoners in their own home. They said they couldn’t let children outside without fear of stepping on drug needles discarded by unhoused people.

Portland Police Bureau’s East Precinct Commander Erica Hurley told residents she understood, but there’s only so much the police department can do to stop minor offenses or the cycle of criminalization.

“So I write you a ticket for a hundred dollars, and you crumple it up and put it on my front lawn, because you live out in front of my house, and then you don’t show up and pay your fine,” Hurley said. “And I’m going to write you another one, and you’re going to drop that one, too.”

“What am I going to do about that? There’s no teeth in that.”

Hurley said the police’s part won’t work until there’s more help on the social services side to help people with drug addiction and other issues.

“Those are resources that are incredibly needed in the city of Portland,” she said.

This story was produced by Reveal from The Center for Investigative Reporting, a nonprofit news organization. Learn more at [revealnews.org](https://www.revealnews.org) and subscribe to their weekly newsletter at [revealnews.org/newsletter](https://www.revealnews.org/newsletter). Read more at www.revealnews.org.

Courtesy of Reveal / International Network of Street Papers

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“Ever since the internet and social media there’s a false sense of community when all you’re doing is social media. I had a really hard time finding a way to fit in community outside of being on the streets. I don’t want to mix my job with my personal life. I don’t want to bring my work home. A lot of my friends, I haven’t seen them in 10 or 20 years. I talk to them on Facebook, sure, but out here on the streets there’s community, we can say hello and hug each other. I wasn’t homeless for about 10 years and you wouldn’t hear anybody say hello to you all day long. I had to force myself to make a habit every morning to say hello to people I was walking by on my way to work. I would say “good morning” to them, mostly to the workers. The people setting up the restaurants for the morning or taking out the garbage from last night. I’d say good morning and they’re cheerful and happy to say good morning back. But that’s like the most interaction you can get out of people, and it’s forced. I don’t feel so forced in the community I live in right now.”

“When it comes to interactions with men in particular, you have to be direct and upfront with what your intentions are with that person, especially if they make advancements on you. You have to be firm in telling them that you’re not OK with them, you know. You can never ever, ever, ever have a gray area because you want to be nice. You need to just tell them. But the biggest concern is when I’m sleeping alone. I’ve had men try and come in my tent a couple of times. Thankfully I woke up to my dog chasing them out but if he hadn’t been there, I’d of woke up with a man in my tent, and who knows what he’d have been doing. I’ve got friends who tell me that they’ve woken up with men and the first thing he does is offer them dope, or drugs, and some of them accept it because they don’t know what he was doing before they woke up. It’s terrible. Yeah, so sexual exploitation, and ah, the violence. It can be really dangerous for a woman.”



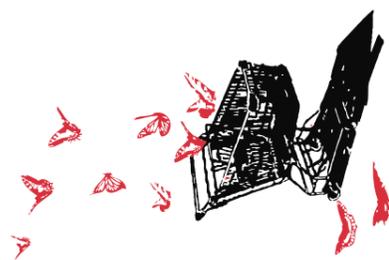
Name: Brandy Ericksen, 39 Date: 8 April 2021 Place: Dore Street Without a home: Off and on: 20 years

“I lost my low-income housing voucher and had to go back to the streets after 10 years of not being homeless, three years ago. It was devastating and terrifying sleeping in the Tenderloin on the sidewalk. You know life doesn’t stop just because you lost your housing. I was completely sober, the first time off all opiates in my adult life, and to find myself right back to being homeless was crazy. I remember thinking, “I can only go up from here, it can’t get any worse than this”. It got worse; my boyfriend went to jail. So now I’m completely alone and on the streets without that safety and protection to sleep with me every night. But the most devastating part of it was it pulled me and my daughter into homelessness. We were homeless from age 2. We became homeless until she was 4. I got us out of homelessness, and that was like the hardest thing I’ve had to do in my life. To go through services and that whole thing, it was like the hardest thing ever. And so when I lost my housing ten years later I couldn’t put her back into that. I didn’t have the heart to go back to Hamilton and drag her through the uncertainty of homelessness, I had to leave her with my mom. At least there’s stability there, there’s structure, to some degree. My mom works every day, and it was better than putting her back through the uncertainty of homelessness, so that’s what I did. That was like the hardest.”

“I feel like there are a lot of people that want to help us get off the streets and there are promises made,. They’re given to you like a promise when it should have been presented to you like a hope. That’s devastating when you think something is going to work out and it was never on the table in the first place.”

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