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US HOMELESS CZAR DOESN'T BELIEVE HOUSING SOLVES HOMELESSNESS

On the tails of his administration's trip to California, Trump blasted the state for the homelessness crisis, calling for the creation of involuntary camps where unhoused people could be locked out of site. His threats may become reality under the leadership of Robert Marbut, the private consultant Trump has picked to head the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, pending confirmation by the same council.

Robert Marbut is known for the use of the term "velvet hammer", or his updated term "velvet gavel", in his approach to homelessness. He had a consulting firm where he traveled around the country, disguising himself as a homeless person and then reporting back to local municipalities with his suggestions on how to solve homelessness, recommending a range of anti-homeless policies from the creation of mega shelters to the halting of food serving programs.

Marbut also is a big believer in the magnet theory — the disproven theory that homeless people are drawn to cities because of the services offered or the preferable climates. In every municipality where this has been studied it has been found that the majority of homeless people become homeless in the cities in which they now reside. Here in San Francisco, 70% of people experiencing homelessness lost their homes here in the city.

Perhaps even more appalling, Marbut has publicly stated he does not believe in Housing First, the practice of housing homeless people, which is broadly recognized as a proven evidence-based model that is most effective in addressing homelessness. In an interview with the Huffington post, he said "I

believe in Housing Fourth."

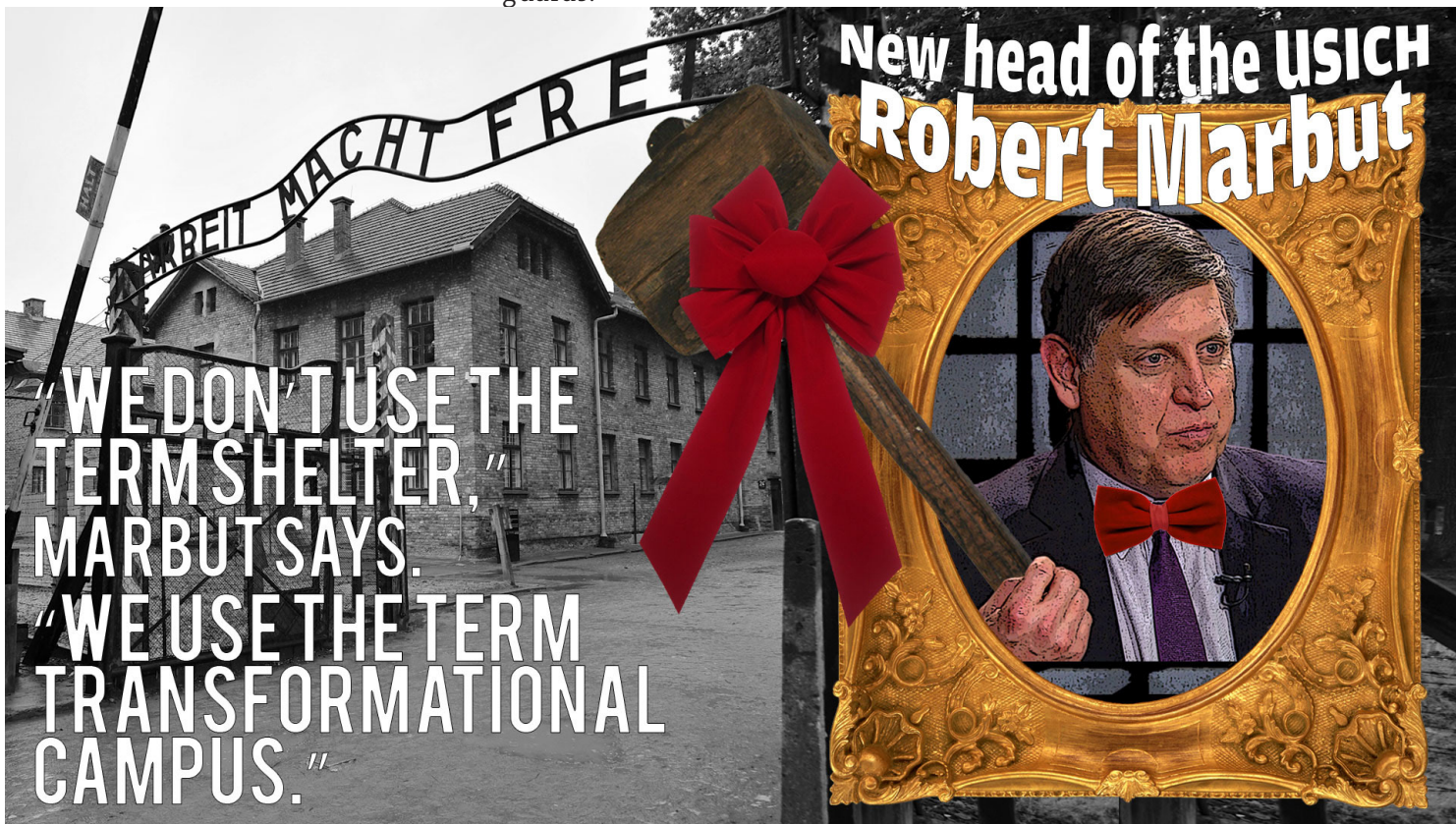
"Look around any major United States city and one can see people who are suffering as a result of the Trump government's indifference to poverty and homelessness," said Jennifer Friedenbach, the Executive Director of the Coalition on Homelessness. "Ironically, the government he leads is the very same one that caused this homelessness crisis by cutting the HUD budget by 78% in the early 1980's. Trump is in a position where he can literally ensure every single person, from children to elders in the United States has a safe and decent place to call home. He has instead appointed a man to lead the country on this issue that holds the bizarre view that housing does not solve homelessness."

