

INDEPENDENTLY PUBLISHED BY THE COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS SINCE 1989



MINIMUM SUGGESTED DONATION TWO DOLLARS.  
STREET SHEET IS SOLD BY HOMELESS AND LOW-IN-COME VENDORS WHO KEEP 100% OF THE PROCEEDS.  
VENDORS RECEIVE UP TO 75 PAPERS PER DAY FOR FREE.  
STREET SHEET IS READER SUPPORTED, ADVERTISING FREE, AND AIMS TO LIFT UP THE VOICES OF THOSE LIVING IN POVERTY IN SAN FRANCISCO.

# STREET Sheet

REFLECTIONS

2

DYING ON THE STREETS  
OF AMERICA

3

DISABILITY APARTHEID

4

ESSENTIAL FAMILY  
SUPPORTS CAMP

6

THE SWEEPY TOWN  
CHRONICLES CONTINUE

7



ART BY BARL



# REFLECTIONS FROM A 40-YEAR-OLD

Rupal R Shah

## PLAY UNO

It is an easy game to learn if you can follow numbers and colors, and a great way to bring people together.

## DRINK WARM CHAI

Nothing soothes the heart like homemade chai on a cold or hot day. Even better, try that cup of chai with cardamom, ginger, or saffron!

## GIVE FIRM HANDSHAKES

Handshakes convey both confidence and collegiality. Do it firmly and with conviction.

## ENJOY THE SUN

Other than obvious health benefits like Vitamin D, sunny weather exudes warmth and happiness in people.

## DANCE A LOT

If physically able, this is something that can be done anywhere, in your privacy, on the street, with a partner, with a child, or in a group.

## GIVE COMPLIMENTS

Compliments are free, yet priceless! Give them, often.

## HUG PEOPLE

Nothing can replace physical contact. Hug properly, openly, and without hesitation.

## ALWAYS CARRY A PEN AND PAPER WITH YOU

You never know when you or someone else will need it. It is the only survival tool you will have if your phone, wallet, or car is gone.

## HAVE A MORNING ROUTINE, WHICH INCLUDES MORE THAN JUST BRUSHING TEETH

Run, play music, or meditate. Do something that signifies the beginning of a new day and a new start.

## SMILE AT EVERYONE

It is easy to fall in love with smiling people and you never know who is looking for love out there!

## TAKE ON ADVENTUROUS CHALLENGES, AT WORK, IN PERSONAL LIFE, AND WITH FAMILY

Comfort is for the later years.

## TRAVEL ON A BUDGET

See the raw parts of a country that are not designated for tourists. Take public transportation. It is the best way to meet and actually meet local people.

## EAT STREET FOOD

Food cooked on the street brings out flavors that one will never taste at home or at a restaurant.

## WRITE

Send cards or letters, for special occasions if not often. Words stay forever and have ways of touching and inspiring people.

## TELL PEOPLE YOU LOVE THEM

Share your feelings and express yourself with honesty. Relationships need appreciation.

DONATE TO  
KEEP STREET  
SHEET GOING  
STRONG!



SCAN ME

coalition.networkforgood.com

## VOLUNTEER WITH US!

PHOTOGRAPHERS  
VIDEOGRAPHERS  
TRANSLATORS  
COMIC ARTISTS  
NEWSPAPER LAYOUT  
WEBSITE  
MAINTENANCE  
GRAPHIC  
DESIGNERS  
INTERNS  
WRITERS  
COPYEDITORS

## DONATE EQUIPMENT!

LAPTOPS  
DIGITAL CAMERAS  
AUDIO RECORDERS  
SOUND EQUIPMENT

## CONTACT:

QWATTS@COHSF.ORG

## 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.

Editor: Quiver Watts  
Assistant Editor: TJ Johnston  
Vendor Coordinator: Emmett House

