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WE’RE ALL IN THIS TENT TOGETHER

SHELTER WAITLIST UPDATE: AS OF MARCH 1ST THERE ARE 1,008 SINGLE ADULTS ON THE WAITLIST FOR SHELTER IN SAN FRANCISCO
I’m not sure where to begin and end on this short tale about my homelessness. It’s just when you think it’s over the saga continues. So let’s start with when I first left home with no place to go. I was only 13 years old and I told my mama that I was a man, and she replied ‘get your ass out there and be a man. When yo’ mannish ass get yo’ own place you can do what you want to do. You have to pay the cost to be the boss.’

I thought of myself as a manchild going through a rite of passage from maleness to manhood. The initiation was to independently survive on my own. The whole process was a great challenge, more complicated than I ever imagined. The most important things were food, clothing and shelter, which meant money. So I went to my Great Grandma. She always knew what to do. She was 100 years old. She asked me what made me think I was a man? We both started laughing at the same time. The reality of the answer to her question was I really wasn’t ready. She stopped laughing and told me to go back home, boy.

Fast forward this story to when I became a man. I was really ready to be initiated into manhood. I started by graduating when I was 16 with my GED. My older brother gave me the hook up on how to become an emancipated youth with a job so I could have the same privilege as grown folks. I moved into my Victorian flat which meant I had a place, a job and my GED. I even bought his car. It was 1981, and I was a man. I soon learned that meant I had to have my own place, cause God blesses the child that has his own, and I soon learned that meant I had to have my own place, cause God blesses the child that has his own, like Billie Holiday said. I got laid off and left needles all over the place. The City’s inspection and get the contract with the City to house these actually uninhabitable, dilapidated and infested with mice. The owners did a little quick remodeling to pass the City’s inspection and get the contract with the City to house these low-income and no-income tenants.

The cold truth about the SROs opening up doors to the streets was that drug Ceci had taken was never to have a place to stay before, period. They trashed the restrooms and left needles all over the place.

There is an old saying “you don’t shit where you play your head,” meaning you don’t bring the streets home with you. The spread of AIDS escalated all over the TL at a rapid speed. The reality was beginning to take effect in SROs cuz people was always looking for a place to shoot up inside.

Now if you play with dirt, you’re gonna get dirty. So now the landlords became slumlords and this brought on the infamous bedbugs. These little bugs were the worst thing that could happen to an SRO tenant and managers who live there. My room was my sanctuary, and I kept my floor so clean you could eat and sleep on it. My SRO, like most SROs, had our share of rats and roaches. The bedbugs from hell didn’t play, they let you know they were here to stay. They are some continues on page 8...
The seminal clinic that developed the gender protocols by which bigger, better hospitals now define what patients now endeavor to treat trans patients. Lyon-Martin Health Services, is also my everyday clinic, and I still need it. It’s where I meet with my primary care provider, where I go when I’m sick, where I get my hormone scrips refilled, where I was able to get effective referrals for gender confirmation surgeries, where I got all my paperwork for legal gender change, etc—and no other clinic is close to being set up to deal with me.

Before becoming a patient at Lyon-Martin my primary medical care was through the county hospital emergency room, like you do when you can’t afford insurance. And despite what someone might have told you about woke medical practice trans people, so I tried to stay out of them. Lyon-Martin is the first place where it was humane and practical for me just to get hormone access. It’s still the only place I’ve ever felt comfortable enough to seek help for things I would (and have) otherwise tried to fix at home, from an abscess to a broken rib.

But in spite of how special it is, Lyon Martin has been underfunded since before any of us can remember. Which is to say that the services are horrible. I’ve waited hours to get seen, sometimes well past clinic hours. Paperwork gets lost, important phone calls don’t get made, providers disappear from one month to the next, medical approvals can take weeks of calling different offices. Every Lyon-Martin patient I know has gripes. So instead of giving up, I avoided it. Lyon-Martin losing: it’s autonomous services that will be reduced by this funding. It needs its own medical clinic being run by underslept trans people for safety and services, they happen is Lyon-Martin’s. So while the only building where that actually happens is Lyon-Martin, people, so I tried to stay out of them. Lyon-Martin is the first place where it was humane and practical for me just to get hormone access. It’s still the only place I’ve ever felt comfortable enough to seek help for things I would (and have) otherwise tried to fix at home, from an abscess to a broken rib.