While his consulting website has been removed, there have been exposés on his work including the Huffington Post piece entitled "How A Traveling Consultant

Helps America Hide the Homeless", published in 2015. Marbut follows a set of methods he developed himself, called "The Seven Guiding Principles of Transformation." Marbut's approach can be understood by looking at these principles and how he has applied them across the country.

The first two principles, "Move to a Culture of Transformation" and "Co-location and Virtual E-integration of as Many Services as Possible" require houseless people to live in close proximity under heavy surveillance. He regularly pushes for large shelters, instead of permanent housing. This is in line with failed approaches from the 1980s. His first major project, Haven for Hope, opened in 2010 with an annual budget of \$15 million and room for 1,500 people. Five hundred of those people are required to sleep in an outside courtyard. Haven for Hope also has 550 closed-circuit television cameras and a staff of 40 security guards.

Principles four and five are "Reward Positive Behavior" and "Consequences for Negative Behavior," which Diane Yentel, president of the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, accurately described as "paternalistic, patronizing, filled with poverty blaming/shaming." These principles fail to account for the structural issues that created the contemporary homeless crisis and instead fixate on blaming poor people for homelessness. The Pinellas Safe Harbor in Florida, which Marbut also helped to design, shows what those principles look like in practice. The shelter is operated by the County Sheriff's office out of an old jail, and houseless people are required to sleep on the floor before "earning" a bed with good behavior. The Pinellas Safe Harbor was described in a 2014 report to the United Nations Committee Against Torture as a "cruel, inhuman, and degrading" choice for homeless people there.



SHELTER WAITLIST UPDATE: AS OF DECEMBER 15TH THERE ARE 996 SINGLE ADULTS ON THE WAITLIST FOR SHELTER IN SAN FRANCISCO

COLD WEATHER BRINGS CONFUSION, LITTLE HELP

Armando Garcia

It's winter in San Francisco again. It gets colder and wetter than usual. This is the time of year in which many more people grow very concerned about our unhoused neighbors being out in the weather.

I understand the concern. Pneumonia, trench foot or other illnesses caused by exposure to the weather are serious. The increased risk to health warrants a more serious policy response.

But on another level, I wonder about how arbitrary it can be for us to draw a line between suffering homelessness in temperate weather and suffering it in cold and wet weather — as if the crisis of having thousands of people living on the streets and sidewalks in a city seven miles-wide was not serious enough to merit all the response we can afford year-round. It isn't just the wet and cold weather that kills. People die year-round on the streets. These are preventable deaths. This is to say nothing of heat waves, which are increasingly common in this age of changing climate, and can rapidly become dangerous for people living on the streets.

The increased media attention and policy response to homelessness in cold and wet weather is appreciated, nonetheless. The weather complicates things for people on the street. In the summer, when Public Works employees soak unhoused neighbors belongings while "cleaning," a bag full of clothes might be wet for a day or two. When this happens just before a storm, as it did in early December to dozens of people living on Willow and other Tenderloin streets, belongings will be wet for days. Imagine not having any dry clothes for days while you have to sleep in a tent, under a tarp or simply in a blanket on the sidewalk.

The City of San Francisco makes additional shelter available in the winter to help with these conditions. This year, the Interfaith Winter Shelter Program has made up to 100 additional beds per month available for individual men experiencing homelessness. During certain cold and wet weather conditions, the city had recently added 75 additional mats in the year-round shelter system to move people indoors. These extra mats will be available whenever the weather gets bad enough. But when does "bad enough" happen, and how are people supposed to know about it?

This and other concerns on the city's cold and wet weather response were shared by homeless advocates, community organizations, and homeless people themselves, including the Coalition on Homelessness. Advocates have met in the last year with District 6

Supervisor Matt Haney and officials in the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH), aiming to improve San Francisco's response to wet and cold weather.

Advocates had asked HSH to change or improve several specific aspects of their policy. They were asked to simplify and broaden their criteria for triggering an inclement weather response; provide funding to keep all shelters open 24/7 during inclement weather; allow unhoused neighbors to go directly to shelters in order to secure a bed during inclement weather; expand the number of winter shelter mats; expand the number of indoor spaces available to shelter people; and improve the quality of their communications regarding inclement weather responses.

HSH officials responded to advocates' concerns by agreeing to consider changing the criteria to trigger an inclement weather response. They also agreed to provide more funding for emergency staff to keep shelters open 24 hours during bad weather. HSH officials hesitated to allow people direct access to shelters in inclement weather, citing their preference for a reservation system because they would like to avoid vulnerable individuals traveling in bad weather to get to shelters that may already be full. Advocates have pushed back on this, citing the feedback from unhoused neighbors and providers that the reservation system can confuse many people and discourages them from successfully seeking shelter. Advocates also point out that the additional shelter mats during a weather response don't get filled to capacity to begin with due to the baffling reservation process and inadequate communication about the expanded shelter.

Getting a shelter bed in general can be difficult and complicated. People in need are told to call 311 to get a shelter bed, but if they call before 8 p.m., 311 agents advise callers to try again after 8 p.m. This isn't something that helps people get out of the rain and into shelter when they need it. How do people access those additional shelter mats that become available in an inclement weather response? Before writing this article, I spent hours trying to learn about our weather response and what options are available to people. And even as this goes to press, I still can't say that I understand. What is clear that there is an abundance of need, but a lack of beds and a failure by the city to make the information about expanded services available to those who need them. ■

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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 agenda to us.

WORKGROUP MEETINGS

AT 280 TURK STREET

HOUSING JUSTICE WORK GROUP

Every Tuesday at 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!

HUMAN RIGHTS WORK GROUP

Every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m.
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!