Coalition on Homelessness staff also includes Jennifer Friedenbach, Ruth Kidane, Carlos Wadkins, Miguel Carrera, Tracey Mixon, Laketha Pierce, Ian James, Yessica Hernandez, Solange Cuba, Javier Bremond, Julian Highsmith

Our contributors in this issue include:  
Otis Delerer, Bree Baccaglini, Revolt,  
Rupal Ramesh Shah, Israel Bayer, INSP,  
Areli Hernandez, Novalie Young, Andy  
Howard

## 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!

# DEATH ON THE STREETS:

## AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

Israel Bayer

*Thousands of people die homeless every year in the USA. Israel Bayer, who leads the International Network of Street Papers' (INSP) North American project, and has worked with street papers and people experiencing homelessness for more than two decades, recounts times in his work that have intersected with the tragic stories of some of the victims of continually frightening trend.*

The winter of 2017 Portland, Oregon was hit with an unusually long ice storm. It would be deadly for people experiencing homelessness. Four people would tragically die of exposure. An older woman would walk into a downtown parking garage and die an agonizing death alone in the unforgiving storm. Another victim froze to death at a bus stop, only blocks away from a family member's home. The third and fourth victims died alone in the doorway of a local business and in a densely wooded area of the city.

If that wasn't enough, another homeless woman gave birth to a stillborn child in the freezing rain that dreadful week. After giving birth, presumably alone, the woman was found by police completely distraught and cradling her deceased child. She was homeless and experiencing a mental health collapse. It was more than devastating.

A local reporter was interviewing me about the deaths.

Did I know any of the victims that died? Has Portland ever seen anything like this? What was it really going to take to prevent these kinds of deaths on the streets in our community? Did I have thoughts...?

My mind went blank. I didn't have any answers.

"Israel, are you there," the reporter asked.

"Yes, I'm here."

"Are you OK?"

"Can I call you back?"

"Absolutely, but I'm on deadline."

It's hard to describe what homelessness does to the people experiencing it, their family, their friends and the people working on the front lines of poverty.

The trauma of homelessness is more than overwhelming. Reality is distorted. Logic is rare. Life is primal. There is nothing remotely rational about the circumstances of homelessness in, the USA, one of the richest countries in the world.

Every time I wrote a story about someone who passed away on the streets, I would tell myself that the more stories like these are read, the more the public and/or government might want to take action to support housing justice in our community. Most days though, I wasn't so sure.

I had spent the better part of that week working on a story, including doing interviews with the family of one of the victims who had frozen to death on the streets. I was hoping to provide a snapshot of the harsh reality the families of people experiencing homelessness face when a loved one on the streets passes away and why we should be prioritizing more affordable housing in our community. Unfortunately, it was a story I had written before.

At the last minute, the family decided they didn't want the story of their father and husband to be told through the lens of a human being freezing to death homeless on the streets. While I was disappointed with the family's decision to not talk to me on the record, I certainly couldn't blame them.

If I was honest with myself, I'm not sure I would have wanted a reporter presenting the legacy of my father or son through this lens either, regardless of how thoughtful the writer might have been. What a painful experience.

Having worked on the streets for the previous two decades, the amount of trauma and death I had witnessed and reported on over the years had shaken me to the core. I had spent many sleepless nights at the bedsides of people on the streets that found themselves on the edge of death.

Pneumonia. Heart attacks. Drug overdoses. Burn victims. Attempted deaths by suicide. Sometimes people pulled through; sometimes they didn't. The experiences almost always left me completely wrecked and lacking any kind of normalcy. My world felt upside down.

I thought about the first person I had ever written about who died on the streets: about a young woman who had taken her own life, and her mother, who had visited me afterwards. I kept a worn out copy of a poem I wrote about her tucked away in my desk drawer. Sometimes after talking to a family member who had died on the streets, or writing a story about homeless deaths, I would read it to myself and think about that girl and all the people who had died during my tenure of working on the front lines.

