

INDEPENDENTLY PUBLISHED BY THE COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS SINCE 1989



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# POETRY CORNER

## Make the Change

by Alina Catubig, Leenz

Make the change  
Give your change  
Lend a helping hand  
Buy a meal  
Feed the soul  
Don't feed me the processed  
Feed me the organic truth  
The fiber, the greens  
The antioxidants to give me life  
Make the change  
Give your change  
Read me a lyric,a story  
What's your story?  
Can you smile that it makes me want to dance and sing  
To perform art, to express change  
Loud & calm waves of expressions,we drown sometimes  
I'm swimming trying to catch my breath but i float, sink,  
repeat I made it to the top  
What's your idea of making a change?

## BECOME A STREET SHEET VENDOR

STREET SHEET is currently recruiting vendors to sell the newspaper around San Francisco. Vendors pick up the papers for free at our office in the Tenderloin and sell them for \$2 apiece at locations across the City. You get to keep all the money they make from sales. Earn extra income while also helping elevate the voices of the homeless writers who make this paper so unique, and promoting the vision of a San Francisco where every human being has a home.

**TO SIGN UP, VISIT OUR OFFICE AT 280 TURK ST FROM 10-4 ON MONDAY-THURSDAY AND 10-NOON ON FRIDAY**

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STRONG!**



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

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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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## ORGANIZE WITH US

### HOUSING JUSTICE WORKING GROUP TUESDAYS @ NOON

The Housing Justice Workgroup is working toward a San Francisco in which every human being can have and maintain decent, habitable, safe, and secure housing. This meeting is in English and Spanish and open to everyone! Email [mcarrera@cohsf.org](mailto:mcarrera@cohsf.org) to get involved!

### HUMAN RIGHTS WORKING GROUP WEDNESDAYS @12:30

The Human Rights Workgroup has been doing some serious heavy lifting on these issues: conducting direct research, outreach to people on the streets, running multiple campaigns, developing policy, staging direct actions, capturing media attention, and so much more. All those down for the cause are welcome to join! Email [lpierce@cohsf.org](mailto:lpierce@cohsf.org)

**EVERYONE IS INVITED TO JOIN OUR  
WORKING GROUP MEETINGS!**

# CHRISTINA’S DREAM

Christina Munene

I love traveling, that’s a fact! On this day, our school planned an international trip to Paris. I was excited as this would be my first trip on a plane. My classmates and I even formed research groups on places to visit while on the trip. We devised a list of some incredible places, and shared it with the teacher responsible for the trip planning. Later that evening, I went home after school and shared the exciting news with my family. They were all very happy for me. The amount to be paid was a bit high, but there was enough time to plan for it. Days went by, and D-Day was here –it was time to jet off. I waved my family goodbye with excitement, and quickly left so as not to be late. We got to school, and my classmates were no less thrilled about this; it was the first visit to Paris for everyone.

We got to the JFK airport on time, and we could see the planes getting ready. We jokingly made several guesses on which one we’d be using, and we bet on it. Soon enough, it was our turn to board. Trust me, they didn’t need to call us twice. Every one of us walked proudly, holding our boarding passes. The airport had a good view as we walked across the jet bridge. In no time, everybody was seated with seat belts fastened, ready for take-off. A brief introduction from the captain and then we were airborne. The take-off was like nothing I had experienced before, and I was terrified. It was a seven to eight hour flight, and I wasn’t planning to waste a minute sleeping. But fatigue

finally caught up, and I fell into a deep sleep.

“We are gonna crash!” I woke up to my friend’s voice, oxygen masks dropping on us, and an announcement from the flight attendant asking everyone to stay calm and fasten their safety belts. Honestly, remaining calm was not possible with a class of high school students. There were panicked screams from all over the plane. I saw a flash of light, and then there was total silence and darkness. When I regained consciousness, I noticed that everybody was okay. I walked out and realized we had crashed in the middle of nowhere, just a desert with nothing at all. Then something strange happened: I could see my classmates, but we couldn’t speak. I tried to tap one of them, but there was no contact or response. I came across a mirror and also couldn’t see any reflection. I had heard stories of how people become ghosts after death, and this was it.