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO OUR WORK GROUP MEETINGS. Our new office has an elevator for anyone who can not use the stairs. Simply call up and someone will come escort you to the elevator. We also have an all gender bathroom available.

To learn more about COH workgroup meetings, contact us at : 415-346-3740, or go at : www.cohsf.org

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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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SUBMIT YOUR POETRY

The deadline to submit
your poetry for the Street
Sheet's Annual Poetry
Edition is December 20th!
Drop off in person or email
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PRAISE AS PIT STOPS PROGRESS PAST PILOT PROGRAM

Olivia Glowacki

In the final weeks of November, nearing the end of a three-month pilot program for 24-hour public bathroom pit stops, District 6 Supervisor Matt Haney alongside dozens of city advocates and activists joined together on the corner of Jones and Eddy streets at Bodekker Park to show support for the continuation of the pit stop program.

One of Haney’s budget items this year included funding for more pit stops around the city, and for existing ones to have expanded hours, some 24 hours. In a city constantly ridiculed for feces and urine on the streets, 24-hour pit stops seem like an obvious solution to a preventable problem. However, Haney’s plan was met with ambivalence from some city officials like Muhammed Nuru, director of the Department of Public Works, who remarked, “At 10 o’clock, most people are already sleeping, and so we don’t think we will get that many flushes.”

Contrary to Nuru’s negative and nonsensical notion that pit stops won’t garner users after 10 p.m., data collected from the Mayor’s office shows the opposite: a quarter of all flushes were during nighttime hours, equal to 10,518 flushes. Additionally, steam cleaning requests from unhappy neighbors decreased in places where pit stops were located.

This year saw a 30% increase in homelessness, according to the 2019 Point-in-Time count for San Francisco with over 9,000 folks experiencing

homelessness on any given night. With the shelter shortage, one bed for every five folks on the street and the average wait time being two months to secure a 90-day bed, thousands of people are relegated to living outdoors, in the streets and in parks with scarce access to public restrooms. These pit stops offer people a safe and dignified space to perform necessary and basic bodily functions. And while these pit stops are exceptionally important for people experiencing homelessness, everyone benefits from free and public access to bathrooms. Haney, whose district includes the Tenderloin, put it simply, “children, seniors, tourists, taxi drivers, couriers, Uber drivers, people leaving bars, neighborhood residents, anyone and everyone because all people poop and pee.”

As mentioned, the three-month pilot program came to a celebratory close as Haney called upon Mayor London Breed to expand pit stops and keep the existing 24 hour pit stops open. Breed agreed to keep the three 24-hour pit stops open, but more are still needed if the success of the pit stops is to continue, and they should be placed where they are most needed.

“The City loves to use data — especially 311 calls — to target how and where to deploy it’s resources,” Brian Edwards, an advocate at the Coalition on Homelessness, said. “Encampment sweeps for instances are often driven by 311 complaints which the City responds to by deploying SFPD officers and DPW disposal crews.

But when it was time to choose the location for a Tenderloin pilot 24-hour pit stop, the Department of Public works came up with a location that could be intimidating and triggering for some folks — about 50 feet from the Tenderloin police station. This site wasn’t selected based on data analysis showing the location had the greatest need — on the contrary, it feels like it was chosen to fail. Nuru has called unhoused San Franciscians ‘street people’ on multiple occasions and overseeing a City department that regularly steals and destroys the property of our most vulnerable residents, he consistently demonstrates he has little interest in homeless folks except when sweeping.”

Cheryl Shanks, a formerly homeless woman and current activist with the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation who organized the rally to support the expansion of the 24-hour pit stops, said, “In San Francisco, the highest group of homeless people are contained in D6 Tenderloin. We have a right to have 24-hour pit stops. Two are good, but not enough. We will fight to have more. This is a human right. We will not be quiet, we will continue to fight!”

Even with the 24-hour pit stops, there are still massive unmet needs for those experiencing homelessness,



unhoused population among the seven county region. The Carr Fire of last year, which ravaged and burned nearly 1,079 homes, lead to displacement and homelessness for some individuals. This is reflected in the 19.5% increase in homelessness from 2018 to 2019.

Despite the fact homelessness has increased dramatically in Redding, the shelter system capacity has not. Within Shasta County, the largest shelter run by Good News Rescue Mission has the capacity to sleep 307 individuals with more beds for men available. The other shelter option, One SAFE Place, is specific to domestic violence survivors, and it can accommodate up to 50 people. The PIT data shows that over 50% of the population experiencing homelessnes, totaling 434 individuals, are unsheltered. While Mayor Winter’s is calling for the criminalization and incarceration of unhoused folks, Redding and the larger Shasta County needs to re-examine how the system in place is failing people.

especially for those who menstruate. The pit stops offer refuge and privacy but do not have free menstruation products like tampons or pads, which are costly necessities. One transitional-aged youth from the Homeless Youth Alliance recalls, “I was like 13 walking around downtown. My brother was like, ‘All right, we need feminines, we are going to Larkin!’ because I was the only girl. It was so bad, but (my brother) raised me really nice. That’s how I found out how to get what I need.” She added, with a laugh, “But it’s really important, and a lot of people don’t think about it. It’s like the best thing to give to a lady out on the street. Just saying. Feminine hygiene.”

To piggyback on her comment, not all those who identify as a “lady” menstruate, similarly people who identify as a man or non-binary menstuate too and face further stigma when trying to access menstruation products. Making menstruation products available in the pit stops would greatly help those otherwise unable to access these products. While there is still work to do to make pit stops more accessible, maintaining the pilot 24-hour pit stops is a step in the right direction.■

The trend of criminalization can be seen beaming from the federal government. Robert Marbut, newly appointed director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, who has pushed for banning free food for homeless people and doesn’t believe housing is the solution to homelessness. After a recent visit to California, Trump threatened he would announce a plan that could include a similar mass-camp for homeless people in L.A. or San Francisco. As seen throughout the nation, politicians across party lines have been pushing to lock homeless people up.