As information regarding the coronavi- virus and its potential threat of becoming a pandemic permeate every media outlet arising in pandemion, prolonged homelessness as a social problem con- tinue to fall through the cracks. Ac- cording to the National Alliance to End Homelessness in 2018, a total of 552,890 people experienced homelessness. This is an estimate calculated by using the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Depart- ment’s annual Point-in-Time (PIT) count which is collected through Continuum of Care (COC) communities which self-report the homeless population. We believe that the self-report nature of the PIT count may hide a much higher number of the unhoused that went unreported. In our opinion, placing a focus on the subpopulations included in this group would help to eradicate this ongoing national issue. Establishing potential prevention, outreach, and permanency models for each subpopulation, such as former foster youth, prior to their experience with homelessness would provide more stable, permanent housing.

Most foster youth enter into a state of dependence during childhood or adoles- cence. Thus, social workers have enough time to educate their charges on the realities of homelessness and how to avoid falling into it. They should also dis- cuss the implications of being unable to sustain housing, provide basic needs, and the importance of self-sufficiency. Fur- thermore, they should ensure that foster youth understand the resources avail- able to mitigate the struggles associated with transitioning out. Many youth lack access to resources and can’t advocate for themselves effectively when applying for affordable housing programs like Section 8, low-income housing or assisted living. Basic life skills and transitional plans should also be introduced with youth early to better prepare them for the responsibilities of adulthood.

Foster youth should also be made aware of programs that offer career/employ- ment readiness, soft-skill preparation, and budgeting. Moreover, if TAY were encouraged to seek employment prior to aging out, they would be better equipped to avoid homelessness. Furthermore, awareness of programs that teach renter’s rights, tenant responsibilities, landlord outreach assistance, and how to prevent eviction would provide more housing stability. Homelessness for TAY is a serious issue that must be addressed with greater urgency, prior to them aging out. It is our duty to provide knowledge, resources, and programs that assist this future generation in securing stable, permanent housing.

In January 2020, HUD Secretary Ben Carson awarded $500,000 to the housing authorities in Florida, Kentucky, Virginia and Oregon to assist TAY at risk of homelessness, called the Foster Youth to Independence initiative (FYI). If this type of program were available nationwide, it would have a tremendous impact on preventing TAY homelessness. If a nationwide FYI initiative was combined with life-skills classes in foster care, the problem could be significantly reduced.
Project Homeless Connect planned to host their regular homelessness services fair that centralizes services for unhoused people to access on March 4. But two days before the date, the group sent out an email alerting participants and providers that the fair was cancelled, on the recommendation of the Department of Public Health (DPH). Health officials were gearing up for Coronavirus to hit the city, and bringing together thousands of providers and volunteers and unhoused people could pose a risk to the health of all in attendance. The same day, Mayor London Breed declared a state of emergency in San Francisco, saying that it is only a matter of time before the virus hits San Francisco.

Since then, the very real threat posed by this new epidemic has become more clear, resulting in a ban on all large social gatherings over 1,000 people within San Francisco and many investments and recommendations coming from the city level. The health recommendations put out by the Department of Public Health encourage regular handwashing, use of hand sanitizer, and staying home when sick. But those recommendations are close to impossible for homeless folks to follow given the lack of public restrooms and the lack of housing to isolate oneself.

As San Francisco begins to wealth- er the coming epidemic, homeless people stand at great risk, not only of contracting the virus, but of being a convenient scapegoat to take attention off the real failures in the city’s emergency response. That San Francisco has failed to provide housing to all of its residents, that there are people who are unable to avoid contact with infected individuals, and have limited access to hygiene and hand-washing. Additionally, many unhoused people have weakened immune systems because of exposure to the elements, sleep deprivation, and the extreme stress caused by homelessness.