“Christina! Christina! Hey! Christina!” I heard someone call my name, and I opened my eyes in shock. It was my mum waking me up for school. This was the most horrific dream ever; I knelt and prayed about it. Over breakfast, I narrated it to my family; to some extent, I was still shaken. I also got to share this with the class, which wasn’t amusing for them either. Trust me, I was all grown, but that first flight that I took was still a terrifying one for sure! I hope you enjoyed my story. ■

# WHAT HOMELESSNESS FEELS LIKE

Jackie

Have you ever passed a homeless person and wondered how they ended up there? I have been homeless for a while now and it has not been easy. Before judging anyone for being homeless, it would be good to find out what caused it. It is never a choice for anyone. Everyone wants a place they can call home and relax after a long day. Having no roof over your head can be tough, especially if you have a family. Not everyone is willing to take you in after you lose your house, and you may end up sleeping outside.

Before I became homeless, I used to live in a beautiful rental house, and paying rent was not much of a hassle. I had a catering job that helped me pay my bills. Financial independence is the best thing, since you know that at the end of the month you won’t struggle. I lost my job during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that’s where everything changed. I had to rely on my savings to survive as I looked for another job, but nothing came through.

Eventually my savings ran out.

I became stressed and was always anxious, wondering how the next day would go. I walked long distances trying to look for a job, but it was impossible to find work with the economy so bad due to COVID. I survived mostly by borrowing money from friends and family, but eventually that becomes a nuisance and you have to stop. I couldn’t pay rent. My landlord tolerated me for a while, but after a few months they got tired and said I had to move out. I had no choice but to leave everything and look for a place to stay.

I have not recovered. I still cannot believe that I’m homeless. Homelessness

brings about discomfort, such that even if a friend offers you a place to stay it never feels the same. Having your own space is amazing—it gives one a feeling of independence and freedom. Right now I don’t have that; I wake up every-day wishing that I could have my own place. A place I can go back to to relax after daily activities.

Recovering from homelessness is not easy nowadays with the high inflation rate. The economy has become so bad that there is no affordable housing anymore. Not sleeping hungry is the priority right now.

I was lucky to find someone who offered me a place to stay after I became homeless. Not everybody is usually so lucky.

Every country in the world should try and come up with effective measures for dealing with homelessness. Governments should come up with proper measures that help deliver affordable housing to individuals. Also, most people work on minimal wages. Employers should pay their employees better salaries or give them housing allowances, as that will ensure every employee is provided for. Unemployment is one of the major issues affecting people, and the state needs to create better opportunities for everyone. Anyone, no matter their level of education, should be able to get a job that allows them to pay their bills.

Waking up every day with a roof over your head is a big flex. Individuals should learn to help out homeless individuals in any way, as this gives people hope to carry on. Being homeless is not easy but when you have supportive people around you then you can get back on your feet more easily. ■

# A SWEEPY LITTLE TOWN

Andy Howard

A Street Sheet work of fiction...

Will was entranced in his thoughts, mesmerized by the rattling, clanging, window vibrating noises coming from the metal behemoth that was the backbone of the local public transportation system, servicing the 49-square mile area of the iconic City of San Francisco.

It had been a long day. He awoke at 5 a.m., met with the group of homeless individuals that resided within a block or two of his own lean-to, then took off with his friends toward the Tenderloin Linkage Center to see if they could land some highly sought after housing. Trying to get housing involves a lot of standing in line, and being persistent and attentive enough to succeed. There was never a shortage of competition, but there was certainly a shortage of housing. Will was glad that the day was over, and he knew there would be 20 or 30 more just like it before success could be remotely possible.

Will was thankful that he had been proactive the night before. He had sought out the police, fire and Public Works departments and asked for their cooperation during this housing bid. They told Will in no uncertain terms that they admired his efforts to assist so many

in the quest for housing. They assured him that they would not disturb the 20-plus encampments that belonged to the individuals going with Will on a daily basis to seek housing. Will told them how long it might take, and they assured him that was fine—they would refrain from sweeping the camps as long as efforts were being made.

Still, Will was apprehensive. The authorities had let him down before. But there was no way they would break their promise on the first day of the crew’s housing search...was there?

The answer became clear as the group turned the corner from 26th Street onto Shotwell.

What the F\*\*K?!?

Every single encampment was gone, as if vanished into thin air. Will felt his heart sink to a new depth. For a moment, all of Will’s friends forgot anything good about Will and he became the sounding board for everyone’s anguish, frustration and anger.