California must flip this narrative and push for solutions rooted in the ideals of housing as a human right. Our state has over 130,000 unhoused individuals, this is a state of emergency, but one that won’t be and can’t be addressed by criminalization. We MUST protect the dignity and human rights of our neighbors are forced to live on the streets. ■

REDDING MAYOR WANTS TO ROUND UP, LOCK UP HOMELESS NEIGHBORS

Redding, California — On November 19, 2019, Mayor Julie Winter of Redding, CA sent a letter to Governor Gavin Newsom asking him to sign a State of Emergency classification that would allow the city to create a megashelter for homeless people that would essentially operate as a concentration camp. In an interview with Jefferson Public Radio that same week, Winter said, “it’s not a facility you could just leave because you wanted to.” Although all other City Council members signed the letter, when further interviewed, they were unaware of the comments that Mayor Winter had made and distanced themselves from her comments.

The proposed “shelter” has been met with strong resistance from unhoused folks and advocates. In a 2019 report produced by The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, the idea proposed in Redding was listed as one of the most egregious in the country. Eric Tars, legal director of the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, questioned the legality of this “solution” put forward, noting it could violate the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Shasta County is home to the town of Redding. The NorCal Point in Time Count data shows Shasta County has 827 unhoused individuals as of 2019, the largest



MARCH FOR HOUSING

Alastair Boone

Originally published in the Street Spirit on December 1st issue

On a sunny Saturday in November, some 250 people gathered in Mosswood Park to demand an end to unjust housing practices and housing for their homeless neighbors. Under the clear blue skies, Stevie Wonder’s “Superstition” played from a loudspeaker. People filed into the park carrying hand-made signs that read “occupy homes” and

“evict the speculators!” The crowd was alive with conversation as they waited for the march to begin.

The November 23 event, called “March for Housing Now,” was just one of the events in the Bay Area’s Housing Week of Action—a week of marches, conversations, and direct action intended to push city officials to step up efforts to end the housing crisis.

As the music died down, and Carol Fiffe kicked off the event with a speech. “We need to make Oakland the model

for what can happen when people say enough is enough and are putting their feet down,” said Fiffe, the director of the Oakland/San Francisco chapter of the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE).

The march was hosted by eight local organizations who are fighting the housing crisis from different angles: ACCE Action, SIEU Local 1021, East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO), East Bay Democratic Socialists of America, Sunrise Movement Bay Area, Youth vs. Apocalypse, and Strike Debt Bay Area. In turn, the event was a gathering place for an array of other organizers who are working on different aspects of the housing crisis. Their collective presence represented the wide reach of the housing crisis, which not only bears upon unhoused people, but also the environment, the working poor, generations of young people, and many others.

“We’re not going to get any of the solutions we want if we don’t work collectively,” Fiffe said. “We have got to break down the silos that we organize in so that we can strike with one mighty blow,” she said. ■

OAKLAND ACTIVISTS JAILED PROTESTING ENCAMPMENT SWEEPS

Jazmine Davis

On November 24, I joined about 30 other people in occupying Frank Ogawa Plaza in downtown Oakland to demand adequate housing for homeless people and the end of encampment evictions. The occupation started out very successful; people were interested in what we were doing, wanted to learn how they could contribute, and were overall supportive of the action. We were out there with tents, food and literature for most of the day until the sun started to go down. People took the time to stay and discuss the city’s inhumane treatment of the encampments with us and some people wanted to get involved in the work we were doing. But once it got dark, the Oakland Police Department said that we would have to leave the plaza around 10 p.m., otherwise they would issue citations. Of course, we took this as an intimidation tactic and around 10 o’clock, we locked ourselves in the tents. The significance in locking the tents is that it is considered an illegal search and seizure for police to enter them while they are a “locked home.”

10 o’clock rolled around and the police had yet to do anything. At this time, we had a lot of community support and they were strategically waiting for the media, and people who had no intention of staying in a tent that night to leave. At one point, they all left and we assumed that they didn’t want to engage but it wasn’t until around midnight, that about 60 officers came in and started destroy-

ing our tents. As they were doing so, we started chanting and asserting our First Amendment right to public assembly and free speech.

Chants of “where’s your warrant” and “this is illegal” started to erupt while OPD shrugged and simply replied with arrogant dismissals. “You can just file a lawsuit later,” one officer said. “You’re just doing this for the photo op,” another said. They completely disregarded the law so they could break up our occupation. As the arrests started, people outside the tents started filming.

It is absolutely against the law for OPD to do anything but issue citations and release us, as they don’t know who or who is not houseless at the time of arrest, and because this was considered a protest. However, that is not what happened.

After destroying tents, the police gave us an option to leave willingly or to stay and get arrested. Most of us chose to stay and face arrest, but were unprepared for what the next 24 hours would entail. Some of us were forcibly removed and as a result, still have injuries; others complied but still face a resisting arrest charge. The police not only violated our rights, but also our bodies. They groped some of us as we were being patted down and female-assigned people were denied the request to be patted down by a female officer.

Some of us were thrown together into large vans while others, including myself, were in separate squad cars alone. I sat in the car while they were continuing to gather the rest of the arrestees for about an hour until an officer came into the car to write the report. At this point, it was clear that they were unprepared for this kind of mass arrest and it took him the entire ride to Santa Rita to write a report. He asked me invasive questions, of course, and it was clear that our arrests were a direct request from Mayor Libby Schaff.