It is cruel at any time to conduct encampment sweeps in a purportedly progressive city with upwards of 1,000 people languishing on the waitlist for shelter. Doing so in the midst of a State of Emergency as we wait for an inevitable epidemic to hit is unconscionable. And yet homeless people are still reporting being targeted by encampment sweeps led by the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) and San Francisco Public Works. These sweeps deprive already vulnerable people of essential medications, survival gear, and stability needed to minimize risk and keep immune systems fortified.

“It upsets me to the fullest that they are still doing sweeps because we’re in a state of emergency but DPW and SFPD have got no heart for the individuals who don’t have nowhere else to go,” said Shyhylene Brown, who lives in an SRO and spent a lot of her time working with homeless people in encampments. “They don’t care about nothing but themselves and their pockets, even if that means sweeping us off the streets. It’s just crazy.”

Local shelters and SROs centralize people who are already at risk, which could lead to exposure for residents. This week Mayor Breed announced $5 million in emergency funding to keep shelters and Navigation Centers open 24/7, expand meal service in shelters and SROs, and help local nonprofits clean the shelters, supportive housing buildings, and SROs. The money will also be used to keep shelters, including Navigation Centers, open 24/7.

In Washington state, King County is finalizing a purchase of a motel that would house Coronavirus patients who are unable to self-isolate due to their lack of housing, and is also bringing in modular units from elsewhere for emergency shelter. They are also encouraging local shelters to spread information about best practices and to ensure that beds are spaced enough to minimize exposure to the virus. San Francisco announced that similarly it will be offering space in RVs for anyone who tests positive or has been exposed to the virus who cannot self-quarantine because they are in an SRO or are homeless.

The city is making a good effort to prepare, but there are more steps that need to be taken to ensure that homeless people can stay safe during this crisis and going forward. In a city with so much concentrated wealth, homelessness should not be taken as a given. We have to push collectively to house the thousands of people that are homeless because of federal disinvestment and local negligence. That Mayor Breed is preparing to compromise on Proposition C, a ballot initiative that won a majority of voter support last year that marks $500 million for homeless housing, underscores her betrayal of homeless people when folks are most vulnerable.

It has become clear that containment is no longer a possibility as almost two dozen cases have now been documented locally as of press time. The San Francisco Unified School District has cancelled classes for the next three weeks to prevent spread, and many organizations are encouraging staff to work from home. The goal right now is to “flatten the curve” so that the number of cases doesn’t spike all at once, but is staggered so as not to deplete resources in hospitals and other institutions.

Right now organizations and marginalized people are scrambling to identify the many needs of impacted people who will lose income and jobs, who lack adequate health care in jails and detention centers, who may face eviction if they can’t make rent. In order to have a just and equitable response to this, we need to find ways to center the needs and contributions of impacted people.

“I feel like the No. 1 thing being left out of the narrative is the people who will be impacted the most seniors and people with pre-existing health conditions,” said Zach K., a disability justice advocate and Street Sheet contributor. “It’s a repeat of what we’ve seen with the wildfires and other disasters, where people with disabilities and seniors are seen as collateral damage, and our lives are seen as not as valuable. Those of us who are actually dying in higher numbers are not being prioritized, even though everything indicates that we should be.”

Zach says that one of the main concerns he has is getting access to essentials like hand sanitizer that would help him stay safe during this crisis, because able-bodied people have been stockpiling resources that disabled people and chronically ill people desperately need. He recommends that the City of San Francisco work with major distributors to set aside some of those resources and distribute them to folks who need them, especially to disabled homeless folks in encampments and shelters. But Zach also says we need to look to each other for support right now and not wait for city officials to take appropriate action.

“There is a situation here, like in so many other crises, we’re told to trust the experts and the institutions, and of course, they have access to all the important medical data and infrastructure,” he said. “However we know from experience, both from our everyday experiences and from historical epidemics, that these institutions fail us regularly. And so the question is how do we create grassroots responses, and how do we unify to protect ourselves while also being critical of the so-called leaders we’re expected to trust without question.”

