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# STREET

- WHEN WILL UNHOUSED FOLKS HAVE ACCESS TO VACCINES? & HOUSING FOR SIP TENANTS 3
- THE REAL IMPACT OF LOOMING EVICTIONS: FROM AN IMMIGRANT MOTHER 4
- 14 REASONS TO FUND #3ORIGHTNOW...NOW! 5
- WATER FOR ALL: A NEW CAMPAIGN FOR WATER ACCESS IN THE TL 6
- LETTERS FROM INSIDE & NEW DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE AT SFMTA 7

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED TO KENNETH JORDAN. REST IN POWER.



art by Roger Peet via JustSeeds



LISTEN to STREET SPEAK: Episode 5 takes you inside San Francisco's Shelter in Place hotels.

[streetsheet.org](https://streetsheet.org)

# ORIGINAL SIP HOTEL RESIDENTS PROMISED HOUSING, BUT WHERE?

Q Watts

At the beginning of November 2020, the fate of residents of shelter-in-place (SIP) hotels was suddenly thrown into question. Rumors began to circulate that the hotels would begin to shut down in phases, starting just days before Christmas and ending this June. There was no formal announcement to residents, or even to staff, but San Francisco's Department of Homelessness and Housing (HSH) circulated a document internally that scheduled out the hotel closures. Despite having been told that moving into a hotel room would guarantee a path to permanent housing, 2,400 otherwise unhoused hotel tenants suddenly found themselves poised to be forced back onto the streets in the midst of an ongoing and even intensifying pandemic.

Thanks to community groups and hotel tenants who mobilized to protest this move, the Board of Supervisors voted to stop what was called the "SIP Hotel Demobilization Plan" and push back the timeline until all 2,400

people who had been placed in hotel rooms would be able to exit into stable housing. Then, in January, when the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced it would reimburse cities, including San Francisco, for the expense of housing people in hotels, the supervisors also passed emergency legislation to continue to make the open hotel rooms available to vulnerable people currently living outside during the pandemic — but on the condition that these new tenants are not guaranteed a permanent exit from homelessness.

But the reality inside the hotels is much more nebulous, and many residents find themselves in a perilous limbo between hoping for housing and dreading a return to the street. A hotel worker, Alex, (name changed to protect her identity) who spoke with Street Sheet, said she felt hopeful that most people would be offered housing of some kind, and that Episcopal Community continued on page 3...

# Not True

Janny Castillo

Not true  
That I am invisible.

That I disappear into thin air when you take  
my blankets, my food  
and everything I own.

Not true  
That I don't want to come inside  
If inside wanted me, I would go.

Offer me more than what I have  
Offer me dignified housing  
Offer me a home without an end date  
A home that does not take every dollar I make  
And I would go

Not true  
That I want to live in squalor.  
That I want to live without water or a bathroom  
Without hot food, without safety  
In fear and uncertainty

Not true  
That I steal,  
That I steal profits from businesses  
and property values from owners

Not true  
That I want charity  
more than the right to live free  
From harassment, from judgement  
From shame

What's true  
Is that some cannot see me  
As their neighbor, their friend,  
Valuable, capable, worthy  
Of existing by them.

More true  
Is that some, maybe you  
cannot see me at all.

# POETRY CORNER

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# COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS



coalition.networkforgood.com

The STREET SHEET is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition's work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: they bring their agendas to us.

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The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

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# Go Along To Get Along

Mira Martin-Parker

Happy I say nothing smile positive read ipad thingy have ear thingy stuck in ear phone smile nicey-like positive yes positive yes thinky nicey-like nothing grumpy-like nothing cranky-like never me cranky never me critical never me wear black no not me no me happy corporate happy condo Viking oven Google bus me gluten free brown rice art show heritage tomato type messenger bag type me happy yoga organic facebook tweet tweet healthy jogging on-line hybrid electric motor me Democrat change hope responsible reasonable moderate me yogurt green wireless coconut juice raw vegan brunch me literary reading tattoo skillset job cappuccino Four Barrel Macbook me diversity me text message single drip single speed bicycle car-share bamboo tofu Rainbow Grocery succulent plants me Mini Cooper editorial say nothing smile me no wear black never me happy positive I say nothing.

# A SHOT IN THE ARM FOR HOMELESS SAN FRANCISCANS?

TJ Johnston

Where homeless people fit in the Golden State’s plans to vaccinate residents against COVID-19 has been in flux for the past month. San Francisco officials — as well as houseless San Franciscans — might have to wait longer than expected for things to fall into place.

Last month, the state reorganized the phases of its prioritization plan to immunize Californians. Health care workers — the highest prioritized group in the plan — had already started receiving vaccinations. The next phase of the state’s original plan included unhoused and incarcerated people, who would have been getting shots alongside people aged 65 and over, and essential workers such as educators, child care providers and food and agricultural workers. But as of publication time, they’re not.

That changed when the state announced a new prioritization system early last month. While most unhoused people still qualify — most are over 65 or have disabilities or other underlying health conditions — confusion reigned over homeless people and service providers alike as to how soon vaccine

supplies will come their way, not to mention when they will get their shots.