Once at Santa Rita, we were in a holding cell for most of the time. It should come as no surprise that the conditions at Santa Rita are beyond inhumane, and I could never compare to the abuse our trans comrades faced while we were there.

We were psychologically tortured and harassed through means of solitary confinement and verbal abuse. Officers mocked and threatened to tase us; experiencing jail was traumatic, to say the least, but it doesn’t compare with what incarcerated folks constantly deal with while they’re there for years at a time. Though our arrest was unconstitutional, I’m thankful my time in jail was short.

As terrible as this experience was, we will continue to push the city to end unlawful evictions and provide sustainable housing for the unhoused community. ■

TINY MAS EXPLICATING

With homes scattered at over two-dozen congregations around the Bay, taking up a cumulative 1,040 square feet of prime Bay Area real estate, Youth Spirit Artworks’ affordable housing initiative has already yielded 16 tiny home units, with 10 more underway. YSA’s “100 homes for 100 homeless youth” community campaign, launched in 2017, is working towards getting a bed under, a roof over, and a community around the Bay Area’s youth homeless population.

Youth Spirit Artworks’ mission is simple: house, support and provide a community for the 1,700 homeless youth of Alameda County. YSA Youth Leader Mary Stackiewicz proclaims that we have to “break the chain where it starts,” and these three aspects are how to go about it. That mission emerged from an exercise between homeless youth, who resolved that this was the most viable and fast-acting means of breaking the cycle of homelessness. “The youth are the leaders in this project; they have been the ones that initiated it, and they have been to more than one hundred meetings this year,” says Sally Hindman, YSA’s Executive Director and close supervisor of the project.

Hindman has been working with the homeless community, especially homeless youth, for upwards of 30 years, and was the co-founder of the East Bay newspaper, Street Spirit. Although originally interested in troubleshooting the energy crisis of the late ‘70s, Sally came to realize that environmental awareness was a post-material luxury only available to a select few. “What became clear to me was that the whole idea of caring about the environment was something that was for the wealthy or privileged to care about, but people who were just trying to get by day-to-day couldn’t even think about something like that.” Although she was torn between her concern for the failing environment and her newfound solidarity with homeless people in the community, in the end, Sally came to prioritize the fundamental struggle of homelessness, “and that was survival.”

Youth Spirit Artworks was founded in 2007 in order to battle the financial hardships that youth and elderly homeless people were faced with. The project emerged as a response to the Telegraph Avenue

Didi Miller

Y HOME, SSIVE IMPACT

YOUTH SPIRIT ARTWORKS' TINY HOME INITIATIVE

Homeless Youth Drop-In Center's need for a "transition age youth for jobs training programs."

Right now, YSA's tiny homes are in the works. 16 "shells" (finished exteriors and insulation but not yet furnished) have been completed and are now "hibernating" for the winter at various congregations around the Bay Area. The homes were assembled at 211 Bush St. in Oakland, but YSA was paying rent and decided to hibernate their village-in-the-making to save money during the winter months.

Each tiny home is 8'x10', insulated, electrically wired, windowed and heated. They are built to house one homeless person between the ages of 15 and 25. The village will also include two yurts that will function as a community area and a kitchen, as well as communal restrooms and showers. The City of Oakland has agreed to allot space for the village when it is completed, but the location is yet to be determined.

Beyond the physical infrastructure of the project is the underlying religious motivations. During our meeting, Sally vehemently expressed her belief in Micah 6:8, which reads "What does the Lord require of us but to seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with the Lord." Sally explains the fundamentality of this verse in her spiritual journey, and notes, "how do you go to bed at night and be living with Micah 6:8 and not want to deeply respond to doing what we can to create justice?"

The Tiny Home Village has had 800 interfaith volunteers hailing from over 30 congregations in the summer of 2019 alone. These volunteers include Jews, Christians, Muslims and Hindus, among others. Hindman continues, "Our shared religious responsibility to be in solidarity and accompaniment with our neighbor is really what it's all about."

"The religious community has felt called to be in deep solidarity with [these] young people. The young people are leading; in a way they are like prophets, and we are following them," she says.

In addition to the Tiny Home Village project (launched in 2016), YSA also launched "100 Homes for 100 Homeless Youth" in 2017. This

campaign is a 10-year commitment to produce 100 homes, either using Tiny Homes or other affordable housing initiatives.

An important note about the village is that it is not intended to be an end solution. Residents will be permitted a maximum of three years within the village, or until they have permanent housing. The village is supposed to be a transitional space where youth can learn basic vocational skills with peers in a safe space. Members of The Village will be "fully integrated into Youth Spirit Artworks' existing job training program" with social services and community development opportunities. The hope is that over the three years of residency, the community will facilitate an evolution for these young people out of homelessness into fiscal responsibility and secure housing.

In addition to the \$210,000 raised by independent donors, the City of Oakland and Berkeley have also subsidized \$360,000 towards the project. With each of the proposed 26 homes coming in at \$12,500 a piece, the cost of the houses alone is \$337,000. Between the cities' contributions and private donations, the project has raised \$570,000, but YSA is still looking to raise an additional \$100,000 to cover the costs of the yurts and bathroom facilities.

Although the village still has to furnish 16 homes and build 10 more from scratch, they are on track for residents to move in as soon as July 2020. There will be 22 soon-to-be-housed youth and four supervisors,

and there has been a decision by the youth to construct a guest house, raising the total to 27 houses.

In addition to housing youth, YSA is also working towards making an impact on youth who are in need of employment or community.