For years my executive editor, Joanne Zuhl, and I had been writing about the stories of people that had died on the streets. Our collective work contributed to efforts by local governments in the region to create a methodology and system to track and report the number and causes of homeless deaths in the region. Their stories were almost always heartbreaking.

Holding back tears, Krista Campbell, a mother whose son had passed away on the streets talked to me about her son's experience. At 42 years old, James Michael

Bostick had lived a hard life. Her son had been battling addiction and homelessness for more than 13 years.

"Some people might see him as just another homeless junkie that died, but he was an incredible man," said Krista. "He had an incredible heart. He was my precious baby. I suppose in the back of my mind I had been expecting the call for years. I prayed for him every single day. When the call came, nothing I've been through in my life prepared me for what had happened. We've both lived a hard life. Still, I've lost my son. My dear son."

James left behind a mother, a brother and three daughters.

There's nothing that can prepare someone for that kind of conversation. All you can do is listen and provide support. As I held back tears of my own, not having any real answers, we talked for nearly an hour. I listened to Krista laugh and cry, telling me countless stories about James, sometimes pausing to tell me she couldn't believe he was gone. She told me about his bright blue eyes and beautiful smile. She told me that he was a kind and comforting man that loved Jesus.

Like many people, Krista said she didn't understand the mental health issues her son faced. "Demons grabbed hold of my son years ago, continues on page 5...



*Depicts a homeless person who passed away on the streets of Multnomah County*



# DISABILITY APARTHEID

## Revolt

Few people believe disability rights is a racial justice issue. On face value, it isn't. But did you know, although less than 3% of the total population, Black San Franciscans are twice as likely to be disabled than white San Franciscans?

How is this possible? How can somebody's race make them more likely to be disabled or not?

While I don't have all the answers to that question, I can make some educated guesses. I can guess that it has something to do with food deserts in Black communities, where nutrition options are usually limited to liquor and junk food. This is likely a contributor to the increased rates of diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease than other ethnic groups in the U.S. I can guess that it has to do with rising inequality from the billionaire class. I can guess it has something to do with more than 60% of tech jobs going to white people and less than 8% to Black people, which accounts for more than 25% of our local economy. I can guess that of non-tech jobs that are available, many more are manual labor and dangerous, such as working as a security guard, night shift construction or jobs where physical safety of workers is not made a priority. I can guess it has something to do with the disgustingly racist medical triage system where, according to Harvard University, black children have a 500% higher death rate from asthma compared to white children.

## WHO'S LEFT OUT OF THE PICTURE?

One thing that startles me about disability justice activism, is how overwhelmingly white it all is. Few groups for social justice are more homogenized and racially segregated than disabled folks, and it's something that pops out and screams to be acknowledged. If you've ever been to any disabled event hosted by a nonprofit—which is almost all of them, since we are constantly obstructed from building relationships with each other—you know what I mean.

Most all nonprofit CEOs (\*ahem\* I mean "Executive Directors") that "serve" disabled people are either led by non-disabled people and/or white people. And while identity leadership isn't everything, it sure can be a barometer to start with when investigating who's actually

making a difference and who is (or isn't) being seen.

Outside of the boardroom, the glossy NGO lobby or below the picturesque billboards of our "do-gooderism," you don't have to look far to see who the majority of disabled homeless neighbors are. They are Black Americans, and other people of color (POC) being brutalized by a system that doubly hates them for simply existing.

As someone who faces daily cruelty and obstacles as a wheelchair user, it's hard to fathom what those compounding extra layers of discrimination must do to one's psyche, self-esteem and overall access to the basics like housing, food, and relationships. In the dozens, if not hundreds of meetings I've attended at City Hall, including SF access committees, Mayor's Office on Disability, In Home Support Services and others, race is barely even a whisper in the room. It's the elephant the pencil pushers and PR heads do their best to avoid at all costs. Unless there's a massive uprising like in 2020, then sometimes they might make a passing meaningless statement about it.