The vaccine would provide protection against the coronavirus and its variants for a population already rendered medically vulnerable from living without stable housing.

When Street Sheet contacted the San Francisco Department of Public Health about when vaccines will be given to homeless folk, DPH replied with a statement from the City’s COVID Command Center, a collaborative of several City departments, saying it’s still waiting for guidance from the state.

On February 24, the department and Command Center released their vaccination plan, which will hinge on mobile teams visiting congregate settings and outdoor sites. These include shelters, permanent supportive housing sites, shelter-in-place and isolation/quarantine hotels, encampments and “safe sleep” sites.

“A guiding principle of this work will be bringing the vaccine to people who are not able to easily access traditional

settings like a doctor’s office or pharmacy,” the Command Center said in a statement.

The two groups added that the San Francisco Health Network, UC San Francisco and assorted community organizations would assist in outreach.

Once vaccine recipients receive their first dose, health workers hope to record the vaccinations electronically, follow up on the recipients’ conditions and ensure they receive a second dose. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend three or four weeks between doses, depending on the vaccination.

A drop-in clinic at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital will also serve unhoused seniors regardless of ZIP code or insurance status, according to the City’s plan.

But what’s still fuzzy is the exact timeline for vaccinations. Brian Edwards, a human rights organizer at the Coalition on Homelessness, which publishes Street Sheet, has been involved in the planning with City officials for the past month.

“There’s no firm date” when the rollout will reach the homeless population, he said. “I suppose it’s because of the supply of the vaccine, but they’re just not moving fast enough.”

Frontline SIP hotel and shelter workers are included in Phase 1A of the vaccine rollout but did not have reliable access to vaccines until February 15th. Based on contacts he made with service providers, Edwards estimated a majority of shelter staff aren’t yet vaccinated, possibly because the information of eligibility hasn’t reached them.

“There should be a big fucking sign [at the shelters]” to direct front-line workers and homeless people to where they can get vaccinated, he said.

One positive development Edwards found is the public health department’s inclusion of permanent supportive housing residents in its plan.

“The people (at DPH) decided that people in PSH sites can be homeless, too,” he said. ■

## WHERE WILL 2,400 SIP HOTEL RESIDENTS GO?

Q Watts

continued from page 2...

Services (ECS) staff have been doing Coordinated Entry assessments with hotel tenants. Coordinated Entry (CE) is a way of prioritizing vulnerable people experiencing homelessness for housing; some factors they consider include age, time spent without housing, pregnancy and medical status. Care coordinators employed in the SIP hotels are tasked with helping residents prepare documents and fill out applications, but the caseload is overwhelming: At the hotel she works at there are 400 guests, and just six or seven case workers to support them. And on top of the tremendous workload, SIP hotel workers are offered little training or staff support while they are on the front lines responding to questions from residents, mediating conflicts and even responding to overdoses.

Communication failures between the City, the SIP hotel staff and SIP tenants have left those staying in hotels feeling stressed and afraid of a sudden return to the streets. In a SIP tenant call organized by advocates, one hotel resident said the uncertainty was destabilizing. He said that he had tried going through the Coordinated Entry process last year, but was told there was no housing for him. Now that he has been told to go through another

assessment, he worries he’ll end up with nothing again.

“Am I going to go back into this situation where I’ll be strung along and then when I reach the end they tell me, ‘Oops’? The door shuts down and they tell me, ‘Get lost—there is nothing for you,’” he said. “To be honest? I’ve given up. And I just keep my bags packed and ready to go.”

Many tenants understandably share his distrust. Tenants moving into hotels when they first opened were told they were on track to get into permanent housing and would not be returned to the streets. But when the hotels were first slated to close starting in December, few tenants had even been assessed through Coordinated Entry, much less offered permanent housing. Many tenants, and even hotel staff, found out through word of mouth that the hotels would be closing and began preparing for a sudden return to the street with no idea of when that might happen.

While the City has now promised to rehouse the original 2,400 SIP hotel tenants, according to HSH data as of February 23, only 143 people, or about 6% of hotel tenants, had exited into housing of any kind. Those exits include 93 placements in Permanent Supportive Housing, 16 receiving temporary housing support, 17 getting

ongoing housing subsidies, 15 people going to stay with family or friends, and two people helped with “problem solving” to remove housing barriers. Another 284 former hotel tenants have left the hotels with no housing at all, a number that includes a range of outcomes including being kicked out, moving into congregate shelters and dying. (For the full numbers and more information on these categories, visit <https://bit.ly/3szpfuL>)

But with the City’s public commitment to house almost everyone who was in the SIP hotel system before November 2021, there is hope that these numbers will turn around and a significant percentage of SIP tenants will be placed in permanent housing. If that happens, it will be an unprecedented effort by the City of San Francisco to meaningfully address homelessness.

“I think in some ways this is totally awesome, right? I never want to lose sight of that, because to imagine thousands of people would be getting housing a year ago? Ha!” said Alex. “A lot of people I see, I’m like, ‘Wow, you’ve gained 20 pounds, and you look really happy.’ But the City needs to tell people what is happening to them and give them time to plan for it, because right now everything now is shrouded in confusion, and that adds so much

stress.”