On a phone call last week, Reginald "Reggie" Gentry — a current board member and the Assistant Project Manager for YSA — broke down exactly how YSA productively supports underprivileged youth in finding employment: "The higher you get on the progression ladder of the youth program, the more money you make. Aspiring artists get \$150 a month [which entails art projects, meeting attendance, and other things that 'pop up on the fly']. The next title is apprentice, and they also get paid around \$150, but the apprentice leader gets two-hundred-something dollars."

The highest ranked position you can achieve within the youth program is a "leader." There are five to seven leaders, and YSA delegates certain tasks to them. Reggie was the Social Media Leader and was responsible for YSA's social networking. There are also peer support leaders, street spirit leader and a gallery leader.

Reggie continues, "After leader, the final [tier] on the ladder is job placement. That's the goal of these programs. YSA is pretty much an interfaith, non-profit organization that has a transformative youth program which places unemployed youth [into employment]. And in the process of progressing us through the

ladder, they're giving us job, art, and leadership training."

When Reggie first started working with YSA in 2016, he was an aspiring artist making \$150. He climbed the ladder and graduated from the youth program and is now employed part time by YSA itself as the Assistant Project Manager.

The only problem Reggie expressed with where he is now employment-wise is that his hours with YSA are so limited; "There's no set schedule for me besides our tiny house village committee meeting which is every Friday morning." Even though he makes \$18 an hour (a high salary for a non-profit), he is only working for a few hours a week, attending meetings and giving presentations at schools about YSA and their mission.

Despite the slim hours, Reggie is optimistic. "I want to stay at YSA; it's just so perfect for me for so many reasons. It's close, I love the mission, I love the people who work there." Reggie hopes to continue studying at Berkeley Community College and working at YSA full time, and he dreams of one day becoming a professional Twitch gaming streamer.

The community of like-minded, good-hearted people have had a profound impact on Reggie: "Seeing the good Samaritanism and unselfishness of YSA members shown at events and meetings has shown me that it's not all about you, that you can be just as happy helping someone else be happy than just experiencing yourself be happy." ■



GUNS AND GARBAGE TRUCKS LEAD WILLOW STREET SWEEP

Brian Edwards

On December 4, at about 6:30 a.m., homeless advocates and allies from the Coalition on Homelessness, Faithful Fools, Tenderloin People's Congress, the First Unitarian-Universalist Church and other community groups and service providers convened at the corner of Willow and Polk streets. They were there to witness and document the City's planned encampment sweep of Willow Street between Franklin and Larkin streets, and they invited two attorneys and some reporters from the Chronicle and Examiner to join them. Folks from the Harm Reduction Therapy Center, who facilitate a weekly pop-up community event on Willow, joined at 7 a.m., bringing breakfast sandwiches and juice to unhoused Willow residents.

The City arrived a few minutes before 8 a.m. with garbage trucks and disposal crews from the Department of Public Works, followed by San Francisco Police Department officers from the Healthy Streets Operations Center (HSOC), and finally a few members of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing's Homeless Outreach Team. HOT only had one Navigation Center placement and a handful of seven-day shelter beds to offer the nearly 50 folks calling Willow Street their home that morning, and by 11 a.m., HOT had left after placing someone in the available Navigation Center bed. By noon, the two blocks of Willow Street between Franklin and Polk had been cleared by police and Public Works of about 10 tents and 20 unhoused residents. Barricades were brought in and placed on the sidewalks by Public Works to prevent re-encampment.

Advocates and journalists remained with about 35 unhoused folks who were living on Willow between Larkin and Polk, and engaged in an almost comical standoff with Public Works and police, who were clearly waiting for the observers to leave before continuing to displace homeless residents. The trucks finally left Willow around 6 p.m. without clearing the last remaining block, and the advocates went home about an hour later. Police and Public Works returned early the next morning to clear the remaining block of tents and residents and erect more barricades.

San Francisco likes to say it leads with services when responding to homelessness, but in reality, available services are scarce, and often, as in the case of seven-day shelter beds, the services offered unhoused San Franciscans aren't very helpful. In order to accept such a placement, one would have to give up most of their possessions,

including tents and survival gear, and be churned back to the streets after seven days. In the six weeks of engagement leading up to the December resolution date, the Homelessness Department managed to place two people in a Navigation Center and four people in seven-day traditional shelter beds. The City calls these planned sweeps "resolutions," but with no housing solutions and almost no adequate shelter to offer affected residents, it's unclear what exactly is being resolved. Dozens of people were displaced from Willow Street, and a tight-knit community was destroyed.

On Saturday, December 7, mere minutes before a rainstorm that caused major flooding in downtown San Francisco, police officers from the Northern Station led Public Works trucks and a disposal crew on a 9 a.m. sweep to remove homeless residents from Olive Street. No outreach from HOT, no services or offers of adequate alternative shelter — just an arbitrary sweep on one of the wettest days of the year. One woman, who refused to move, had her tent confiscated by police, and was threatened with arrest.

Under Mayor London Breed, the City's response to homelessness has often been led by police and Public Works — guns and garbage trucks. There are currently over 70 police officers tasked with responding to homelessness, usually by enforcing laws that criminalize living and existing in public space, and only 40 members of the Homeless Outreach Team. That's bonkers. What's even more bonkers is that all three sweep operations I witnessed in November and December occurred in the rain. San Francisco is in the middle of a housing and public health crisis, with a shelter waitlist of around 1,000 people on any given night, and yet its response to homelessness — rain or shine — has been overwhelmingly led by law enforcement, with focuses on displacement and criminalization.

