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# STREET SHEET

CAN'T SHUT  
US UP  
CAN'T SHUT  
US DOWN



BLACK  
HISTORY  
✦  
BLACK  
FUTURE

@toosphexy  
@justseeds

# SUBTRACTED

Sisters aren't valued  
In this world of ours  
Seen nowhere on the streets  
Not the hospitals, malls or bars

Because they're

Missing  
Subtracted  
From the city  
Headcount cut down in size.

Sisters aren't respected  
In this world of ours  
Yet their kin are fraught w/ worry.  
Long absence digs in the scars

Because they're

Missing  
Subtracted  
From the city  
Headcount falls before our eyes.

Sisters, mothers,  
Aunties, lovers

Our hearts—snatched up suddenly.

Sisters, mothers,  
Aunties, lovers

Police won't help—where could they be?

W: 1.2.23  
[ In response to Black women missing and murdered  
in Kansas City. ]

Dee Allen

# DEEP NORTH

Headed to the "promised land" in droves  
Attracted to bright urban lights  
Like a swarm of sepia-toned moths  
They arrive  
In search of work  
Safer homes  
Altars to pray to  
In search of the peace that  
Living in the so-called  
"Bible Belt" did not give them.

What kind of god  
Would allow its own children to  
Endure the jail cell  
The slurs  
Out of the mouths of babes & rednekkks  
The noose that broke the neck  
From a tree  
Strung-up  
For the crime of  
Being born Black  
The white hoods that made their Heaven  
By making innocent lives Hell?  
What kind of god  
Would abandon its own children  
To the mercy of hate?  
To doors being shut to them  
Because they are descendants of the enslaved?

They arrive  
With a different kind of home in their hearts.  
Among the dark mass, a young  
Tsalagi\* woman, her Black carpenter  
Husband & their 2 daughters [ one a half-breed ]  
Leave Virginia in the dust  
Headed for the "promised land"  
In the shadow of the Great Depression.

The Deep North welcomes them all.

W: 3.20.07  
\*Tsalagi [ pronounced "Chah-lah-gee" ]: What the  
Cherokee Indians call themselves.

Dee Allen

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GOING  
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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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# MY STATE OF BLACK AMERICA

Lisa Willis

\$187,000 versus \$14,000: That’s the average wealth of white and Black Americans respectively, according to the U.S. Census. Choose your cliché: A picture is worth a thousand words, money talks, but where I grew up, we would just say “That’s f\*\*\*\*\* up!”

This is the wealth gap you hear so much about. And I believe this is our focal point. I remember when Tiger Woods won the Masters in 1997—a million years ago! It was a big moment in golf, or so I’m told. To paraphrase Jack Tripper in “Three’s Company,” I’d rather go whale gutting in the Arctic than watch golf. The only reason I’m interested in it now as an activity is because I’m too old to keep playing basketball. I know, there are people my age playing basketball. Well in the tradition of my childhood, those don’t count.

It was a big moment in golf, but a huge one nationally. Serena Williams stands out because she’s one of the greatest tennis players of all time. But when she and her older sister Venus first started as professionals, they both stood out for their talent, but honestly, also for being the only Black players there.

Whenever we see a Black ballet dancer, a Black skier, swimmer, and of course, piano player, we are a little surprised. This doesn’t make us racist: it’s our acknowledgement of the truth, the huge obstacles Black people face in this country.

I wrote a letter to the editor of Inside Chess in 1994 about the unfair advantages of wealth in chess, and he published it.

If you want to start a business, go to med school, buy a home or a car, or just get a loan, that huge wealth gap is

there to suck the life out of your dreams.

Being Black can sometimes feel like being in quicksand. No matter what you do, no matter how hard you try, you just keep sinking. And it becomes emotionally draining. Anything worth doing takes great effort. And when you’re constantly being pulled down, it can become too much to deal with. You can find yourself in a fog of despair you can’t get out of.