As we wait for a more thorough federal and local response to the Coronavirus outbreak, Shyhylene Brown talks about steps homeless people can take to prevent spreading and contracting the virus.

“To be honest with you, wash your hands, take care of your necessary hygiene. Drink plenty of fluids,” Brown said. “The city needs to go and teach us what this virus is and how we as citizens of the USA can better help one another to stay healthy. And I feel that they already know, get vaccinated, get your flu shot. But they need to tell us more about it, and how we can combat it.”

These steps can help prevent the spread of the virus. And just as importantly, we need to be taking care of ourselves so we can stay mentally and physically strong during a very challenging time. Zach puts it well:

“One of the best things we can do moving forward is to listen to people with chronic health problems. We are the leaders in these situations, and not only do we need to be protected, we need to be listened to. And one of the things we’ve learned to do for our own survival is what’s called radical self-care. And that means countering the negative internal dialogue in our heads, and the fear, with powerful acts of compassion and self love. Now is the time to pick up that art project you’ve been putting on hold, listen to that album that you haven’t had time to listen to, and cook the good food that you feel like has been waiting in the fridge too long. Now is the time to treat yourself.”

"Following the CDC's guidelines is recommended. But..."

The most vulnerable among our community are being 'sworn away'... again.

The Economic Injustice of Epidemics

MINA
Concern about the spread of coronavirus is widespread, including in homeless communities here in San Francisco. There is no reason to believe that homeless people are more likely to get the virus, and we should collectively shut down any effort to further stigmatize those living in encampments or shelters. However, if the virus does spread to homeless people we must be sure that there will be adequate resources and information offered to those impacted as well as our community at large, and we need to make sure homeless people have the resources to prevent infection. The following is a list of recommendations to city officials thinking through a response to the spread of coronavirus that account for the particular needs and vulnerabilities of unhoused San Franciscans.

**GENERAL**

- A plan for disseminating information to homeless people and front-line service providers, preventing spread of the virus, and responding to potential outbreaks, should be developed with input from homeless people, advocates, and services providers. These community members have additional resources to employ that can help more people, and can advise on the challenges of engaging an emergency response that reaches as many unhoused San Franciscans as possible.
- Offer a 24/7 anonymous hotline for folks who think they have been exposed to the virus that is absolutely free from police, ICE, or any involuntary detention. The toll free number should be staffed by people trained to share resources specific to unhoused people
- Outreach should be done in encampments, shelters, drop-ins, and SROs to share information about hygiene stations, testing facilities, and individual housing resources and help people enroll in Medicaid or local health plans.
- There should be a moratorium on evictions in San Francisco so that no new people are experiencing homelessness as a result of this virus.
- Plans of action for responding to coronavirus in encampments, Navigation Centers, shelters, and SROs to share information about hygiene stations, testing facilities, and individual housing resources and help people enroll in Medicaid or local health plans.

**ENCAMPMENTS**

- Homeless people are already at greater risk because of compromised health due to stress, chronic sleep deprivation, and exposure. Given the crisis we are facing, we need an immediate moratorium on sweeps so that people in encampments can stay in touch with health outreach workers, have consistent access to hygiene stations, not be forcibly deprived of medications and survival gear that protect people, and can get enough sleep to keep their immune systems up.
- Increase hygiene facilities, including hand washing stations and pit stops, in areas with known encampments.
- Ensure outreach workers are disseminating information on coronavirus symptoms, prevention strategies, and hygiene station locations.
- Health workers, rather than police, should always be the first responders to health concerns in encampments.
- Individual housing accommodations, potentially including modular units, should be arranged immediately for anyone infected to prevent transmission of the virus to other residents. This has been done in the Seattle area.
- There should be a moratorium on towing vehicles that house people, as these individual accommodations make it possible for people to self-quarantine.