Community advocates also recognize this as a unique moment that could change San Francisco’s homelessness crisis permanently. In a press conference last week, homeless advocates and hotel tenants came together to urge the City to use federal funding to offer permanent housing to more San Franciscans and ensure hotel tenants are offered housing that meets their access needs. Among the demands is for the City of San Francisco to purchase hotels that could house people permanently.

“We want to take advantage of this remarkable and rare opportunity where we have this convergence of a windfall from FEMA that was unexpected, and [hotel] owners who want to sell, and of course an increasing homeless crisis as the pandemic takes its toll on jobs and eviction moratoriums start to expire where we may see more people needing this housing,” said Sara Shortt, director of policy and community outreach at the Community Housing Partnership, a nonprofit that advocates for people experiencing homelessness. “So we ABSOLUTELY call for the city to make the smart choice and use the money to actually acquire the buildings to house people.” ■

# THE REAL IMPACT OF EVICTION

## A MOTHER SPEAKS OUT ABOUT THE THREAT OF DISPLACEMENT

Mi nombre es M. O., inmigrante de Guatemala y llegue a los Estados Unidos en 1988.

Salí de mi país que se guatela por la situación económica, lo cual sobrevive día con día, los trabajos son escasos y pagan muy poco. Como sabemos que los EEUU ha quitado muchas riquezas de nuestro País. Como también sabemos que nuestros presidentes de nuestro país que ellos se enriquecen robando al pueblo y ellos haciendo más ricos y el pueblo se vuelve más pobre.

Al llegar a los EEUU se me hizo más difícil por la cultura y el Idioma, pero a pesar de todo he salido adelante, con esfuerzos y trabajo siendo inmigrante, tengo la fe y la confianza en dios que todo va a salir bien.

Todos llegamos con un sueño de poder ayudar a nuestras familias y tener una casa para nuestros hijos, lo cual pasa el tiempo y no se realiza, tenemos que luchar para conseguir esa metas y ser persistentes.

Trabajar, ser madre y esposa, es difícil, pero al ver a mis hijos que piden cuando tienen hambre, ellos son mi motivación para seguir adelante y que ellos vean en mí como un buen ejemplo y también que mis hijos tengan una mejor calidad de vida.

También motivo a mis hijos que estudien porque al tener un diploma o título universitario, podrían tener una vida mejor.

Yo vivo en el Hotel Winston Arms SRO hotel en San Francisco CA, tengo más de 11 Años viviendo en este hotel, para mi y mi familia ha sido difícil por la infestación de chinches Y moho, también tengo que lidiar con el dueño y el manager del edificio, que no son nadie amables. ellos piensan sólo en el dinero de la renta y como les cuesta hacer arreglos.

Tengo dos nena pequeñas, J tiene 9 Años y Ja tiene 7 Años, para mis hijas es muy difícil porque el lugar es muy pequeño, también tengo que tener limpio siempre por la salud de Ja, siempre tengo que estar limpiado, por el moho y las chinches, tuve que tirar las camas y muebles por que estaban llenos de animales. También mirar por las noches que las chinches le piquen a mi dos niñas, es horrible dormir con las luces prendidas todas las noches.

Ja nació con Síndrome de down, tiene 14 problemas de salud incluyendo cáncer en la sangre, para nosotros ha sido muy difícil todo esto le doy gracias a dios por que ha permitido que Ja esté con nosotros todavía. nosotros la cuidamos mucho y lucho día a día por la salud de mi princesa Ja.

Hemos tenido problemas con el manager, pero lo hemos reportado con la coalición de desamparados y la colaborativa de hoteles residenciales de familias Unidas, a side los dos únicos programas que me han estado ayudando a salir de este problema, y el personal de la COH, como don Miguel es una gran persona humanitaria que ve las necesidades de las familias y se preocupa por la salud de los niños deshabilitados o no. Le

pido a la alcaldesa de San Francisco, mesa de supervisores y los directivos de la vivienda de la Prop C, que nos ayuden con una vivienda digna que tanto falta no hace. Que dios le toque su corazón y ayuden a todas las familias Latinas y Africanas Americanas y las gente que está en la calle también merecen una vivienda digna.

Lo que estoy compartiendo es real y verdadero no es ficción, siendo un país muy rico con mucha pobreza y desamparo muchos de nosotros llenamos aplicaciones y quedan en el olvido porque nunca sabemos dónde quedaron las aplicaciones.