Sometimes I look at a Black person, clearly struggling with poverty and they’re so tired, so drained of hope. Long ago, as a child, they dreamed of a life worth living, but now dread the start of the day.

That emotion is unfamiliar to some I bet. When I wrote it, right away I knew everyone wouldn’t know what I meant.

I don’t mean that people are hopeless in that they want to commit suicide: I’m talking about living in a motel, broke, and tonight is your last night. Tomorrow at 11am, come check out time, you’re homeless.

Remember that movie “Groundhog Day?” Many times I can remember that last night. Maybe you had enough for a cheap cheeseburger and fries, and you’re watching baseball, or a good movie. It’s warm, you feel relatively safe. And I just wanted that moment to not end because I knew what the next day would bring.

So the next morning you open your eyes, and you feel dread, not joy.

Some dreams are meant to die. Years ago there was a hip-hop song by Skee-Lo: “I wish I was a little bit taller/I wish I was a baller.”

I grew up in Pasadena, about 20 miles from Los Angeles. When I was 15, I would play a lot of basketball at a community college a few blocks away. They had several nice courts, and a lot of locals came to play. If there were enough people, we would play full court, 5 on 5.

One day the team I was on got on a hot streak, winning two or three straight games. We’re feeling good about ourselves, and one guy said, “Lakers!” He was younger like me, but most of the players were middle-aged men. And once they said doubtingly, “Lakers?!”

For context, that was 1985, shortly after the Lakers beat the Celtics in the Finals, we all had dreams of basketball greatness.

But I’m only 5-foot-5, I couldn’t dunk a basketball if you offered me \$10 million, a lifetime Amazon Prime membership, and all the marijuana (for medical purposes of course) in all of San Francisco!

Oh, I would try, and probably throw out my back in the process, but it’s not happening!

Lots of kids have these dreams, but many Black kids see it as the only way. An athletic star, actor, musician, something, anything to tip the scales.

I’m sure some are saying “go to college.” Yes, but even among college graduates, Black people still have a higher unemployment rate than white people, so let’s get real.

President Obama worked hard in school, went to Columbia and Harvard Law school, won every election he ever entered except for a Democratic primary against Rep. Bobby Rush in 2000.

Seven of the eight years of his presidency he had to deal with a filibustering Republican Senate, and did so with grace, humor, intelligence, and respect for the office, and is hated like poison on the right.

Some kids figure, if I can’t have respect, at least let me be rich.

And there is the trap: most people of any race are not going to become stars.

Children see the wealth gap, and it affects their motivation.

So I would say the state of Black America is anxious. A conservative court, a Republican Congress, an aging sitting President who may lose in 2024.

As a 53-year-old Black woman, I’m nervous about the future. I think a lot of Black people are.

It’s that feeling where you want to run, but where? The state of Black America? Tired, anxious, and worried about the future. ■

## WHAT THE FUTURE WOULD LOOK LIKE WITHOUT RACISM

Belinda Moses

What is racism? Racism is the prejudice, discrimination or antagonism by an individual, community, or institution against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized. There is a worldwide belief that some races possess distinct characteristics, abilities or qualities that make them superior to others.

Racism does a lot of damage to both individuals and the community. It has a huge mental health impact on people who experience it causing them to have feelings of sadness, anger, depression, as well as having constant fear of being verbally or physically attacked. These impacts can reduce people’s ability to work or study.

In a future without racism there would be;

### 1. EQUALITY

Racism largely contributes towards inequality when it comes to getting opportunities. Black people have a difficult time getting employment, access to resources, health care and general services. Until we fight racism to the letter, we can only imagine how great America would be for people of color.

### 2. HEALTHY MINDS

Racism affects people’s general well-being when they are denied equal access to jobs, services and education. Lack of these vital needs may lead to mental health problems that the affected may not even afford treatment for.

### 3. RESPECT

Racism creates a society where people do not trust and respect each other. When allowed to flourish, racism lessens us Black people, and eventually this affects us all as neighbors, workmates and friends. We should love and respect everyone equally regardless of skin color.