Silence is complacency, as the saying goes, and these pretend diplomats of disabled inclusion add insult to injury when they refuse to acknowledge the horrible pain and suffering that is unleashed through routine, systemic, racial profiling and discrimination in housing, jobs and everywhere else that bigotry can nestle its filthy snout.

## WHERE'S THE WATCHDOG?

For racial discrimination of this sort, San Francisco has an underfunded and largely ineffective Human Rights Commission you can go to to air grievances. If they do bother to reply to your emails—an "if" in my experience—you can expect to wait four to five *years* for a housing discrimination investigation to be completed, usually in the landlord's favor. Not that it matters, by that point you've probably been gentrified already. I fought it out for those years, but I'm white, and the societal advantages that I was born into are the *only* reason I am able to continue living in housing as a severely disabled San Franciscan.

Our ruthless politicians and even a newly "forward-thinking Democrat" appointed supervisor have rushed to the fore with a

solution: "Conservatorship!" they say. "Let's expand conservatorship!" In other words, if they can't eradicate homeless people through encampment destruction, racial profiling, defunding social programs, stealing their belongings, or police brutality, they propose to convince us to give police the power to literally enslave homeless people to the State, under the cause of "mental incapacity."

These gargoyles of fascistic intent intend to strip grown adults of their democratic freedom to handle their own money and personal decisions. That sure did wonders for Britney Spears (sarcasm), who suffered incredible anguish and mental and emotional damage from abuse. As an international celebrity with millions of fans around the world, it took her many years to finally be able to have control of her own life. How long do you think it would take a Black disabled San Franciscan with none of those things, similarly manipulated or wrongfully accused?

No, conservatorship is not the solution to homelessness, racial profiling or disableism. And while nihilism, apathy, gaslighting or disinformation might trick us into believing otherwise, there are some very good solutions to the very real issues. Here are some steps (or rolls) in the right direction, I believe we can take today to begin solving this crisis:

1. **Talk about it.** Stop pretending that racial profiling doesn't exist in the disabled community, and it isn't a rampant problem. You can't fix anything without addressing its existence first. There should not be a single meeting on disabled issues that doesn't prioritize racist exclusion in the community.

2. **Acknowledge that disability rights are a racial justice issue.** When we protest for BLM, disability services and similar causes of justice, let's also demand inclusion of Black and indigenous POC who are disabled and their needs. Is your protest accessible to disabled people? Don't assume it is or isn't, invite your disabled friends and ask. Is your disabled event hosted by majority white people? Ask for feedback or put text on the flier asking for thoughts on access and inclusion. Don't say "we are inclusive" - say that you strive for inclusion. You won't get it perfect, but asking and being humble is a great way to begin the conversation.

3. **Demand better funding and leadership at the Human Rights Commission.** This is a local body whose sole purpose is to supposedly protect groups from discrimination. However, they have almost no power; they cannot levy fines or fees of any kind on bad actors. They also drag their feet and do not have enough investigators, or ones that are incentivized to do good. Speak up one of their meetings or at a Tuesday meeting at City Hall, and organize within your community for better accountability from this department.

4. **Re-elect or reinstate Chesa Boudin** or a similar district attorney who actively combats and litigates against racial discrimination, both within and outside government and NGOs.

5. **Defund the police.** Every year Black Americans are made disabled from acts of police violence and brutality. 2022 marked more police killings of black people in a decade, and yet, our Mayor continues to increase the police budget with a "no strings attached" mentality. However, it's only the deaths that make the news. What about the people who were shot and choked for several minutes, but survived with disabling conditions? Or disabled people of color who are profiled by police so much that they made an album about it? Support them and support the cause of removing funds from our always-increasing police budget to re-invest in community programs and harm reduction services.