La pandemia vino a cambiar totalmente nuestras vidas. Ya no hay libertad en darnos un abrazo o un beso o compartir con la familia, ya no participo en mi iglesia. Todo ha sido cerrado, es como si fuera una ciudad fantasma de San Francisco. Miro tantas necesidades en la gente. En todo el mundo la gente está muriendo. A mi me afectó mucho porque perdí mi trabajo. Mi esposo se quedó sin trabajo también. También de pensar y pensar cómo vamos a pagar la renta, vivimos todos estresados, también nosotros somos de bajos recursos y vivimos día a día. Gracias a dios él me da fuerza para seguir adelante. Él es un dios de amor, nos cuida y nos guarda. Ya no quiero ver más las noticias, que tanta gente se está muriendo por el virus, mi corazón se entristece mucho. Mis primos se enfermaron del virus, mi cuñada falleció en Guatemala. En mi iglesia casi toda la gente se enfermó y unos murieron. Es como si fuera una película que no quisiera ver, como si fuera ficción pero tengo que ver mi realidad y aceptar que esto es verdadero. Al fin tenemos que aceptarlo queramos o no. En mi país de Guatemala están muriendo familias enteras de hambre y del virus.

Yo vivo con el temor de que me vayan a desalojar del hotel desde el año pasado cuando empezó la pandemia. Por la irresponsabilidad del gobierno. La gente debe usar la máscara y la sabiduría y la inteligencia para encontrar un medicamento o medicina para terminar con esta enfermedad o pandemia.

My name is M.O. I am an immigrant from Guatemala and I came to the United States in 1988.

I left my country because of the economic situation, which continues day after day. Jobs are scarce and pay very little. As we know, the U.S. has taken much wealth from our country. We also know that the presidents of our country get rich by robbing the people, getting richer as the people become poorer.

When I arrived in the United States it was more difficult for me because of the culture and the language, but despite everything, I have pressed forward, with effort and work. As an immigrant, I have faith and trust in God that everything will turn out well. We all came with a dream of being able to help our families and have a house for our children, but as time passes and this dream is not realized, we have to fight to achieve those goals and be persistent.

Working, while being a mother and a wife, is difficult, but caring for my children, who look to me when they are hungry, is my motivation to keep going. I want my children to see me as a good example and also to have a better quality of life.

I also encourage my children to study, because by having a college degree or diploma, they could have a better life. I live in the Hotel Winston Arms SRO in San Francisco CA. I have been living at this hotel for more than 11 years, which has been hard on me and my family due to the infestation of bed bugs AND mold. I also have to deal with the owner and the manager of the

built about the p

I have year: difficult born prob: has b allow of he Princ

I also health to th watc It is l nigh

We h we h Hom Colla that At th who the h of Sa the c hous us to toucl Afric are o hom

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The j Ther or be my c like : peop dyin My h muc are g We a Thar goin keep so m hear the v Guat got s don't see r end, not. l are d

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**CAN'T PAY RENT**  
DUE TO PANDEMIC-RELATED INCOME LOSS?

**NO PUEDES PAGAR LA RENTA**  
PORQUE HAS PERDIDO INGRESOS DEBIDO A LA PANDEMIA?

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因为疫情收入损失?

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**¡NO TIENES QUE MUDARTE DE TU HOGAR!**  
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ling, who are not friendly. They only think it rent money and how much it costs to fix problems.

re two little girls: J is 9 years old and Ja is 7 s old. For my daughters, living here is very cult because the place is very small. Ja was with Down syndrome; she has 14 health lems including leukemia. For us, all of this een very difficult, but I thank God for ving Ja to still be with us. We take great care r and I fight every day for the health of my ress Ja.

o have to always keep the unit clean for Ja's th. Because of the mold and bed bugs, I had row away the beds and furniture. Also, I h at night as the bedbugs bite my two girls. orrible to sleep with the lights on every t.

ave had problems with the manager, but ave reported them to the Coalition on elessness and the SRO Families United borative, as they are the only two programs have been helping me with the problems. ie Coalition, Miguel is a great humanitarian sees the needs of families and cares about ealth of disabled children. I ask the mayor n Francisco, the Board of Supervisors, and irectors of departments responsible for ing and those in charge of Prop C to help be able to live in a decent home. May God h your heart and help all the Latino and an American families, and the people who n the street who also deserve a decent e.

t I am sharing is real and true. It is not n. Being in a very rich country with a lot of rty and homelessness, many of us fill out ications and are forgotten because we never v where the applications go.

pandemic came to totally change our lives. e is no longer freedom to give a hug or a kiss : with the family. I no longer participate in hurch. Everything has been shut down—it's San Francisco is a ghost town. I see so many le in need. All over the world, people are g. It affected me a lot because I lost my job. usband lost his job, too. Also, we spend so h time thinking and thinking about how we oing to pay the rent! We all live under stress. re also low-income and we live day by day. k God, He gives me the strength to keep g. He is a God of love, He cares for us and s us. I no longer want to see the news that any people are dying from the virus—my t becomes very sad. My cousins got sick from rirus, and my sister-in-law passed away in emala. In my church, almost all the people ick, and some died. It's like a movie that I : want to see, like it's fiction—but I have to ny reality and accept that this is true. In the we have to accept it whether we want to or In my country of Guatemala, entire families ying of hunger and the virus.

re lived in fear that I will be evicted from otel since last year when the pandemic n, because of the irresponsibility of the rnment. People must wear masks and wisdom and intelligence to find a drug or icine to end this pandemic.