### 4. FAIR TRIALS

They say, two people can do the same crime at the same place but get different time just because of skin color. Racism causes unfair arrests, incarceration and even murder of Black people who have not been proven guilty of any crime. We only achieve fair trials by fighting racism first.

### 5. DEVELOPMENT

Racist individuals decide who to or not to work with and this denies bright minds the opportunity to

put their skills into practice. The chance is given to an unqualified individual of the same race leading to poor results. This not only has an effect on the individual but also the productivity of a country. A world without racism would give qualified people equal opportunities regardless of race.

### 6. FAIR TREATMENT

Racism has seen an increase in cases of harassment in society. Black people have been mocked, insulted and even assaulted yet no measures are being taken to stop all this.

This is just my imagination of how the world would be without racism, it would be a great place to live in. I wish we could focus, and join hands to make this world a better place for all. Let’s realize that we all need each other, no one is better than the other, and we are all human.

The war against racism has already begun, it’s tough but the future is bright. This Black History Month, we have a dream and it’ll come true. Let’s spread love and fight racism. ■

## I SAID I WASN'T GON' FIGHT NO MO

It seem like I couldn't  
Fight no mo  
So I had to pick up my pen  
and write some mo  
When things seemed like  
they wasn't right, No Mo  
I prayed to God for the power to fight  
Prayer prepared me for  
every bout to give it my  
all without a doubt  
My fans keep cheering they  
scream and shout  
They really don't know what  
this fight is about

I'm not tripping on them  
Hollering and screaming  
Cause God is the one that's helpin  
Me fight these Demons  
I'm tossing and turning  
and just can't sleep

I got to get up and pray  
cause this shit is deep  
The demons are all over out  
there in the street  
Nobody said this fight  
would be fair  
The demons is tricky so  
I better beware;  
This fight has ups and downs  
Crazy twists and turns  
If I get caught slippin  
I'm going to get burned  
I said i wasn't gon' Fight No Mo  
Now I'm in it to win it  
an that's fa sho  
When God got my back  
There is no doubt  
Im gone get in the rung  
and knock they ass Out

## THE LOVE OF POETRY

Poets like me needs people like you

It gives our minds something  
to hold onto  
In our times of dire of stress  
You give our mind some place to regress

As I sit back and meditate, My pen  
is my best friend that helps me contemplate  
and participate with love instead of hate

I make the impossible, possible for  
you to read and believe  
When I write from the heart of my  
experience it makes it easy for  
everyone to conceive.

It's the gift from God that makes  
me feel dressed with what I've been  
blessed with. It is the best  
way for me to express it.

Tariq Johnson

Tariq Johnson

# WHAT BLACK HISTORY MEANS TO ME

Tariq Johnson

It is a time of Reflection to sharpen my perception of who I am and where I come from. The struggles that my ancestors went through, to overcome the obstacles of racism and achieve their goals. So the Positive definition of the word N-I-G-G-A could and would become: Never Ignorant - Getting - Goals Achieved.

I am 58 years old, born in 1964 when Black Power really meant something to my people. We began to organize, unify and sacrifice our lives to change the condition we were forced to live in. My Dad was a veteran paratrooper in the Korean War. He got shot in the head on his 73rd jump into the jungle. He was blessed to make it and conceive me, my brother and my sister.

We were Miracle War Babies born during the baby boom era. My mom was part of the Black Panther Movement here in San Francisco. She was a member of the Economic Opportunity Council (EOC) and fought for the Free Lunch and other activities for us kids in the ghettos of San Francisco.