**CONGREGATE SHELTERS, DROP-INS, AND NAVIGATION CENTERS**

- San Francisco should develop a plan for congregate shelters and drop-ins that makes coronavirus tests available when possible for folks who may be infected.
- City staff should lead trainings for service providers and guests on how to minimize risk of transmission, prevent contamination, and respond to the virus.
- Shelter and drop-in staff should be regularly sanitizing surfaces to prevent contamination.
- Individual accommodations should be arranged immediately for anyone infected, and anyone who is known to have been exposed to the virus so shelter or drop-in guests don’t have prolonged exposure.
- People staying in shelters, drop-ins, or Navigation Centers should have access to harm reduction tools and should not be denied service for any rule violations short of violence.

**SHELTERS, NAVIGATION CENTERS, AND DROP-INS**

- Shelters, Navigation Centers, and Drop-ins should be open 24/7 and the city should be ready to open emergency shelter space if consistent with public health recommendations.
- San Francisco’s COVID-19 plan should take into consideration input from the SRO Collaborative in shaping a response to the heightened risk in congregate living facilities.

**COUNTY JAIL SYSTEM**

- We recognize that 40% of the county jail population is comprised of people experiencing homelessness. Medical teams should be dispatched to jails, prisons, halfway houses, and other locked facilities to assess and treat patients. Physicians on-site must have the authority to dictate necessary changes in facility conditions in order to treat the sick and stem the spread of the illness.
- Most facilities already have inadequate medical staffing and an outbreak will likely lead to many people failing to come to work. San Francisco should (at least) temporarily release anyone currently being held in jail who is not considered a threat to public safety, as is currently being done in Iran.

**DISABILITY JUSTICE**

- The majority of homeless people in San Francisco have one or more physical and/or mental disabilities. San Francisco’s COVID-19 plan should include transportation assistance and accessible care for patients with disabilities. These guidelines should be developed in collaboration with disabled people and public health officials and must respect the rights and autonomy of people with disabilities.

This list of recommendations comes from homeless people and advocates at the Coalition on Homelessness and the Street Sheet newspaper in San Francisco, and will be kept updated on our website STREETSheet.org. Many of our recommendations were adapted from this amazing resource created by Kelly Hayes, a queer indigenous organizer and nonviolent direct action trainer with We Charge Genocide and the Chicago Light Brigade, and published on transformativespaces.org.
The Director of the city Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (DHS) stepped down into the much lower position of running the embattled "Healthy Streets Operation Center (HSOC)", after admitting the operation a complete failure.

HSOC started in January of 2018 following a surge of encampments in the Bayview, Mission and South of Market. It started as a mixed bag. Part Encampment resolution, where the homeless department would identify a large encampment, give campers two weeks' notice and work with them until appropriate accommodations were found, and part sweep machine the adventure had obvious mixed results. HSOC started becoming a centralized unit, led by SFPD, over the course of that first year. By the end of 2018, the resolutions were gone, and it was primarily a response to complaints via 311. It moved from being centered on reducing encampments by moving folks inside to a complaint driven response. However, the entire philosophy from the beginning was about reducing tents. In the joy of human beings were not factored in at all, as we scoured emails and documents from HSOC.

"It is healthy for bureaucracies to acknowledge when they have tried something and it didn't work," Kostisky said during the most recent quarterly Local Homeless Coordinating Board meeting where data from HSOC was presented. The data was beyond dismal. Before the police took over the response, there was a 65% acceptance into services, whereas after only 5% acceptance and 5% of the people who came in were called a "slow-roll" approach would be used. Not only that, but the overarching police response also decreased acceptance into services by outreach workers down to 17%.

It is important to deconstruct these numbers a bit. Acceptance into services can be a very misleading term. Often the services offered — such as those by police are non-existent, limited or inappropriate. For example, they started setting aside day 7 navigation center beds for police. Many unhoused people would happily move into navigation center beds for long stays, but the churn of moving from streets to shelter and back to the streets often leaves people on the streets in worse shape. The problem circles in part back to Kostisky. In a June 15, 2018 memo to then Department of Public Works Director Nuru (recently arrested by FBI), he stated "Our goal is not to move tents or structures in the city." This is an instruction to lead with criminalization and to conduct sweeps except in rare exceptions when there are no resolutions going on.