# Fund #30RightNow NOW

Jordan Davis

Last summer, I wrote a piece for Street Sheet about the #30RightNow campaign, our fight to make sure that all supportive housing tenants are paying no more than 30% of their income towards rent. We are proud to announce that since then, Supervisor Matt Haney introduced legislation that would close the gap for about 3,000 supportive housing tenants. It passed unanimously, and Mayor London Breed signed the legislation as well.

But in our backwards “strong mayor” system, the mayor could actually refuse to fund this. According to the Board of Supervisors Budget and Legislative Analyst, it would only cost \$6.1 million per year to make a difference in the lives of thousands of tenants. Even in our budget crisis, it’s still imperative that the city funds this beginning in the FY21-22 Budget Cycle and beyond.

So, here are 13 reasons to fund #30RightNow starting this budget cycle (plus a bonus 14th, because superstition):

1. #30RightNow keeps people in their homes, especially with COVID-19 still raging through our communities. In fact, according to the most recent eviction report from the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, 60% of all non-payment notices of eviction came from the one-third of supportive housing sites with rent burdened tenants, and there are, in some sites, more notices of eviction in a year than there were tenants.
2. #30RightNow helps with emergency preparedness. Often, people are financially struggling by mid-month, and since the shelter-in-place order began in March 2020, a lot of people have struggled with many emergency expenses, including WiFi for Zoom meetings, as well as stocking up on provisions to properly quarantine.
3. It costs the city more to respond to homelessness than it costs to provide real, dignified housing at 30% of income for only \$6.1 million per year.
4. Many supportive housing tenants are Black, and the murder of George Floyd has only accelerated our reckoning with institutional racism.
5. In the same vein as reason number 3, the city spends \$8.6 million per year on over-policing public housing tenants through the San Francisco Police Department’s District Housing Officers program. That’s \$2.6 million more than the #30RightNow ask.
6. Since Proposition E passed overwhelmingly last year, allowing for defunding the police, there is no excuse not to divert funding from carceral systems and into life-affirming services.
7. While the #30RightNow Act cannot be funded with money put aside for Proposition C, a 2018 ballot measure that put nearly \$500 million toward homeless services, those dollars will help make sure other homeless priorities are funded, and will clear a path for funding rents capped at 30% of income in government supportive housing through the general budget.
8. All city revenue measures passed last year, and though they won't necessarily be used to fund #30RightNow, it still clears a path for funding in the general budget.
9. The City of San Francisco can use retroactive reimbursements from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to help close the budget gap caused by COVID-19.
10. This year’s Board of Supervisors Budget and Finance Committee will be led by equity advocates. The new board president, Supervisor Shamann Walton, prioritized equity issues including #30RightNow when he appointed himself and Supervisor Hillary Ronen to the Budget committee and Supervisor Haney to chair the committee.
11. Funding #30RightNow in this budget cycle is supported by every supportive housing provider that has units in which rent is more than 30% of income—except for the Tenderloin Housing Clinic—in addition to Community Housing Partnership, Delivering Innovation in Supportive Housing, Supportive Housing Providers Network, and Dolores Street Community Services.
12. The #30RightNow policy statement has endorsements from 80 organizations dealing with housing rights as well as essential community services.
13. #30RightNow is supported by many tenants of color, such as Adriana K’in Romero, a transgender immigrant who lost her job and survived COVID and was helped by a decrease in rent. And just last week, a disabled Black man Supervisor Haney met on the street expressed his joy at having his rent reduced.

And as a bonus reason...

14. #30RightNow prevents people who are in the homelessness system from “holding out” and resisting services. Though service resistance is not widespread, we must understand why some might resist being housed, and unless we can have uniform standards (for rent and other matters), homeless people in our shelters and navigation centers may resist being “placed” if they anticipate paying more than half their income towards rent.
- As we hopefully come out of COVID, there is no reason to not reduce rents for all supportive housing tenants to 30% of their income by this fall. As our coalition continues to grow, we will continue to show up to make sure that this change is funded, and we need everyone to join us to make it happen. To get involved with the campaign, please email [30rightnow@gmail.com](mailto:30rightnow@gmail.com).

# WATER FOR ALL:

Stella Kunkat

## A CAMPAIGN TO MAKE DRINKING WATER ACCESS PERMANENT IN THE TENDERLOIN



The Water For All Initiative, a campaign led by the Human Rights Workgroup of the Coalition on Homelessness, is reacting to San Francisco's continued failure to provide potable water and other basic human necessities, such as access to showers and bathrooms, for unhoused residents in the Tenderloin. The initiative demands more permanent drinkable water sources throughout the Tenderloin that are accessible to its unhoused and precariously housed residents.

As part of the initiative, the Human Rights Workgroup conducted a survey that polled around 80 unhoused individuals in the Tenderloin to assess their current water access – or lack thereof. The surveys found that 65% of the respondents are not able to access 15 liters of safe water a day, which is the United Nations international emergency water standard. By contrast, housed San Franciscans use an average of 159 liters, or 42 gallons, of water a day. The Coalition survey also found that 40% of respondents must travel over 30 minutes to access water. Thirty minutes' round-trip travel is considered the standard for "basic access" to drinking water by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Beyond the sheer lack of water access points, many unhoused individuals deal with disabilities that impair their mobility. One survey participant said, "I have to make a commute to get water. How do I carry it around with disabilities?" Further, many have to worry about their belongings being stolen while they're gone

looking for water. "You can search for hours," one respondent told the Coalition.