6. **Get to know your disabled neighbors of color.** Ask them what kind of community improvements they'd like. Support BiPOC communities with healthier food alternatives through gardening initiatives. Offer to pick up or deliver food or medication, and get to know your disabled neighbors of color. You might be surprised at how kind and generous they are!

7. **Divest from apps or gig economy startups**, which only further racist disenfranchisement, and the digital divide and hurt workers through anti-union practices, minimum wage/fair compensation loopholes and other unsavory tactics that harm workers or color. Support brick-and-mortar stores that are Black-owned, like Marcus Books.

8. Renting a room? Take the extra



effort to include in your ad that you welcome prospective tenants with disabilities and tenants of any race or national background. Sure, this kind of discrimination is illegal (though often practiced), but there's a big difference between avoiding the wrong thing and encouraging the right thing! Adding this language can help people feel seen and know where to prioritize their limited energy to respond.

**9. Look at the policies and actions, not the figure.** It's no secret that our city plays heavily on politics of identity, often putting token puppets into positions of power over others. Don't let a single person in a position of authority speak for an entire population of that shared identity. Alex Wagner, the only Asian American prime time cable news host put it most eloquently, "It's absolutely humbling to represent a huge diaspora that is definitely not all within me."

**9. Listen and look to communities for what they want, not politicians or "stakeholders"** - get your news and info directly from the source by reading this newspaper, or ones like it!

What are your ideas for improvement? We'd love to hear from you, write us at [streetsheet@cohsf.org](mailto:streetsheet@cohsf.org) ■

See the online version of this article for relevant links!

# NO ONE SHOULD DIE ON THE STREETS

Israel Bayer

continued from page 3...

and I felt helpless," Krista would say. "I didn't know anything about depression. I didn't know he was bipolar, then eventually paranoid schizophrenic. I found out about other mental disorders James was facing after I Googled all the medication found in his backpack after his death. There were voices in his head that wouldn't leave him alone. Mental health and addiction took hold of his life and held him until his very last breath. Then, it was God that took him home."

"The average person doesn't always know how to deal with addiction and mental disorders," said Krista. "We feel stricken with fear for our suffering family members. We feel disgust in ourselves for not doing something more to help him."

It's something I would hear over and over from the families of people who have passed away on the streets. Not only are people dealing with the trauma of losing a child, individuals or families are often grieving alone. The loss of a child or a death in the family is never easy. It can be even harder when the family member is homeless. The feeling of judgment from peers and the stigmas attached to having a family member die on the streets can be isolating and torturous.

The average age of homeless deaths in many communities across the country hovers between 40 and 50-years old. One would have to go back decades, possibly centuries, to find another demographic of people that were dying that young in America. The leading causes of death for people on the streets are accidental drug overdoses, natural causes and death by suicide.

"People experiencing homelessness die young, and from often preventable causes," said Paul Lewis, a former health officer for Multnomah County. "You can't help but conclude that the lack of housing has contributed to these realities."

Research has long shown living on the streets exacerbates existing health problems and causes new ones. Chronic diseases are difficult to manage under stressful circumstances. Acute problems such as infections, injuries, and pneumonia are difficult to heal when there is no place to call home.

It's not uncommon in America for many people experiencing homelessness that are dealing with life threatening ailments to be released straight from the emergency room right back to the streets, or into a crowded shelter.

"Everyone's family has a story, and

this is part of our story," Mary, the sister of a man who died on the streets of Portland once told me. "It's a devastating story. We could have helped him, absolutely. I'm not holding anybody responsible, but as a society we let him down."

Research shows that at least 20 people in America die homeless every single day. The numbers are absolutely staggering. It's unconscionable.

Needless to say, I never did get back to that reporter. I'm still not sure what I would have said. After more than 20 years of working on the front lines of homelessness it's hard to find any kind of logic in a land where housing remains a commodity and human beings on the streets hold no actual value in the eyes of the federal government. A land where thousands of people experiencing homelessness are left to die every year, alone and forgotten. Their stories untold. Ghosts left to haunt our streets with no safe place to call home. A real American tragedy.