Will turned inward and tried to channel his rage to the ground by taking long, slow breaths for at least 10 to 15 minutes before uttering a single word. This

proved very effective and helped to clear his thoughts so he could focus. In this moment he knew that one wrong action—one led by emotions—could prove to be devastating, even fatal.

The crew was now in survival mode, and quick decisions had to be made. It was already getting dark and still tents had to be procured, as well as blankets, water, food, etc. So many people, so many decisions to be made, not the least of which was: where the hell do we go?

Once the crowd’s rage had tempered, Will called everyone that was interested in sticking together, and they had an informal meeting. The topic quickly became...WHERE DO WE GO?

The three most fundamental concerns for any human being when you find yourself on the streets in the dark will always be food, shelter and security. Suggestions abounded as the discussion wore on. For now, sweep tight. ■

Stay tuned for the next issue to see what new adventures Will and his friends will come up against in the concrete jungle...



# 50 YEARS SINCE “LAST GREAT DISGRACE” A FORMER WILLOWBROOK RESIDENT REMEMBERS

The morning sun is shining through the windows of my mother’s small Brooklyn apartment. It feels like it’ll be a scorching August day, and I’ve been up for hours. I live in upstate New York, but I love coming back to Brooklyn to visit my mother, and to spend a few days in the city. The landline she refuses to get rid of rings and I quickly answer it. I recognize the voice on the other end right away: It’s Bettina, or Betty, as everyone calls her. My mother had mentioned to her that I’d be in Brooklyn, and she’s calling to invite me over to her home for coffee and cake. I tell her that I’ll be there by noon.

Betty lives in a tiny, one story house in Sheepshead Bay, but probably not for long. She’d shared the place with her 96-year-old aunt until about 6 months ago, when her aunt passed away. Most likely, Betty will be made to move to a group home. Betty suffers from speech and learning disabilities, and she has issues with her motor skills, plus a seizure disorder. Living alone wouldn’t be easy for her, even though she has an attendant that comes to help and check on her daily. At 66 years old, Betty is a survivor, having lived for many years at the notorious Willowbrook State School.

I first met Betty through my mother. Betty and her aunt were regular customers at the supermarket where my mother worked. They’d come in to do their shopping, and Betty would talk to my mom. They became friends, and I was introduced to Betty. She seemed very lonely, so I gave her my number. She would come to my apartment at least once a week when I lived in Brooklyn. At first, she never mentioned anything about Willowbrook, but as time went on, Betty became more comfortable with me. She started to tell me about the horrors that she’d endured in that “school” that was no school at all, but a dumping ground for the unwanted, the insane, and the disabled. She also talked to me about her eventual release, which left her homeless for some time before her aunt had agreed to take her in.

Fifty years have passed since the horrors of Willowbrook were exposed. In 1972, investigative reporter Geraldo Rivera and print reporter Jane Curtin had received a tip about the atrocities taking place at Willowbrook State School. The reporters used a stolen key to get into the institution, surprising the staff by appearing, unannounced, with cameras ready to expose the horrors of Willowbrook. A doctor who worked at the institution gave Rivera the stolen key. The doctor knew of the physical and sexual abuse of the patients by the staff, the overcrowding, and the unsanitary, dehumanizing conditions. The investigation, called “Willowbrook: The Last Great Disgrace”, was viewed by millions, and to this day, I cannot watch more than 5 minutes of the documentary because of the horrific conditions and abuses through which the patients lived.

Betty looked excited as she opened the door for me before I could even knock. I arrived as her attendant was leaving for the day. She’d helped Betty set coffee and cake on the kitchen table, as well as some of the “birthday cake” cookies that we both loved. The attendant told me how nice it was that I was spending time with Betty as she waved goodbye to us. Betty is in her late 60s, but looks much older than her years. I suppose that the hard life that she endured has taken its toll on her.

We sat in the sunny kitchen and talked. Betty was concerned about how I was doing, having heard from her aunt (before she passed away) about some of my struggles with dissociative identity disorder (DID).

“My aunt told me that you have a problem with ghosts in your head,” she said. “Are they gonna put you in a hospital?”. Betty has the endearing quality of having no filter.

I laughed. “No, I don’t have ghosts in my head,” I said. “Just other people. It’s hard to explain, but I’m fine.” Betty looked sad and replied, “I think I saw people like you when I was in Willowbrook. They were always getting punished because they said they were different people.”

I asked Betty if she’d allow me to write about her time at Willowbrook. Betty nodded. “People forget what happened to us there,” she said.