The survey results confirmed that San Francisco's unhoused residents – who are internally displaced people in one of the wealthiest cities in the world – do not even have access to the lowest international standards for water and sanitation.

For the 3,659 unhoused residents of District 6 – which is nearly half of San Francisco's unhoused population concentrated in one district – there are currently only four water spigots and one shower available. To meet the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) standards established by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, which mandate that no more than 100 people share one working water faucet, San Francisco would have to provide an additional 36 water assets in the Tenderloin alone to serve its unhoused residents appropriately.

In addition to there being far too few water access points, most are only temporary fixtures, such as the several fire hydrant spigots installed last year as part of the city's COVID response. These fire hydrant spigots are far from ideal. To many unhoused residents that the Coalition has talked to while conducting the surveys, it seems unclear whether these spigots are safe and potable water sources, such as one person who said that they don't even trust giving their dog that water to drink.

Furthermore, the spigots sometimes get moved around the district, such that people cannot count on them for their daily water needs. The pandemic has made it even harder for unhoused folks to meet their basic water and hygiene needs. This is mostly because COVID restrictions have greatly reduced access to water in public places like schools, libraries, and parks. Being already more vulnerable due to the difficulty or impossibility of sheltering in place,

this reduced water access has put unhoused San Franciscans at an even greater risk of contracting COVID, as not meeting one's basic survival and sanitation needs is connected to a low immune response and the transmission of diseases.

The crisis-driven implementation of temporary water access points is not enough. Instead, an investment in permanent fixtures is necessary to provide a stable long-term solution. Importantly, these must be constructed in public spaces that are always accessible, rather than being made exclusive to certain people and limited to certain times. This would be a meaningful step away from further criminalizing homeless people, who are often affected by discriminating local statutes around sanitation.

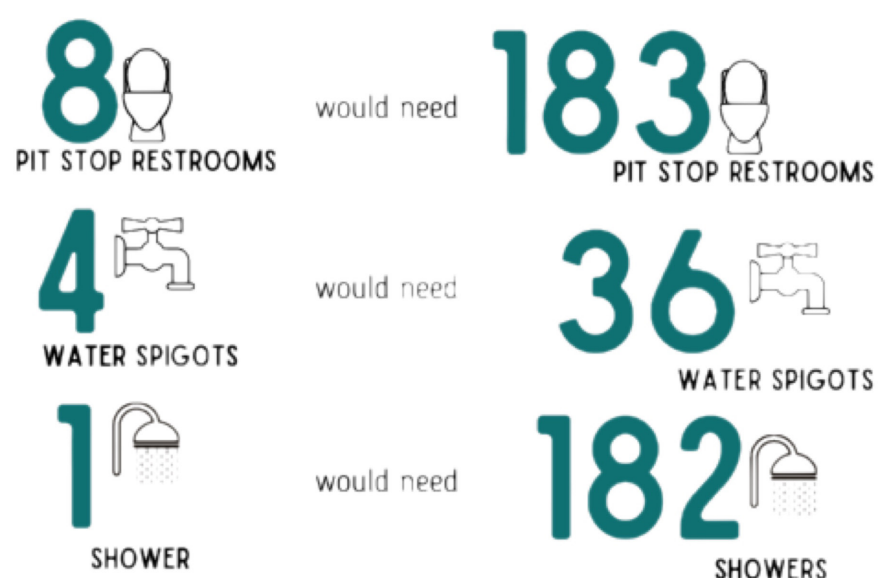
While appreciating the recent establishment of permanent potable water assets in the Tenderloin, Mission and Bayview, the Coalition's Human Rights Workgroup is demanding an additional three permanent water assets, in the form of water bottle filling stations with two spigots,

in the Tenderloin, which would increase the total to six. Long term, the group is looking to expand its demands to other districts and potentially the entire city.

The group is arguing that such permanent water fixtures are not just necessary to help solve the public health crisis, but that they are also an investment in the public space and living conditions shared by all San Franciscans, who would benefit from freely accessible water throughout the city. The fixtures also serve the purpose of encouraging the use of refillable water bottles, reducing the reliance on disposable plastic water bottles by unhoused and housed San Franciscans alike.

The Initiative's report capturing all the results from the water access survey and laying out its demands will be published in early March. And on World Water Day, Monday, March 22, the initiative will organize an action to raise public awareness around the lack of basic water access for San Francisco's unhoused residents! ■

### TO REACH UN-HCR GUIDELINES ON Water Access Sanitation and Hygiene IN THE TENDERLOIN



UN-HCR: United Nations - High Commissioner for Human Rights

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

If you or your family live in a shelter or SIP Hotel, and have been issued a warning or denial of service, please contact our office by phone at 415-346-7685, or by email at [sca@evictiondefense.org](mailto:sca@evictiondefense.org).