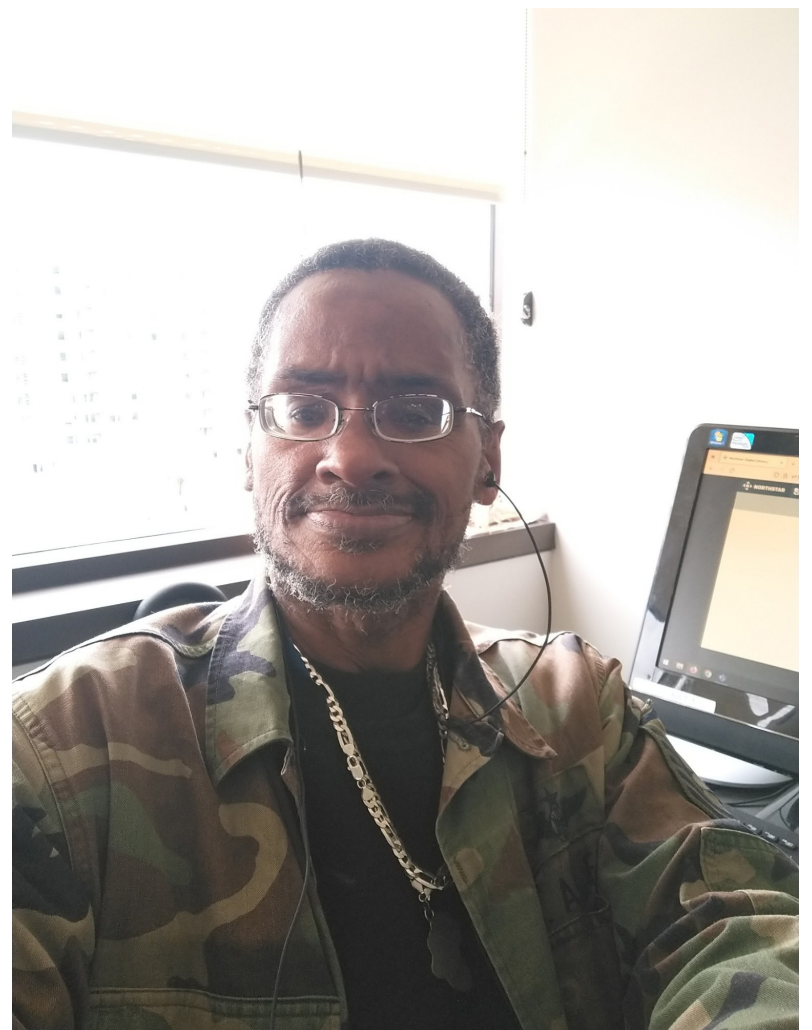
This was a real life revolution that wasn't televised. This movement began, and progressed with challenges and struggles, which came with achievements and built our faith. Faith was truly the substance of things we hoped for and the evidence of things unseen. If it wasn't for that we would never have made it to where we are today.

I was so proud to be a part of voting for Barack Obama, back to back, and to watch him create jobs and opportunities that will forever be the most incredible part of Black History that my son, daughter and myself will never forget. The man even wrote me a letter thanking me for doing my civic duty.

We are Black History in the making.

May the peace and blessing of Almighty God be upon us forever.

2023 ■



## DID YOU KNOW WE HAVE A PODCAST?



Get answers to your burning questions about poverty and homelessness wherever you get your podcasts. PLUS! Listen to our 2023 Poetry Episode and hear poets from our last issue reading their pieces aloud!

<https://www.streetsheet.org/street-speak-podcast/>

SCAN ME





# HOMELESSNESS: A RACIAL EQUITY ISSUE

Martine Khumalo

The intersection of Blackness and homelessness in San Francisco is a result of gaps in the system, and it is said you can't beat the system. On any given night in America, there are over a half- million people who are homeless. Many suffer from chronic health conditions and have limited access to health care, or no access at all. This is an untenable situation, and it is not only a moral issue but also a public health crisis. Allowing so many people to remain unsheltered has always been a time bomb waiting to go off. And with recent flooding, the COVID-19 crisis and other social economic issues, it has.

We still have yet to experience the full fallout. But this quickly evolving social crisis has clearly shown the vulnerabilities in the public and private health care system and how it affects people experiencing homelessness, particularly Black people.