Betty was born in the early 1950s to a 16-year-old mother and a 17-year-old father in Brooklyn. Her parents had gotten married when her mother became pregnant, which was expected at the time. A year and half after Betty was born, it was clear that she was not hitting milestones at the same pace as other babies her age. She was having issues with her motor skills and was not learning to speak. Betty’s mother abandoned her, and her father didn’t want the responsibility of a child, so Betty was passed around to different family members who would keep her for a while, but would eventually pass her on to others due to her limitations and needs.

Betty was three years old when her paternal grandfather decided to place her in Willowbrook. He and Betty’s grandmother took her to the “school,” which was on Staten Island, and that was the last time that Betty ever saw them. No one ever came to visit her. Betty spent her childhood and adolescence locked up in a place that Robert Kennedy called a “snake pit.”

Betty was subjected to beatings and sexual abuse by staff, as well as by some of the older patients. She had almost no medical attention there, unless she was bleeding from an injury. If the staff thought a child was difficult, the child was either put in a straitjacket all the time, or placed in isolation in small cells called “the pit.” Betty was placed in isolation a few times for being a “trouble maker,” as the nurses called her. She was left in a cell 24 hours a day, with only a cloth diaper and nothing else—not even a blanket, and very little food or water. “Everyone was afraid of the pit,” Betty said.

As Betty aged, she was moved to another building where there were girls and women over the age of 14. The beatings, sexual abuse, and punishments continued in the new building. Betty, like many of the girls and women, was sterilized against her will. She said that they were told that “retards can’t have babies.” The ward was overcrowded, and the residents were routinely drugged every morning, night, and throughout the day. Laundry was never done, so many residents were either naked or wore cloth diapers that were infrequently changed. Their days were spent in a large common room that smelled like death. Bathrooms were only allowed once in the morning when they woke up and once before bed. The walls of the common room, and everywhere, were

covered in feces, urine and blood from the residents.

The nurses had no patience for any resident, and they often beat them. The residents were always bruised and some had cigarette burns. When it was meal time they received some kind of mushy substance that was often drugged with heavy tranquilizers. There were no activities scheduled for any of the residents, so Betty stayed in the dayroom til it was time for them to go to bed. None of the blankets or sheets were washed or changed. Some residents were chained to their beds and were left in carts if they were unable to move on their own. The sleeping area was overcrowded and filthy. A bath literally meant being hosed down with cold water, and it was only once or twice a month. The toilet overflowed because the plumbing was never fixed. The unsanitary conditions made many residents very angry and some died. There was once an incident where a boy was scalded in the shower as punishment by another resident.

Betty teared up as she spoke about Willowbrook, so I asked her if she wanted to stop. She didn’t, she just kept saying the same thing over and over again: “People forget what happened to us there.”

She said that it was normal for people to just disappear or die. Nobody looked into their deaths because the staff either had families that never asked about or visited them, or the family had specifically wanted no contact from Willowbrook, not even if their family member came home. Some patients had all of their teeth pulled if they were someone once, and many were lobotomized. To say that the patients were dehumanized would be an understatement. Willowbrook was hell itself.

Willbrook was state funded. Parents who wanted better treatment for their children had to give signed permission for their children to be experimented on for new vaccines and hepatitis.

Betty said, “Yeah, some kids were in the experimental building. They got better food and had school for a couple of hours a day. Do you know what happened to them?”

I shook my head as Betty continued, “Oh, they were given hepatitis, and then they gave them vaccines.”

“They put poop in their chocky milk—hepatitis from the kids that had it!” Betty said. I shook my head in disbelief. Betty continued, “They gave the poop to the new kids to see if it will work like a vaccine shot.”

I’d heard about the experiments, but didn’t know the extent of them. I changed the subject and asked her to tell me about leaving Willowbrook. Betty said that she was placed in a group home after Willowbrook. She was almost 20 years old when she left, having spent most of her life in Willowbrook. In many ways, it was the only home that she had known. Unfortunately, the group home was only slightly better than Willowbrook. Residents got better food and clothes, but the beatings and sexual abuse still went on.

Betty eventually ran away from the group home, and no one looked for her. She ended up on the streets of New York, homeless, vulnerable, alone, having no understanding what was going on around her. She

# THE RACE": ERS

JOHANNA ELATTAR

me she slept in doorways and sidewalks and begged for change so she could eat. I've had my own experience with homelessness, and I couldn't imagine how hard it was on Betty. She was raped several times while on the street, by men who took advantage of her obvious disabilities. She was also pimped out by a man that she thought was her boyfriend.