June 15, 2018 email from Jeff Kostisky to Muhammad Nuru, Chief Scott, Jason Elliott, and Naomi Kelly on HSOC Process Obtained through Sunshine act Request.

The problem is pretty clear: when your work to address homelessness is centered on getting rid of tents, you are left with people who are unsHELtered and alone. That means the homeless people you are supposed to be helping are in worse shape than when you started.

Part of the HSOC communication, obtained through a sunshine act request there was no mention of any social service agency or homeless outreach worker at all.

In another HSOC communications obtained through a sunshine act request there was no mention of any social service agency or homeless outreach worker at all.

The changes look good to the Coalition on Homelessness, however we would rather the operation be dismantled. The contrast is all wrong, and designed around political outcomes such as decreasing tents and not centered on homeless people themselves. We welcome the change, but would like to see the police removed and we are not confident they will stop responding to complaints. The change away from a police response is just too big, too ingrained in our systems. If we truly move to a health oriented response to homelessness instead of a criminal justice one, that will take movement not just a change in leadership. Movement is exactly what we are building now.
SUFFERING OF SAN FRANCISCO’S HOMELESS
Housing Crisis and Alleviate the
$300 Million to Address the Affordable
Million, Providing the City with Over
Corporations 0.5% after their first $50
Would Tax San Francisco’s Largest
(OCOH), the 2018 Measure, Which
Proposition C - Our City, Our Home
Continual Dismissal and Disregard of
Confront Mayor London Breed’s
Homelessness” Rally Will Seek to
Potential Attendees, Including Those
Coalition Acted in the Interest of All Its
To Address the COVID-19 Spread, the
March 6. With These Escalating Efforts
Starting Novel Testing on March 2, and
A State of Emergency on February 25,
Known as the Coronavirus, by Declaring
Down the Spread of COVID-19, Also
Implemented the Measure as Over 62%
Support for Her to Protect Proposition C - Our
Signed — Not to the OCOH’s Pledge
Pledge Was Sent, the Mayor Finally
Her Support on Seven Points Related
Breed’s Office Asking Her to Affirm
Her Support on Seven Points Related
Prop. C, Including Not to Supplant or
Cut the $300 Million Baseline. Concurrently,
Ten of Her Colleagues on the Board of Supervisors, Except
District 2’s Catherine Stefani, Signed on
To Honor the Voters’ Wishes, Include and
Empower OCOH’s Role, and to Tax Big
Corporations to Address Homelessness in the City.
Twenty-seven Days After the
Pledge Was Sent, the Mayor Finally
Signed — Not to the OCOH’s Pledge for Her to Protect Proposition C - Our
City, Our Home, But to an Apathetic and Disingenuous Letter Highlighting That Her Priorities Lie Not with the
62% of San Francisco’s Voters, Not to Homeless San Franciscans, and Not to Their Advocates and Allies, But Rather to the City’s Largest Corporations. She Declared That She Was “Generally Supportive” of OCOH’s Priorities, However, She Quickly Also Noted That “Compromises Will Be Likely.” However, When Voters Overwhelmingly Approved the Measure, They Did So Without Compromising on the 4,000 Units of Affordable Housing, 1,000 Shelter Beds, Expanding Behavioral Health Services for 1,600 San Franciscans, and Homelessness Prevention Measures for 7,000 Households That Would Be Funded by Prop. C’s Tax on San Francisco’s Largest Corporations.
Homeless Individuals, Families, Youth, Homeless Advocates and Allies, as Well as Dozens of Community Organizations Have Joined With OCOH and the Coalition to Demand Leadership and Action by the Mayor to Address the Affordable Housing Crisis and Homelessness. Furthermore, the Outbreak of COVID-19 Has Exacerbated the Issues Facing Homeless People and Highlighted the Absolute Need for Affordable Housing and the Support Services That Would Be Robustly Funded and Provided by Prop. C. The Mayor’s Response to Our Pledge, After More Than Three Weeks, Displays Not Only Her Inaction Towards Homelessness, But Also Her Lack of Leadership on an Issue Dominating Headlines and the Minds of San Franciscans Especially During the COVID-19 Crisis. Homeless People in the City Continue to Suffer on the Streets, While Mayor Breed Refuses to Pledge Her Support.
On March 9, Acting Only by the Pressure of COVID-19, Mayor Breed Prepared $5 Million, of Which 20% Would Be Set Aside for the Private Owners of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Spaces Alone. The $5 Million Has Been earmarked to Support Homeless and SRO-Housed People by Expanding Access to Certain Spaces, Deep Cleaning Procedures and Meal Delivery Programs. The Day After, the Mayor Acted to Identify Temporary Housing, Vacant Hotel Rooms and Unoccupied Residential Spaces, to Allow Potentially Infected Individuals the Space to Quarantine and Recover, Including a Site in the Presidio for People in Residential Vehicles. While Prop. C Awaits the Mayor’s Support, While People Reside on Our Streets, the Mayor Only Seems to Act When a Crisis Strikes the City. Where Was the $5 Million for Shelters, Navigation Centers and SROs Before the Outbreak? How Can Temporary Housing Just Now Be Found for People? Why Is Safe Parking Just Now Being Set Aside for the Vehicularly Housed?
Five Hundred Days Will Have Passed Since Prop. C’s Passage, 43 Days Will Have Passed Since Mayor Breed First Received Our Pledge to Protect Prop. C, and 16 Days Will Have Passed Since We Were Informed That “Compromises Would Be Likely” on Prop. C’s Funding, When We Gather for the “Not a Penny Less on Homelessness” Rally on Wednesday, March 25. Unfortunately, As Has Been the Case Throughout Mayor Breed’s Tenure, OCOH, the Coalition, Homeless Individuals, Families, Youth, Advocates and Allies, and Community Organizations Have Had to Continually Act, Rally, and Lead on Addressing the Affordable Housing Crisis and Homelessness in San Francisco. Please Join Us as We Unite and Pressure Mayor London Breed to Sign the Pledge, Respect the Will of Voters, and Lead the City on These Issues.
LIVING AND Surviving
Homelessness
continued from page 2...