We cannot have a conversation about this crisis without addressing race. We know that Black people are disproportionately impacted by homelessness. In San Francisco, for example, a huge number of people are experiencing homelessness. The most recent point-in-time homeless count shows 38% of the unhoused population are Black, even though Black people represent just 6% of the general population.

Data from the Office of Minority Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services show Black people suffering disproportionately from

underlying medical conditions that put them at a higher risk for contracting other diseases, such as diabetes, asthma, and high blood pressure. When you compound the medical vulnerabilities that disproportionately affect Black people with their overrepresentation in the homeless population, you have a situation that is not only alarming but catastrophic.

Given this, it comes as no surprise that Black and brown people are bearing the brunt of the homelessness pandemic.

Speaking from firsthand experience, we should drill down on how race plays into homelessness and to make recommendations on how to eliminate the disparities. For instance, Black people with lived experience of homelessness should be included in some outreach teams and service delivery in some—if not all—shelters for homeless people. I believe this will help shape the message out on the streets in meeting the needs of vulnerable people. We should also train more service providers in trauma-informed care, to start their work with an understanding of how institutional racism affects homelessness. Providers should also recognize the trauma of Black people's experiences, including trauma associated with the health care system, and they should recognize that other factors like COVID-19, floods and other emergencies only exacerbate the situation. Providers should meet

Black people who are experiencing homelessness with empathy and understanding by working to see this crisis through a lens of racial equity. Crises like police brutality against homeless people are unacceptable. Will we let racial disparities again harm Black and brown people disproportionately? Will we start to track racial data so that communities of color are not overlooked? And will we make COVID testing widespread, especially for those experiencing homelessness? The answer lies in our commitment to using a racial equity lens when dealing with this public health emergency.

In different locations in San Francisco, and across the country, I have heard of creative partnerships between public, private and social service agencies forming to bring immediate relief, though I personally have not seen one yet. This is promising, systemic change needs to utilize a racial lens if it is to be truly effective.

My hope is that after a while in consideration of my opinions in this article together with other suggestions, the efforts to address homelessness through a racial equity lens will be stepped up. We must use our experience of crisis to dismantle racist structures and systems and put in place the investments and attention that communities of color need to thrive. This can be achieved only if we work towards one primary goal: to defeat racism.

# POLITICAL ISSUES FACING BLACK SAN FRANCISCANS TODAY

Andrew Khakali

When Same was a child, they didn't see any difference between them and their mostly white preschool mates. Like all children, they simply enjoyed the company of other people, and saw them as either nice or mean based on the way that person treated them. How they felt about others had nothing to do with race, who their parents were, how wealthy their family was or anything else. They accepted their playmates as individuals.

With time, Same's perspective changed. Same realized that they had a different skin color than their playmates, and that their parents looked different from their playmates' parents. It still didn't mean anything significant to them, but they recognized the differences. When they moved into high school and then college, they became more concerned with the issues that other Black people faced in San Francisco. For Same, the present problems Black people face became a much greater source of unease and concern.

U.S. Census data from 2022 shows the number of people in the U.S., age range, their racial makeup, income and employment. According to this survey, the Black population makes up about 14% of the total U.S. population. Census data also shows that Black people are paid less than any other large racial group and have less access to higher education. While the population in the United States is growing, the Black population is not growing compared to other groups.

Incarceration, homelessness, poverty, and drug addiction affect every race and ethnicity, but when these issues fall disproportionately on Black people it becomes an even more serious problem. The Black community has a difficult legacy in San Francisco. Many people in this community have ancestors who came to the United states as slaves. Thus, racism has always been inherent in the structure of American society. Unfortunately, this has led to contemporary issues which deserve an immediate solution.

For instance, the politics around accessing adequate healthcare is a concern for many Black people, especially those living in urban areas. This is due to inadequate funding resources and the degradation of hospitals in these areas. Many hospitals relocate to suburban areas which means longer travel time for Black people in cities who are in need of care.

Black people are also disproportionately plagued with COVID- 19, hypertension, stroke, HIV and heart diseases among other ailments. Health care is so expensive that many people simply can't afford proper treatments, and high food prices make good nutrition inaccessible as well. This is made possible by the systems put in place not to favor the Black population.