Finally, a social worker befriended Betty after she was arrested for prostitution, and gave her some help. The social worker managed to track down some of Betty's family, and Betty was taken in by her maternal aunt, with whom she lived until her aunt's death six months earlier. Betty said her aunt was mean and treated her badly when she forgot things, dropped something, or if the house wasn't cleaned to her specifications. Her aunt took her in because she thought she was getting a free maid, and for the disability money that Betty got every month.

"It was better than the street and Willowbrook!" Betty said.

Willowbrook first opened in 1947, and finally closed its doors in 1987, fifteen years after a stolen key allowed millions to see the cruelties that were taking place. It's a little hard to believe that it took so long for this horrible place to finally be shut down. Willowbrook now stands abandoned, filled with trash and rats. Some of the residents either ran away or were not placed in group homes. They became homeless on the streets of New York, and many actually came back to inhabit the abandoned buildings that were their homes for most of their lives.

There are about 2,300 Willowbrook survivors alive today. Even though it's been 35 years since Willowbrook had closed its doors permanently, many former Willowbrook residents have reportedly continued to suffer abuse in their new facilities. In 2019, there were 97 reports of physical abuse, 34 allegations of psychological abuse, and many reports of sexual abuse of former Willowbrook residents.

Geraldo Rivera's report in early 1972 was called "The Last Great Disgrace," but that title was wrong. Willowbrook State School wasn't the last disgrace because the disgrace is going on today, 50 years later. It is every person's right to be safe from harm, yet mental health facilities in operation today are still understaffed, and there's a lack of training for employees. Today, Willowbrook State School is just several abandoned and decaying buildings on Staten Island. Some say it's haunted by the tortured spirits of its former residents, and a child killer known as "Cropsey," but in fact Willowbrook's many horrors live on in the smaller modern facilities that are supposed to protect the vulnerable and the disabled. ■

Johanna Elattar is a writer from New York.

Please subscribe to her YouTube channel:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbl8YHfxexHQ5TGJbPw\\_B4Q](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbl8YHfxexHQ5TGJbPw_B4Q)



## THE TRUE HORROR OF SF HOUSING: LAKETHA'S STORY

Years of displacement, public housing teardowns, bad policy favoring property owners, gentrification and structural racism has decimated our African American population in San Francisco. This has resulted in tangibly disastrous impacts on families, and has dimmed San Francisco's shine. There are many things we can do collectively to turn this around. One way is to restore housing for one family - one beautiful San Francisco mother and three gorgeous children with deep roots in San Francisco.

LaKetha Pierce loves San Francisco and has spent her adult life giving to this city, as a caregiver in health care, as a service provider to unhoused people and today as a leader fighting for housing and human rights for impoverished San Franciscans. In 2010, during a time of personal struggle with postpartum depression, she was illegally evicted from public housing. Eviction proceedings were filed against her for owing \$250, and she and her family members attempted to pay several times before the Sheriff got there and were refused by property management.

Since then her family has suffered homelessness, living in cars, in shelters, in hotels, moved out of the city on a temporary housing subsidy twice and became homeless again each time when the subsidy ended. The whole time she continued working in San Francisco, bringing her children to school in San Francisco while suffering trauma and instability of homelessness. As Laketha said in a letter to the Housing Authority "Having a home for us again is the foundation we need to be able to focus on bettering ourselves and so I can continue to help others who experience the trauma of homelessness"

The coldest part: Laketha's old home at 1015 Oakdale is sitting vacant.

Please sign this petition calling for the Housing Authority to rescind the eviction and move Laketha and her sons back home in public housing! ■

<https://www.change.org/p/reverse-sfha-illegal-eviction>





# THE HORROR LAWYER

Terry Johnson

**A Street Sheet work of fiction...**

CONTENT WARNING: violence against gay men, body horror

Here is evil, the pure poison of the soul, the darkness we are all afraid lurks within ourselves. We are afraid of it, and of what we are capable of doing if we lose control. Afraid, but also tempted, because there is freedom in doing exactly what we want. Freedom for a time and a price.