More information about our services can be found at: [evictiondefense.org/services/shelter-client-advocacy/](https://evictiondefense.org/services/shelter-client-advocacy/)

# New FINE AND FEE Discounts Available

Stella Kunkat

Thanks to the Financial Justice Project, a San Francisco city initiative, people experiencing homelessness are eligible for several new fine and fee discounts as well as one-time waivers.

Here is a summary of the most recently introduced discounts. Please spread the word so that anyone in need can make use of these.

## DISCOUNTS FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS:

These three discounts are available for any person experiencing homelessness who has had an assessment done at one of the city’s “Access Points” within the last six months. You can get an assessment done by phone, which you can schedule by calling (415) 487-3300 x7000. Once the assessment is done, you will be eligible for these discounts for six months. People living in single-resident occupancy units are also eligible for the discounts.

### 1. THE ACCESS PASS: FREE MUNI FOR UNHOUSED PEOPLE

The Access Pass lets you ride Muni for free. Once you receive the Access Pass, all your prior transit violation citations (MUNI fare evasion tickets) will be waived. The Access Pass is active for 2 years! You can apply for the Access Pass in four different ways: 1) Completing an application online at <https://www.sfmta.com/fares/access-pass> 2) Mailing a completed application to SFMTA. 3) Dropping off the completed application at an SFMTA sales kiosk. 4) Dropping off the application in-person at SFMTA Customer Service Center at 11 South Van Ness Avenue. When applying, your immigration status does not matter.

### 2. ONE-TIME WAIVER OF TOW AND STORAGE COSTS

This is a one-time waiver of the fees when your vehicle is towed and of the storage fees for up to 15 days. It can save you over \$1,000! To get this waiver, go to an Access Point or speak to them by phone. Next, when retrieving your car, bring a valid driver’s license and proof of ownership to AutoReturn, which is at 450 7th Street and open 24/7. AutoReturn can verify ownership for vehicles registered in California, so if the vehicle is registered in California, folks should bring the keys and a valid driver’s license to retrieve the car.

### 3. ONE-TIME WAIVER OF “BOOT” FINE

Sometimes, the City penalizes vehicle owners for unpaid citations by installing a wheel clamp, also known as a “boot,” on the vehicle. Similar to the row and storage waiver, this is a one-time waiver of the “boot” fine, which is normally \$505. You are eligible to have this fee waived for six months after contacting an Access Point—if you haven’t already, remember to first schedule an appointment for an assessment. To get this wheel clamp removed, bring a valid driver’s license and proof of ownership to either AutoReturn or to the SFMTA Customer Service Center.

### Last but not least: 4. MYCITATIONS ONLINE TOOL

## A LETTER OF HOPE FROM INSIDE WASHOE COUNTY DETENTION CENTER

Ricky Zepeda

My name is Ricky Zepeda. I am 44 years old. At the moment I find myself in a dilemma. My dilemma involves the law out here in Reno, Nevada, something I am sure some of you reading this can relate to. I have a lot of other personal issues I’m going through, but we’ll get into that much later.

Since we are fortunate to have this platform in Street Sheet, I want to take this time to attempt to drive some of you readers in a positive direction. I strongly believe that if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.

I was homeless as a child for years. Whenever I’m released from here, I’ll be homeless again. I lost everything before I was arrested this time—everything. Keep in mind that being homeless doesn’t make us worthless or any less than anybody else. We all have a purpose, and it is up to the individual to find that purpose. We have to get up, get motivated and help ourselves. But don’t confuse activity with productivity. We could be moving all day, but if we’re not moving with a purpose, it’s useless.

Build a foundation based on clarity and self-sacrifice. Set a goal—a realistic goal, a short-term goal. Maintain that forward progress. We don’t have to accomplish our goal in a day; as long as we’ve made some sort of advance toward what we’re attempting to accomplish, we’ve made “progress.” If there’s no meaning in what you do, it’s activity without direction, events

This is an online tool you can use to apply for a significant discount—possibly 80% or more—on some citations received in San Francisco. The amount of the discount will be based on your ability to pay. These include discounts on moving violations and “quality of life” citations. You can access the tool online at <https://mycitations.courts.ca.gov/>. You are eligible for the online tool and for the possible discounts if you receive public benefits such as: Medi-Cal, CalWORKs, CalFresh, Tribal TANF, General Assistance, SSI, County Adult Assistance Program, Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants, or In Home Supportive Services. You also qualify to use the online tool and for the discounts if your income is less than 250% of the federal

poverty level, which is about \$32,200 for a single person. Finally, you may be eligible if you have a financial hardship that you can explain and demonstrate in your application.

When filling out the application, you need to indicate your date of birth, your phone number, and a proof that you receive public benefits (e.g. EBT card, MediCal card, WIC Card, SSI checks etc.) with any private information like a social security number crossed out, as well as your case number or ticket number.

Demonstration video on how to apply and use the MyCitations online tool: <https://youtu.be/qozoGYTwmU>

without reason.

In my opinion, the system is designed for people to fail if we’re not wealthy and privileged. Well, to that, you know what I say? I’m tired of failing! Failing is no longer an option for me.