Racism is also a serious problem within the legal system. Arrests and incarceration rates are higher among Blacks than any other group. It may seem to some people that this is due to some flaw in the group as a whole, but that is not borne out by the statistics. A Black person is six times more likely to face jail time for a drug or a traffic offense than a white individual, even if it is the same kind of offense. Although Black people comprise only 14% of the total population in America, they make up more than half of the prison population. Racial profiling and police brutality against Black people is also a concern.

The system has been designed to

harm Black people. Our laws demean Black people, create barriers to even simple tasks such as visa renewals, and try to paint innocent people as guilty. These are political issues facing black San Franciscans today.

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Tina Orlandini  
@t.orlandini for @agitarte\_cultural\_works



# SIDE BY SIDE

**Sunday, February 12, 4PM**  
**@the Lab, 2948 16th Street**  
**in San Francisco**

**Sunday, February 26, 4PM @**  
**PianoFight, 1540 Broadway**  
**in Oakland**

Six houseless residents of San Francisco, LA and Oakland live outside in tents, cardboard boxes & RVs, surviving together in community, interdependently, until each City deploys a giant machine and multiple poLice and state agencies to crush all of their belongings, tents, walkers, wheelchairs and more. The exciting new play *Crushing Wheelchairs*, which incorporates magical realism, poetry and myth culminates in violent tragedy and hope rooted in decolonial self-determination. The production includes a cast of only houseless or formerly houseless and disabled actors who have been participants in a series of theatre and writing workshops led by the playwright Tiny (Lisa) Gray-Garcia aka @povertyskola.

"I had everything taken from me, things I will never be able to replace no matter how many hoops I went through—I could never get them back from CalTrans," said Brokin Cloud.

Houseless in Oakland for over fifteen years, Brokin Cloud is one of more than twenty co-creators, actors, and writers who have been meeting in a workshop led by the playwright, poet, actor and visionary PovertySkola also known as Tiny Gray-Garcia, who herself was houseless first as a child with her disabled mother for the majority of her childhood, and then again as a single mother with her son due to the

violent gentrification of the Bay Area throughout the last decade.

"This play and all of the theatre work we do at Theatre of the POOR has helped me to heal from the multiple traumas I have dealt with as a houseless disabled Black woman, and survivor of eviction and poverty," said Aunti Frances Moore, Black Panther, POOR Magazine povertyskola, co-founder of Homefulness, and founder of the Self-Help Hunger Program in Oakland, who plays the character Reggi, based on one of the ancestor povertyskolaz honored in this play, all of whom died because of the violence of anti-poor people-hate, politricks and/or poLice Terror.

"I created this play based on my life as a child who barely survived poverty and homelessness, criminalization and incarceration. I created this play based on my mama's life and the lives of countless fellow houseless youth, mamas, and elders who have barely survived and often died from the position of being without shelter in a system that values "private property" over people. A system that values the hoarding and acquiring of stolen resources and indigenous land over the safety of children and families and elders and disabled people, and actually views us as trash—to be swept or put to death," said playwright tiny Gray-Garcia, formerly homeless, incarcerated, single mother, poet, co-founder with her mama Dee of POOR magazine, visionary of Homefulness and co-author of many publications including *Criminal of Poverty - Growing Up Homeless in America* and more.

"This play honors and pays tribute, prayer, and art to the stories and spirits of Steven Taylor, Papa Bear, Luis Demetrio Gonogra Pat, Luis Temaj, Laure McElroy, Desiree Quintero, and Shannon Marie Bigley, and so many more all who passed from the violence of sweeps, poLice

chair frames and  
baby toys,  
jackets,  
toothbrushes coffee  
cans and pillows  
wrapped up in  
paper bags made of  
memories

nylon homes  
buried under lives  
made of storms...  
**Povertyskola**

terror, and hate of us poor people," said Tiny. "This play honors our lives as well—currently in struggle homeless povertyskolaz, in cities like ours. In San Francisco where we are being swept in the rain or hosed down by individuals like art gallery owner Collier Gwin. In Oakland the Wood Street Commons residents are currently struggling with an eviction notice from their longtime neighborhood in West Oakland in the middle of torrential rains."