The fear, the temptation, the rebellion, the horror and the consequences are all part of the darkness that's within ourselves. As a good, talented lawyer, James worked hard to protect the oppressed and the less fortunate in society by giving them freedom from the oppressors. But little did they know that freedom comes at a cost. But when James invited Cain—a homeless gay man—to his house to swap stories, the darkness was about to come to light.

Cain looked into James' eyes and saw a man who was willing to help him get off the streets of San Francisco, so he never hesitated to accept James' invitation. Cain wanted to invite his best friend but the lawyer told him to come alone, that it would be his turn first, and that once he got inside he could help his friends do

the same.

James was making advances, but Cain didn't mind at first. He got into James's car and they drove to a country house where James lived alone. The home was a bit far from town and in a lonely place, but that did not really matter to Cain. James had a seductive nature that made strangers feel safe around him, even if at some point fear crossed their minds. James offered Cain a drink, and left him sitting on a couch in the living room while he went downstairs.

As Cain sat silently sipping the drink, he heard some commotion and sounds that sounded like a puppy coming from the basement. His head started feeling heavy, and he felt dizzy. He immediately realized there was something wrong going on, and rushed towards the door. James followed him and struggled to block Cain from leaving the house. The door was locked so Cain broke his way through a window, but by that time he had little strength remaining. The drugs in the drink took full control of his body.

He woke up in pain.

His sight was returning slowly but he was immediately aware of the

stench—a rotten smell that quickly made Cain realize that his escape was unsuccessful, and that he was now in big trouble with this monster in the form of a lawyer. He had company. Also in the basement was a middle-aged man, the one who had sounded like a puppy before he was chained. Cain noticed a large pool of blood near a crushing machine, and a big freezer in the right corner. The walls were covered in photos of young men, hung on the walls with one of their bones. Each photo had a different bone from a specific part of a human body. One had a rib bone, another a phalange bone, another a piece of a skull, and so many other parts just hanging next to pictures of the victims.

Cain tried to unchain the other man so that they could escape together, but the man was too weak to stand. As they were struggling, they heard James come into the room. They tried to hide as James opened the steel reinforced door. Cain grabbed a heavy object nearby and brought it down on James' head, then rushed out of the door, but the blow was not strong enough to knock him down. James, now agitated, followed Cain and beat him until he became unconscious, then chained him. When Cain regained consciousness yet again,

he saw the older man he had tried to rescue earlier being dismantled and minced in the crushing machine, then burned. Cain knew he was next. He tried to scream but his tongue was cut out and thrown to the mincing machine.

James was transformed into something barely human, a murdering amoral fiend. As Cain's blood leaked from his body, he could hear James mumbling about how he is attacking gay men by seducing them or pretending to offer help, then luring them to his home to torture and murder them. He says he believes by doing so he is atoning for the sins of his gay father who left him and his mother to suffer. He keeps part of their individual bones so that when assembled together it can make a full human skeleton. He claims nothing can stop him besides death.

Through the fog, Cain heard a doorbell ring. James closed the basement door and went to answer. When the basement door was opened, Cain saw the police officers who had been on the monster lawyer's trail for some time after complaints from some of the victims' friends. Cain was rescued, just in time. ■

# ZOMBIES

Quinn Hailey

**A Street Sheet work of fiction...**

Sunday night, family dinner as usual. It was all fun stories, chatting, and TV—until normal programming was interrupted for some breaking news. Something was definitely happening.

“Reporting live from California, we interrupt normal programming to bring you some terrible news,” the reporter began. “There has been an outbreak of an unknown infectious disease that's killing people in a matter of hours. The dead bodies have also been waking up within a few minutes with bloodshot eyes and an urge for blood. A bite from these individuals will infect humans with the disease and turn them fast. The Government has said that they have no idea how this came about, and so far there is no cure.”

At first, this felt like a bad dream. But it was happening, right here in our city. The advice we got from the reporter was to stay indoors as it was safer. We were desperate to avoid further infections. My dad thought this was a bad idea and that we should pack only the necessary items, then move as far away as possible. We all disagreed and decided to stay put, switch off the lights and not

do anything else to attract the attention of these unknown monsters. We did not know how long this would go on, but we were not prepared for it. With no stocked food, we'd eventually have to leave the house, or die of starvation.

Soon we were out of food and everything that we needed. My dad had to leave and get some groceries, but the infected creatures were right outside in the streets. He gathered courage and drove off with my brother to look for groceries. We all had a gut feeling about this, but there was nothing much we could do. We locked the door behind them, and this felt like that final goodbye. We could only follow the news from our basement and hope for the best. The infection rate was getting higher and higher, and both government and privately owned institutions had closed to protect their employees. All travel had been banned to avoid any further spreading of the disease. The city was at a standstill.