Police also claim to "lead with services," but police officers aren't social workers, and enforcement of sit/lie and illegal lodging laws isn't social work. According to police HSOC Commander Daryl Fong, all police officers have had access to 30-day Navigation Center beds since November 12, to replace the frankly useless seven-day beds officers had been offering unhoused folks

before that date. But HSOC officers I spoke to who were accompanying Public Works sweep crews on Willow Street on the night of November 25 and the morning of December 4 all claimed to be unaware of those beds, and said they were no longer able to offer Navigation placements to anyone. According to police HSOC Captain Steven Mannina, HSOC officers were informed of the 30-day beds at a December 4 HSOC meeting, three weeks after Fong told the Local Homeless Coordinating Board that his officers had begun to offer them. The homeless outreach officer from Northern Station who was leading the December 7 sweep on Olive also claimed to be unaware of the new 30-day beds, which Fong claimed all police can access through HSOC.

Sweeps aren't services, and resolutions aren't solutions. They're a cruel, dumb, expensive and harmful game of Whac-A-Mole, shuffling people around and making it harder for people like HOT, Department of Public Health, and health care and harm reduction workers to find them and have the kind of productive engagements that can save lives and ease suffering. Sweeps destroy community, and the resulting scattering and isolation can increase the risk of overdose or sexual assault for many of those who have been displaced. Sweeps often result in property loss, including life-saving medication and Narcan. Thanks to articles in both the Chronicle and the Examiner documenting the sweep of Willow, many folks now know that Mayor Breed's oft-repeated claim of "leading with services" is a lie, and that "resolutions" are a farce. Now is the time to go to our elected officials and decision-makers and demand an immediate end to the cruel and inhumane practice of encampment sweeps, and demand housing and adequate alternative shelter solutions instead. ■

#SolutionsNotSweeps



NEW TRUMP RULE COULD ELIMINATE FOOD STAMPS FOR ALMOST 200,000 CALIFORNIANS

Manuela Tobias, The Fresno Bee

The Trump administration finalized a rule Wednesday that will cut off food stamps to roughly 688,000 American adults by requiring states to enforce work requirements.

The U.S. Agriculture Department said the move will save about \$5.5 billion over five years. The rule takes effect in April 2020.

"This is about restoring the original intent of food stamps," said Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue on a call to reporters. "Moving more able-bodied Americans to self-sufficiency."

About 198,000 Californians stand to lose their assistance in buying food, according to a 2018 estimates by the Urban Institute. Under current law, able-bodied adults without dependents working fewer than 80 hours a month or in certain training or volunteering activities qualify for three months of food stamps every three years. States and counties can waive those three-month limits if, for example, unemployment rates are high.

Currently, all but six California counties — Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, Santa Clara and San Mateo — have received waivers through August 31, 2020. Fresno has waived the limits for the past two decades. The new rule will make it significantly harder for counties to drop the requirement. A city or county will need an unemployment rate of 6% or more, as well as approval from the governor, to qualify for a year-long exemption. Fresno had an unemployment rate of 5.8% in October.

"It will require almost every county to enforce the harsh time limit on providing nutrition assistance for adults who are working less than 20 hours each week, no matter how hard they are looking for a job, have irregular schedules, or are employed but unable to document their hours," said Jessica Bartholow, policy advocate at the Western Center on Law and Poverty.

Fresno Department of Social Services Deputy Director Linda Du'Chene said the rule will harm the Central Valley's farmworkers.

"We are a rural agricultural county, and we are very concerned
continued on page 7...

SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

DECEMBER
17

MOMS 4 HOUSING
EVICTION DEFENSE

WHERE: 2928 MAGNOLIA STREET, OAKLAND CA 94607 @6AM

On November 18th, a group of mothers without shelter reclaimed possession of a vacant investor-owned property in West Oakland. On December 3rd they received an eviction notice from Wedgewood Inc., one of the country’s biggest “fix & flip” companies that has profited significantly from the housing crisis.

Moms 4 Housing is calling on all community supporters and members of the media to come to 2928 Magnolia St. on the 17th to defend #MomsHouse. The Alameda County Sheriff’s office has confirmed that they will be enforcing the eviction order on December 17th beginning as early as 6 a.m.

DECEMBER
17

SFPD COMMUNITY MEETING FOR POLICE SHOOTING OF JAMAICA HAMPTON

WHERE: CHAVEZ (CESAR) ELEMENTARY 825 SHOTWELL ST @6-8PM

The SFPD is required to host a community meeting after any and all officer involved shootings. The SFPD just announced that the meeting for the shooting of Jamaica Hampton early Saturday morning will be held at Cesar Chavez Elementary Tuesday December 17th, at 6pm.

DECEMBER
19

THE VIGIL: ANNUAL HOMELESS PERSONS MEMORIAL

WHERE: 50 UNITED NATIONS PLZ @6-7:30PM

Join people of all faiths, or no faith, to remember those who have died this year while living on San Francisco streets. In silence, in prayer, in song we'll remember them, honor them, mourn our loss, reach out to each other for comfort and hope, and show our solidarity in working for change.

ACCESS: This is an outdoor event.

DECEMBER
28

X-MAS / NEW YEARS HARMONIC HUMANITY OUTREACH WALK

WHERE: BILL GRAHAM CIVIC AUDITORIUM 99 GROVE ST @11AM-12:30PM

HH leads volunteer walks to engage those in need where they need it most: On the streets. Greeting them, asking how we can help, and connecting them to resources.

If you’re a Counselors, Psychotherapist, Psychologist, Car giver, Life Coach, Therapist or a Heart-based-listening human, we’d love to have you join us on our walk.

Our event centers on outreach and making a difference for those on the streets of San Francisco. We host outreach walks the last Saturday of each month. Our goal is to supply supplies to those in need. Please visit: Harmonichumanity.org and make a Donation. This help us get supplies needed to make a difference.