"I feel blessed to rehearse, heal, and co-write my own story of decades of homelessness into the new play *Crushing Wheelchairs*," concluded Brokin Cloud. Brokin Cloud also just moved into Homefulness - a rent free housing project created by houseless people at POOR Magazine.

This play culminates with Indigenous and all nations prayer for ancestors of homelessness and a discussion about solutions like Homefulness—a homeless peoples solution to homelessness and Wood Street Commons—a homeless resident led community in West Oakland with housed advocates and Houseless residents present ■

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

Families of ancestor povertySkolaz present

Pay-per-view available Jan. 15 on Da CHNL

**CHNL**



# BLACK AND TRANS IN SAN FRANCISCO

Mia Harper

Homelessness and how to end it has been a topic of conversation over the past several years at the state, federal and community levels. However, there has been little conversation on how homelessness and racism are linked. It is time to speak up and call it what it is.

It is so sad that at this time being Black still feels like a crime in this country. Many U.S. citizens have not gotten rid of racism in their blood, nor social structures have got it out of their system. Discrimination based on sexual orientation, religion and, worst of all, skin color is still evident. San Francisco is not an exception: I have experienced this myself as a resident. For me, it has been even worse because I am Black and trans. Finding work and getting health care and general services seems like quite a challenge, and sometimes you just give up.

For many African Americans, workplaces are the worst when it comes to discrimination and even sexual harassment from people who think they are untouchable. Most of these cases go unreported due to fear of tarnishing the workplace's good name or just fear of losing the job. It's so sad,

but real! This discrimination has led to many unemployment cases and job losses. These in turn lead to loss of income, housing insecurity and homelessness.

As Black people, we also face a challenge finding secure and affordable housing. Some landlords won't allow us to lease their apartments at all, and if they do, it's not without an awkward background check that sometimes feels racially offensive. They have this notion that by being Black you may be associated with criminal activities or cause disturbance to the neighbors. But there are dangerous white gangs involved in crime and drugs as well.

We African Americans have been denied rights and socioeconomic opportunities resulting from racism. We have low or no access to mortgages and business loans, which contributes to high levels of poverty and finally homelessness. Many of us who are housed still live in low-income neighborhoods with exposure to environmental toxins and limited health care, nutritious food and economic opportunities. With this kind of environment, there is a very high risk of ending up homeless.

Discrimination makes moving from these neighborhoods to places with less crime and no environmental hazards difficult if not impossible.

Racial discrimination has also placed Black people at greater risk of being targeted, profiled and arrested for minor offenses, especially in high-poverty areas. This creates a criminal history that prevents people from passing background checks required to secure safe, affordable housing and employment. People tend to make criminal justice-involved folk, especially those who are Black, feel unwanted and unwelcome in society. They end up on the streets, unemployed and homeless.

I believe that everybody, regardless of race, should have access to proper housing, health care and services. Any efforts to end homelessness in San Francisco and the U.S. as a whole have to first address the issues that have resulted from racial discrimination. We must understand that we cannot make progress on a problem that is the result of racial inequity. These measures should ensure availability of affordable, stable housing and employment opportunities for all. ■

# THE FUTURE WITHOUT RACISM

Terry Johnson

What would the future look like if racism were defeated? This question causes my heart to yearn. The belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, abilities or qualities that distinguish them as inferior or superior to one another is what makes this world so divided. We could instead embrace a world that is diverse and colorful, full of different kinds of people with different mindsets and backgrounds. In a bid for racial superiority, the world seems to have forgotten the unity in our diversity. As a result, some races are condescended by other races which are considered superior.