ticious little bastards that move real
fast and you know they have bitten
you when they take a plug out your
ass.

The rats had grown as big as cats,
the way they ran around the hallway
at night like they own the place
had me scared to use the bathroom
at night. My room at one time was
my sanctuary, the only place I felt
comfortable and got peace of mind.
I had a portable heater, rotating fan,
entertainment center with remote
control, which consisted of a dual
cassette deck, record player, CD player,
AM/FM stereo, 100 watt amp, twin
three-foot tri-axle speakers, 40-
inch flat screen TV, with remote. My
Muslim prayer rug on the floor and
nobody but me would use this rug
to pray five times a day. Last but not
least, I had a 49ers quilt on my bed.

My room was a very cozy
cubbyhole. The bedbugs got into
everything and ruined my life. My
kids couldn’t even come over any
more. They were teenagers who loved
to play videogames at their daddy’s
house. The whole building became
infested with these little monsters.
The creeps came out at night. You
would feel it when they bit and they
crawled into every crevice in sight.
Our building had 19 health violations
they had pest control come through
for roaches, but not for bedbugs. I
had to get rid of everything. The
longer I kept everything, the more the
bedbugs would breed. They were not
just biting my body they would also
eat chunks of the wood. I guess they
were teething or something.

The manager acted like he either
wouldn’t or couldn’t do anything
about it. Then the chickens came home
to roost and him, and his girlfriend
started getting bitten by the bedbugs.
The health department came out
again and claimed they couldn’t see
any signs of bedbugs until I pulled one
out of the boxspring, trapped him
with tape, and put him in an airtight
jar. The owner ended up selling the
building, and I launched a class action
lawsuit against him and the new
owner. The other tenants loved me
like I was family.