JANUARY
1

11TH ANNUAL OSCAR GRANT VIGIL

WHERE: FRUITVALE STATION 3401 E 12TH ST OAKLAND @12PM-4PM

We want to remember the life of Oscar and as we remember his life there are others who lost their life by community violence. We want to remember them as well. This year we will have a family who lost their son on the same day as Oscar . Help us remember him as well.

THE LAST BLACK MAN IN SAN FRANCISCO: A MOTION PICTURE BREAK SILENCE

Ms. Demetria Gigante

Did you know that less than 3% of the city of San Francisco is Black? As part of that 3% that fills out the census, when I see the double decker buses in the Tenderloin (red light district), I wonder what the riders are thinking, “Is this where the Last Black Man in San Francisco Lives?”

What went wrong? Why are half the homeless population African Americans who were born in San Francisco? Did our public education system fail us? Did our public housing system fail us? I believe that San Francisco residents who were born here deserve preference on ALL San Francisco housing.

And that 3% population may fall even more. Fentanyl (a highly-addictive illegal drug) is killing more African Americans - San Francisco General Hospital has



reported that the majority of deaths from this kind of overdose are Black.

Don’t forget about the often witnessed black-on-black murders that are rarely solved because we allow our youth to use the community for target practice. Do you think that may have something to do with it? And we wonder why the smart ones move away. If we continue, there will be less than 3%

We must BREAK SILENCE on the disproportionate impacts of housing costs, drug addiction, and violence felt by the Black community. We must understand what gentrification and redevelopment have done to our Black community. And what can we do about it? Let’s take accountability to make sure that our Black Lives Matter as native San Franciscans.

December
23

LAST BLACK MAN IN SAN FRANCISCO BENEFIT SCREENING

BALBOA THEATER @7:30PM

Screening of “The Last Black Man in San Francisco” followed by a panel discussion.

ACCESS: The space is wheelchair accessible, has gender neutral restrooms, and there is no scent policy.

TRUMP CUTS TO FOOD STAMPS THREATEN THOUSANDS OF POOR CALIFORNIANS

...continued from page 6

about our clients who are working seasonal jobs. For example, it’s raining (Wednesday), so our farmworkers who may need those hours to qualify are not working,” Du’Chene said.

The county’s workload also will increase. Fresno will have to check monthly whether CalFresh recipients are meeting their eligibility requirements.

According to Bartholow, this will affect all able-bodied adults without dependents. The California Association of Food Banks estimates that could be as many as 700,000 Californians.

“Just because you don’t lose benefits doesn’t mean you’re not impacted. It means you now have to tell your boss you need a pay (stub) because you’re on food stamps. You have to spend the extra time and work to get your pay stub and send it in to the county,” Bartholow said.

The rule is the first of three Trump-era food stamp cuts to be finalized. Under all three rules, the Urban Institute estimates that roughly 3.7 million Americans would lose food stamps, including 625,700

Californians.

Congressman Jim Costa, a Democrat from Fresno, said the decision would harm thousands of residents in the San Joaquin Valley.

“I fought to maintain SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) eligibility for those who need it most in negotiations for the 2018 Farm Bill, which the president agreed to and signed into law. Now the president is going back on his word,” he wrote in a press release.

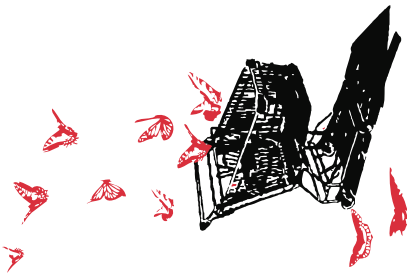
State Senate President Pro Tempore Toni G. Atkins said in a news release the decision would “make it harder for adults on the brink of homelessness to get the food they need.” ■

Manuela Tobias is a journalist at The Fresno Bee. This article is part of The California Divide, a collaboration among newsrooms examining income inequity and economic survival in California.

CalMatters reporter Jackie Botts contributed to this story.

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Home



Pamela: I'm (we are) living in a dorm situation a shelter. I started out sleeping on the floor (of an emergency shelter) when I became homeless so it's not the best situation, but it's a step up from where I started. I just have a 60-day bed so I'm hoping and praying that before then that they can move us because there are a lot of things going on there. But it's better than sleeping on the street. (Sleeping on the streets) It felt like I had been pushed aside.

Maurice: My whole life I'd been in a house so (being on the isstreet) different, scary like my mom said. I didn't like it at all. Reality hit me, we had to sleep in the streets. I miss the comfort, the warmth, having a blanket. We couldn't bring the blankets with us that night. Knowing you can lock the doors.

Pamela: Home (is) having a key to where I can open my own door. Being able to go in and being in the privacy of my own home without having to worry about my possessions, putting my safety at risk. You know sometimes it's hard for me to sleep knowing that there's other people next to me that I have no clue to who they are. (My strongest are) paying my rent and knowing that when I leave out I can go back in, you know, with the key and have the security of having a roof over my head.

Pamela: I'm a grandmother and I have three children. This is the first time that I have become homeless and I became homeless after living in a place 24 years and not paying rent for 2 months – it wasn't like a cycle of not paying rent.

Maurice: I know there are better things so I'm just staying positive and pushing forward.

Name: Pamela Driver, 51 and son Maurice Jones, 17
Date: 29 May 2019
Place: Compass
Without a home: 3 months

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INTRODUCING... STREET SPEAK

a brand new podcast produced
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answers your questions about
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first episode talks about the 30
year history of the Street Sheet
newspaper, what our mission
is, and what exciting changes
have taken place this year. PLUS
hear the headlines impacting
homeless people as well as a
featured song from Tay and the
Janglahdahs!

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