Let your shortcomings become a launching point for success. Utilize the resources that are in your community, and let’s rise so that the next generation doesn’t have to look down in shame but stand up tall with pride and feel good about the forward progress we’ve all made. You are not alone in this fight. I know a lot about self-sacrifice, and as long as I’m able to, I’ll continue to try and bring some sunshine to your life through Street Sheet.

So it’s around 1983. I’m about 6 or 7 years of age at this particular time. I’m with my older brother (who isn’t more than a little over a year older than me) and our mother. We are homeless, moving around from place to place. Downtown Los Angeles is where we call home. The ’80s were a real rough time in Los Angeles, and to make matters worse my mom is deep into her heroin addiction. Of course at this age I didn’t have a clue. At times she would leave us at a park, laundromat, or even a bus stop bench. She would be gone for about an hour or two, and when she would come back it seemed as if she was always tired and sleepy. She would leave my brother in charge and tell us she was going to go see a friend to try and get some food. Sometimes she came back with food;

other times she didn’t.

I can remember being balled up, lying in my mom’s lap on a bus stop bench, crying because I was so hungry. All night she would wave the bus by. At this time in Los Angeles the bus would run all night long. I can still remember the days and nights of being homeless. The unfortunate journey took us from park to park, sleeping on store roofs. I was the smallest of the three of us, so my mom and brother would boost me up into a window of some abandoned apartment or house, I would open it up, and we would sleep there for the night.

My mom eventually was arrested trying to buy drugs one day as we waited for her at a laundromat. When it closed we wandered around until about 2 a.m. A police officer saw us, picked us up and introduced us to the “system.” My life changed forever. At the time my brother thought my mom had abandoned us, and for years he didn’t speak to her. It was only when he was about 25 years old I was able to convince him to talk to our mom.

I’m 44 years old now, and I’m currently locked up in Nevada. But at the age of 18, I inherited my mom’s disease. I remember the first time I started doing drugs, and I wish I had never picked up that spoon. Soon I’ll be headed to a program but my story doesn’t end here.

We will see success eventually. If it’s not from me, it’ll be from you. We must believe with love.

Ricky

**Anastasia:** “I’ve been in San Francisco for about 2 months now. I moved out here because I just see more opportunities for my family, more opportunities for me to grow as a person with my children.”

**Anastasia:** “The shelter system, we stay in with a group of people. Sometimes we’re in bunk beds, it depends on where we’re at. But sometimes we’re on the floors and it’s just me and my daughter on a little mat. You go in and sign in and stay there for the night and the next morning you go do your normal stuff – Some (shelters) are different. Like we’ve tried a women’s shelter but we have my boyfriend with us so we couldn’t go into it women’s shelter.”

**Brenda:** “It’s hard to get a place. If you’re not there at the right time then if you’re in the middle of the line then sometimes we don’t get places to stay so we end up being in the streets, at the park sleeping. We have a tent, we always have to carry our stuff everywhere – our clothing, our papers, toothbrushes, hairbrushes, our hiking stuff.”

**Brenda:** He goes space hunting while we come here to Compass or someplace else that they send

us. What we will do is get up early in the morning, we will walk, and he will pick-up the whole tent and stuff and then he will go space hunting, somewhere he knows we’re not going to be thrown, harassed for the night.

**Brenda:** We’re on our own, one family, that’s all we have, each other. We have each other.

**Anastasia:** This is just us. This is home for us. It’s our family. We’re just trying to make out here, just being together, that’s it. We’d just rather be together, that’s home for me. That’s love, that’s home, that’s everything.

**Brenda:** “We want a home. Just somewhere we can lay our head down at night, know we’re warm and safe. Now since she’s going to have a baby we want one before then, before Christmas comes cause she’s going to be a Christmas baby.”

**Anastasia:** “Playing with my daughter. Playing with her, spending my time with her reading books. Trying to make her as happy as she can be, that’s it. I just want her to be happy and feel like we’re at home, that we’re not just hurting, suffering, that we’re OK.”

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Home

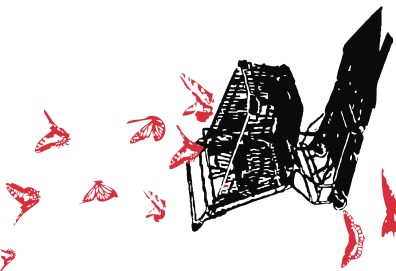
**Name:** Anastasia Lagrone, 20; Brenda Soyos, 40; Stacy Sayos, 3  
**Date:** 4 September 2019  
**Place:** Compass Family Services  
**Without a home:** About a month



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streetsheetstf@gmail.com

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Homelessness  
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# STREET SHEET

is now accepting submissions for our first ever

# DISABILITY ISSUE

We are seeking articles, narratives, poems, artwork, comics etc focusing on personal experiences with disabilities and well as disability justice issues.

Submissions can be emailed to

qwatts@cohsf.org or mailed to

280 Turk Street, SF 94102

\*payment may be available for submissions from people experiencing homelessness, please contact the editor for more information\*

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