A few days later, the cell phone signal went out. There was still no sign of my dad and my brother coming back. We could see the zombies from the windows, and by this time there were so many, we didn't dare step out. What kind of infection would

this be, and how did it even start? My mom kept asking. My grandma needed her medications. Hunger pangs and thirst were killing us. We couldn't drink the tap water anymore for fear of being contaminated. This was bad and getting worse as days went by. For the first time, we experienced how it felt to be like a homeless person—with no solutions and no help at all.

One fateful morning, we heard a knock at the door. We opened it to find my brother, alone. He looked shocked, sad and drained, but he at least got groceries to cover us for weeks. Bad news was to follow. My brother told us he and our dad were separated at some point. My dad had suffered a bite and turned. We couldn't believe this awful news. Our dad had been our main source of income and with this news, our lives had been officially ruined.

Months later, the government came up with a vaccine for the disease. Drastic measures were taken to first pick all the infected people from the streets and dispose of them in undisclosed locations. The next step was to vaccinate everyone who was still uninfected and not showing unhealthy symptoms. This horrific experience was finally over, but not without serious damage. ■

## DID YOU KNOW WE HAVE A PODCAST?



Listen to **STREET SPEAK**, the podcast answering your burning questions about poverty and homelessness in San Francisco. Created by the editors of Street Sheet, this podcast brings you the word on the street. Find the latest episodes on our website and wherever you listen to podcasts.



SCAN ME

# FOR PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY, GETTING AN ABORTION WAS ALREADY HARD. IT'S ABOUT TO GET HARDER

By Kaela Roeder, Street Sense Media, accessed through the INSP News Service , published June 1, 2022

As the US repeals Roe v. Wade and rolls back abortion rights, Washington DC street paper Street Sense covers what effect this will have on those on the margins, highlighting the already significant barriers that poor people have to obtaining healthcare, especially those seeking an abortion.

When Aida Peery decided to get an abortion at 18, she felt scared and confused. It was a few years after the historic Roe v. Wade ruling, the 1973 landmark case protecting a person's right to an abortion. But Peery was unsure how she could access the procedure.

At the time, the state of Illinois required unmarried people 18 and under to first obtain parental consent to undergo an abortion. Peery, nervous but committed to her decision, enlisted the help of a family friend to pose as her mother at a clinic in Chicago. She felt like she couldn't be honest with her family about the situation

"I was scared to talk to my family about it," Peery said. "They instilled a lot of fear in me."

Now, amid a historic rollback of reproductive rights led by Republican lawmakers after the repealing of the precedent set by Roe v. Wade, the same law that allowed Peery to get an abortion all those years ago, instituting a patchwork of contradictory laws state-to-state, Peery feels the past creeping back up.

Perry, a vendor program associate with Street Sense Media, worries about how low-income people and people experiencing homelessness will be affected in the coming months.

"It's a woman's right to choose," she said.

Nearly half of people who receive abortions live below the federal poverty level, according to the Guttmacher Institute. Another quarter identifies as being "very close" to poverty. Some studies have shown up to 20 per cent of women seeking abortions in metro areas were experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

With close to 15 per cent of D.C.'s population living in poverty,

according to the latest census data, the city's most vulnerable residents will be affected by future reductions in reproductive care access. Abortions have always been difficult to access

Even though abortions had been legal since 1973, low-income people have consistently struggled to find access to steady health care. Obstacles include cost, knowledge of reproductive health and physical access to providers, according to a study published in the academic journal Health and Social Care in the Community.

"Roe v. Wade was never enough," Benny Del Castillo, the interim Board President of the DC Abortion Fund, said. "Roe v Wade provided legality into the mix. However, it never guaranteed true access."



Thousands of demonstrators gathered at the Bans Off Our Bodies protest in downtown D.C. on May 14. Credit: Kaela Roeder.

For those who cannot afford the full cost of an abortion, the D.C. Abortion Fund is an all-volunteer non-profit that gives grants to pregnant people in the Washington region and to people who travel to the District.

And the variation of state abortion laws adds further challenges, particularly for Washington region residents.