We have such a long way to go.

Israel Bayer is an award-winning writer and housing advocate and works with the International Network of Street Papers. ■

Courtesy of the International Network of Street Papers

Theatre of the POOR presents

CRUSHING WHEELCHAIRS

Theatre written, lived, and died by Houseless/Po' humans swept like we are trash

Twitter & Instagram @poormagazine poormagazine.org

Tickets \$1-20

Free to houseless povertySkolaz

Purchase online at bit.ly/crushingwheelchairs

Email poormag@gmail.com for free/discounted tickets

Sunday, 2/12/23, 4 p.m. SE Redstone Bldg, 2940 16th St

Sunday, 2/26/23, 2 p.m. OAK PianoFight, 1540 Broadway

A Lower Bottom Playaz and Theatre of the POOR co-production

Families of ancestor povertySkolaz present

Performance available on pay-per-view on Da CHNL after Feb. 26

Masks required & provided

Teatro de los POBRES presenta

APLASTANDO las SILLAS de RUEDAS

Teatro escrito, vivido y muerto por humanos sin hogar / humanos pobres barridos como si fuéramos basura

Twitter & Instagram @poormagazine poormagazine.org

Entradas \$1-20

Gratis para las pobrezaSkolaz sin hogar

Compra en línea en bit.ly/crushingwheelchairs

Enviar poormag@gmail.com por correo electrónico para entradas gratuitas/con descuento

Domingo, 2/12/23, 4 p.m. SE Redstone Bldg, 2940 16th St

Domingo, 2/26/23, 2 p.m. OAK PianoFight, 1540 Broadway

Una coproducción de Lower Bottom Playaz y Teatro de los POBRES

Familias de ancestros pobrezaSkolaz presente

Pago por evento disponible el 26 de febrero en Da CHNL

Máscaras requeridas y proporcionadas



# ESSENTIAL FOOD AND MEDICINE AT WORK ON WOOD STREET

Areli Hernandez

Until recently more than 4,000 homeless people had been living at a large encampment on Wood Street in West Oakland. That number has been reduced to around 50 by repeated sweeps led by CalTrans, which have displaced many former community members. A neighborhood nonprofit called Essential Food and Medicine, or EFAM, helps encampment residents by distributing healthy foods and medicines. The group's main aim is to reduce homelessness in the Bay Area.

EFAM is a collective of Spanish-speaking healers with multiple skill sets who help care for vulnerable people. As a journalist I have helped this organization for years. Many of those involved with EFAM are teachers, yoga instructors and artists. EFAM believes that forming a strong artistic community on Wood Street will help the homeless people in the Bay Area.

EFAM has met with Oakland City Council member Carroll Fife, whose district includes Wood Street. The group is also working with other Bay Area community members to stop government agencies like CalTrans from removing homeless encampments on Wood Street. On February 3, Judge William Orrick lifted the restraining order stopping Caltrans from said removal, then reinstated the order one week later. As a result this street-based community is experiencing great upheaval.

Sequoia Hansen, a hip hop and jazz dancer who works for the Oakland Zoo, lived at the encampment on Wood Street before finding housing. She says that working with

organizations like EFAM has encouraged her to prioritize helping those around her. This nonprofit is really pivotal for homeless people in the Bay Area and needs more moral and financial support.

EFAM is currently working with Wood Street residents offering to help them build homes, and providing food, freshly made juices and spiritual guidance. Xochitl Bernadette Moreno, one of the nonprofit's co-founders, states that the organization uses resources to help individuals navigate the unwieldy political system we all live in. Residents have help from other Bay area artists and teachers as well.

EFAM and its donors this year were able to build makeshift housing, showers and a kitchen for these houseless residents. It had to bring its efforts to a halt because of the looming threat of eviction by Caltrans and the city of Oakland, both of which oversee the area. Many people who live at Wood Street are looking for housing, even temporarily, as they look for long term stability.