I do, however, have an image in my head of a country like America, but free of colorism, free of racism as a whole, free of distinction between Black and white. A country where Black and white children play in the same playgrounds, Black and white people have equal access to food and basic needs—just humans working together, where the mention of poverty and unemployment would not be associated with Black people. I dream of a world where superiority is not white, where racial equality reigns. A world where there are no racial differences, just humanity. Where there are no races, just humans. A world free of racism: That is the future we should all dream of for generations to come.

In most of the world, there is no shortage of stereotypes that negatively impact Black communities. A Black man is considered dirty, poor or criminal. A Black child is not seen as intelligent. A Black woman is assumed to be incapable of independence. These negative stereotypes continue to pile up around Black people and consequently, we find ourselves stuck with an inferiority complex.

Racism is not virtuous. No one filled out an application to be born Black or white, just like no one chooses to be born poor. Racism is hatred, and it will forever hold our world back. It is a great disappointment that, despite witnessing and

experiencing the damages of racism, we continue to blame each other instead of coming together to eradicate it head on.

Truth be told, everyone has the capacity to be racist. Everyone has to make a choice whether or not they will separate humans by skin color. I came across a Nelson Mandela quote, saying that “racism is a blight on the human conscience.” This is because, similar to a blight, it blinds our growth, leaving us stuck in the same place like statues. The economy is fluctuating and underperforming, humanity is diminishing on a daily basis. We keep losing the true sense of humanity due to racism, but aren't we all a lovely creation that is meant to grow together and build each other up as a nation?

I strongly believe that racism begins when people use the words “Black person” and “nigga” instead of saying “a person.” It is when they say “colored people” instead of “these people.” Everywhere one goes, be it a shopping mall, restaurant, bank, or hospital, racism remains the big elephant in the room. Just as we witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic, instead of facing it head on, we face down and walk away without even speaking about it. We have turned a blind eye in the past and continue to do so to this day. In order to stop racism, we must stop drawing dividing lines between people.

A fig stem can only be bent when it is still wet, for if it is bent when dry it will break. We should teach growing children about equality so they can grow with that mindset. Let us keep in mind that we all want a future free of racism. If we want a better world for future generations, we should help create a better generation for the world's future.

Many countries, especially African nations, were exposed to many years of racism due to the apartheid governance in colonial eras. The Black and Colored majority were severely oppressed,

but freedom fighters who fought the racial segregation by speaking about the unity of the people helped lead to the growth of democracies. Now, these countries are enjoying a democratic era. Some are still recovering as nations, and though traces of racism can still be observed, they are working to give the next generation a past they will not have to recover from.

To be able to reform something, you need to be able to call it evil. This is a strong take: Evil simply means that which is morally wrong. Is hating one another not morally wrong? Is it not evil when you feel that one race is better than another? I pronounce racism as an unacceptable act of injustice; nowhere in this world should anyone be talked down on because of their race. in the future.

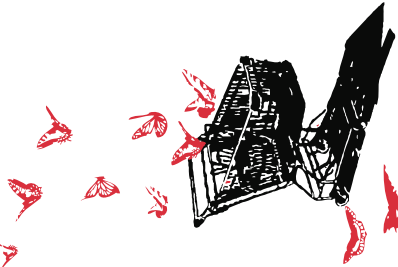
Racism divides nations, it turns people against each other. It makes us forget that, in all truthfulness, we all come from the same creator. We were all created to be equal. We were all created to love and build each other instead of pulling each other down. It makes us forget the true meaning of diversity.

We should want a world free of racism because there is no love, prosperity or success in division. We should all see each other as kin, because there is no equality in discrimination— we are all sisters and brothers. We should all come together and accept our differences before we can share our similarities. We should hold each other's hands and continue to build each other up, because there is so much more beauty in a united nation than a divided one. Would the future not be a beautiful place to live without all these racial shenanigans?

Let us all embrace diversity, togetherness, and hold that ladder to help the person one in front climb first and so that they can pull us up. The world is always beautiful, but it will be so much merrier when racism is defeated. It starts with me and you. ■

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