Often when a person is experiencing homelessness or living in deep poverty, they may also have a harder time being in tune with their body and noticing changes, as well, Scott said. In fact, Leise Gergely, a community advocate with My Sister's Place, a domestic violence housing and services organization in the District, said she comes across clients who have expressed this idea.

Tracking your period or ovulation just isn't a priority when you're dealing with the stress and trauma of homelessness, says Scott. Additionally, pregnancy tests are also costly and not easily accessible to purchase, administer and interpret. People also frequently experience long delays in getting timely appointments or require co-pays which add additional burdens to obtaining care.

"Some people may not even be aware that they have missed a period because they are concerned about the other determinants of health, like how they will find and secure safety, shelter, food, work and nurturing human attachments," Scott said. "Those take precedence, so people sometimes are not aware of what's happening in their body."

While abortion is legal in D.C. at all stages of pregnancy, including late-stage and third-trimester abortions, Medicaid does not cover the cost of an abortion except in cases of life endangerment, rape or incest. In 2017, a Republican-led House voted to prevent the District from using local tax dollars to subsidize abortion services for low-income women, limiting access to abortions for low-income people.

Abortions are illegal in the third trimester unless the patient's life or health is endangered in Virginia. Medicaid cannot be used to subsidize an abortion.

In Maryland, abortions after viability (meaning the baby can survive if born) are illegal, but Medicaid can be used to cover the cost of the abortion. Lawmakers in Maryland just voted to expand access, allowing health

practitioners other than physicians to perform abortions.

Because people living in deep poverty typically do not have access to health care and insurance, it can be hard to detect a pregnancy and receive an abortion early on, according to Dr. Karen A. Scott, a board-certified OB-GYN and founding CEO and owner of Birthing Cultural Rigor, a science consulting firm.

Protestors get ready to march from the Washington Monument to the Supreme Court on May 14 at the Bans Off Our Bodies protest. Credit: Kaela Roeder.

This delay has material impacts; it's harder and more expensive to find places that cater to abortions later on in the pregnancy and in the third trimester, Del Castillo said.

But even an early abortion can be cost-prohibitive: the average price for an abortion during the first trimester ranges from about \$400 to \$600, depending on the clinic. Late-term abortions can cost upwards of \$2,000, according to Planned Parenthood.

People experiencing homelessness – particularly women – also face an outsized threat of sexual assault and trafficking, according to a study by UNANIMA International. Sexual violence and abortions are inextricably linked, Del Castillo explained.

"It's just another way to really exert power and control over the most marginalized," she said.

Abortions are common among trafficking survivors, according to a peer-reviewed study by the science journal Annals of Health Law and Life Sciences. More than half of 67 respondents in the study said they had received at least one abortion, and 20 respondents reported receiving multiple abortions.

Society has already taken so many choices from people experiencing violence, poverty and housing instability that limited access to abortion is part of a larger pattern, Gergely said.

"Taking away even more autonomy is bound to wreak even more havoc than they're already experiencing." ■

Courtesy of Street Sense Media



# MISSING PERSON!

Aquiles Candeas Leal has been lost since August 30, 2022.

He is Brazilian and came to visit me after 3 years without seeing each other. Please help me find him.

He is 25 years old and is 6-foot-one. He has black and purple tattooed eyes and has two bands tattooed on his left ankle and a mandala on his left calf. He also has a small cross tattooed on the middle finger of his right hand.

He doesn't have much facial hair, but he might have a little mustache and a goatee. His hair is short and he often shaves his head.

If anyone can help me find him, please contact me. I am his mother.

Viviane Candéas dos Santos

Phone number: +1 (407) 773-9254 (WhatsApp)

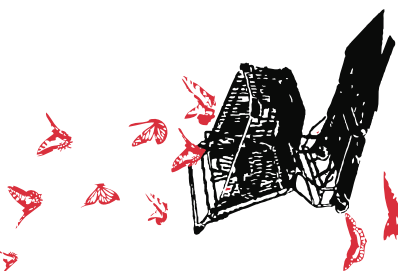
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## Proyecto Dignidad Community Meeting

### Save the Date

Monday, October 17th, 2022 at 5:30 pm  
Mission Neighborhood Health Center  
Parking lot @ 16th and Shotwell St

### Join our Community Meeting

Come learn how to secure human rights and housing for our unhoused neighbors in the Mission District. We will share a Call to Action and the LTF Street Needs Assessment findings.

Interpreters and  
childcare will be  
provided



Food will  
be provided