Recently, I met someone in San Luis Obispo County experiencing homelessness. Jaeon C. Cox spends his time in secluded spaces and uses public services such as a library to charge his phone and take a shower hosted on site by a local nonprofit. Cox is getting help and is getting his life in order.

EFAM continues to help on Wood Street by hosting art shows and other fundraisers. They truly hope to help those experiencing homelessness in the Bay Area. ■



## 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**



# FROM AFRICA TO SAN FRANCISCO

Novalie Young

San Francisco has a high number of Black immigrants. The community began with the workers and entrepreneurs of the California Gold Rush in the 19th century, and in the early-to-mid 20th century, it grew as more migrant workers were drawn to the city. Since then, the Black community living here has attracted masses of other immigrants from developing countries in search of greener pastures.

The increased population of homeless people in the streets and shelters around the city includes some of these Black immigrants. In San Francisco especially, the Black community has consistently been the minority and afforded less privilege, so it has not been as easy for Black residents to secure a stable livelihood.

African countries have a high rate of joblessness and poverty, which pushes some people out in search of a better life. When an African person decides to come to San Francisco, they often have relatives or friends to host them in their first days in the city. Once they arrive, they try to get documented, but if one has no money or financial support, this takes time. This leads some people to engage in illegal activities like selling drugs to raise the money they need to

get necessary documentation.

The unfortunate ones get caught and arrested by law enforcement. Once released, these folks are often forced to look for shelters or churches because their hosts are afraid to host them further. If they're unsuccessful, they may be forced to live on the streets.

Many Black African citizens in San Francisco are poor or earn minimum wage. This often means they have poor housing or no housing at all. Those that have good housing are forced to work two to three jobs or cohabitate with others to share the cost of the bills. Many Black people in San Francisco earn minimum wage and therefore their money is only enough to buy food and clothing, and cannot cover the cost of housing.

Many African immigrants trust the agents in their home countries that help them get visas to come to more established nations like America. But these agents deceive them, telling them that they will offer them jobs and places to live once they get there—but instead they end up abandoning them. Once many immigrants come into the country, they find themselves alone with no one to host them, no job, and no

money to get housing, and so they are forced to be homeless until they secure a job, or find a simple, cheap place to live.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it affected many Black entrepreneurs and low-wage workers who were vulnerable to other negative conditions that affected the economy.

After the initial COVID-19 city-wide shutdown, most businesses were closed, and the Black community was adversely affected. This brought about joblessness and homelessness. The lack of finances to pay mortgages or rent forced some in the Black community to seek shelter in churches or on the streets.

In all the above presented cases, it's evident that Blackness and homelessness intersect. Homelessness disproportionately affects Black people. Their minimum-wage jobs and the fact that they are in the minority often lead to homelessness. The rising cases of homelessness among the Black community should be solved by creating more shelters and jobs that are permanent. Increased public education can also help prevent the homelessness situation from getting worse. ■

## PART 4: THE SWEEPY TOWN CHRONICLES DUMB OR DUMBER

Andy Howard

Will was mesmerized as he stared through the dirty window of a local coffee shop. Wind gusts of 70 mph and raindrops that mimicked fish eyes pummeled anyone and everything in their path. Will was grateful to be standing inside. What was it like to be the poor homeless couple across the street in their wind torn tent with a bivy tarp tied fast to anything heavy enough to keep the tent on the ground?

All of a sudden, Will noticed something out of his eye. In cavalry fashion, up rolls an SFPD car with a Ford Bronco SFFD, a few DPW vehicles and a bucket loader. Will could not believe the amount of firepower that had just swooped in on this unsuspecting homeless camp.

As the several vehicles commandeered a large portion of the block's curb parking area, it became obvious that nobody was rushing to get out of the cab of their nice warm trucks. Then out of nowhere, in comes the famous HOT Team agents—to do what? Save the homeless individuals from harassment and humiliation? No, that would be wishful thinking. The HOT Team was in a hot car, drinking hot coffee, and fixing to totally ignore the hot mess that was about to be created by the other illustrious departments of the fine City of San Francisco.

The man in control of the situation was a big heavysset man driving the Department of Public Works rack body truck. He was obviously the leader of the entire operation because he made the authoritative gesture of pushing down on his horn for what seemed like a long interval. Being a well-oiled crew that obviously had choreographed this particular maneuver many times in the past, it all fell in sync and in tempo quickly with each of the other vehicles parked in that illustrious line of authority.

The effect however was less than fanfare as it resulted in nobody coming out of that nice, warm, cozy little tent and tarp area.

Pretty soon a figure emerged from the backseat of the DPW truck, (obviously a low man, seniority-wise). He was slim, lanky but ready to wake his bones by intimidating the hell out of whoever was in that tent.

The DPW worker marched up to the tent and proceeded to bark commands at the inhabitants inside.

Pretty soon, a hyperactive Cchihuahua came running from the tent, teeth bared and growling at

the lanky DPW worker. Ten seconds later, the first body emerged from the tent and he was not real impressed with the goings on.

He repeated the command the DPW worker had been barking at him. It went something like this: "You want us to get out of here so you can scoop our belongings up and dump them into a trash truck that is then going to crush our belongings into the landfill. Then when you are done I am free to go."

Will could tell by his body language that the man was outraged by what he was being told and pretty soon his wife and Cocoa, the Chihuahua, were not having any of it. In the end, however, the HSOC crew got exactly what they desired. The man and his wife and their little Chihuahua were left with no shelter, no clothes, no food, not even an umbrella.

So there you have it—another successful job carried out by San Francisco's finest.

I leave you with the obvious question: Does the City have any idea the hardship they just caused this family? If so, then their actions are very very dumb. But if they didn't understand or comprehend what they had just done, then that is even dumber. ■

CONTRIBUTE  
TO THE  
STREET  
SHEET

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

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

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

VISIT [WWW.STREETSHEET.ORG/SUBMIT-YOUR-WRITING/](http://WWW.STREETSHEET.ORG/SUBMIT-YOUR-WRITING/)  
OR BRING SUBMISSIONS TO 280 TURK STREET TO BE CONSIDERED



# GET HELP TODAY



TRAFFIC  
TICKET  
PROBLEMS?

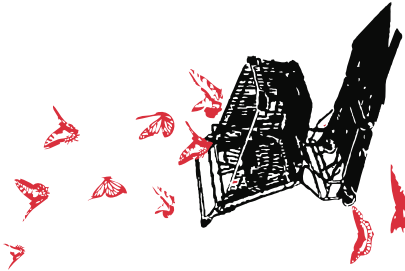
## SAVE MONEY on Traffic Ticket Debt

[sfgov.org/financialjustice/find-discounts](https://sfgov.org/financialjustice/find-discounts)

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 3481  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94188

Coalition On Homelessness  
280 Turk Street  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
415-346-3740  
[www.cohsf.org](http://www.cohsf.org)  
[streetsheetstf@gmail.com](mailto:streetsheetstf@gmail.com)

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Coalition on  
Homelessness  
San Francisco

## STREET SPEAK EPISODE 14: POETS SPEAK

This special episode features some incredible poets reading their pieces aloud. To read these poems and many others, check out our full poetry edition of the Street Sheet, available at [streetsheet.org](https://streetsheet.org)

### FEATURED POETS:

Virginia Barrett  
Dee Allen  
Johanna Elattar  
Detroit Richards  
Aaone Enosa  
Revolt  
Martine Khumalo  
Lisa Willis

Support for Street Speak comes from our listeners! Please donate to us online at <https://coalition.networkforgood.com>



SCAN ME

