



MINIMUM SUGGESTED DONATION TWO DOLLARS.

STREET SHEET IS SOLD BY HOMELESS AND LOW-INCOME VENDORS WHO KEEP 100% OF THE PROCEEDS.

VENDORS RECEIVE UP TO 75 PAPERS PER DAY FOR FREE.

STREET SHEET IS READER SUPPORTED, ADVERTISING FREE, AND AIMS TO LIFT UP THE VOICES OF THOSE LIVING IN POVERTY IN SAN FRANCISCO.

# STREET SHEET

TARIQ JOHNSON:  
SURVIVING HOMELESSNESS

2

SAVE LYON MARTIN CLINIC!  
& OP-ED ON FOSTER CARE

3

CORONAVIRUS SPREADS IN  
SAN FRANCISCO

4

RECOMMENDATIONS ON RE-  
SPONDING TO CORONAVIRUS

5

HSH DIRECTOR KOSITSKY TO  
STEP DOWN, TAKE OVER HSOC

6

## WE'RE ALL IN THIS TENT TOGETHER



Poster  
Syndicate  
San Francisco

SHELTER WAITLIST UPDATE: AS OF MARCH 1ST THERE ARE 1,008 SINGLE ADULTS ON THE WAITLIST FOR SHELTER IN SAN FRANCISCO

# TARIQ JOHNSON’S NARRATIVE ON LIVING AND SURVIVING HOMELESSNESS: PART I

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 hookup on how to become an emancipated youth with a job so I could have the same privilege as grown folks. I moved into his 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, like Billie Holiday said. I got laid off from my job and ended up on GA and food stamps, which came with a room for two weeks.

Back then life was sweet in San Francisco. There wasn’t a whole lot of homelessness — you didn’t see a bunch of people sleeping in the streets unless they were winos or bums.

So I got my GA room at a place called the Apollo, located on 16th and Valencia. One thing about a GA room was you couldn’t have any visitors. That was one rule they enforced, they would put you and your visitors out. The Apollo was a prototype of what would become what is known today as an SRO, short for single-resident occupied. It was like most SROs, one

room, shared bathroom down the hall, mice everywhere. The building was almost 100 years old. They got the contract with the city to make more money cause they were renting at \$25 a night. The city hotel voucher paid more than that, sometimes \$200 a week. Do the math on that and you’ll see they were raking in the dough. These days, the same room with nothing but a sink and a bed inside would cost you \$100 a night. Most people would be grateful just to have a warm place to stay and hot & cold running water. When your two weeks expired, you had to leave the GA room. They would make sure you left sooner than later, regardless of checkout time.

As the years passed by, the homeless community began to grow and develop in the Tenderloin. The resources like drop-in centers, soup kitchens, shelters, and finally, after 15 to 20 years of going through the revolving door of homelessness, couch surfing from here to there with family and friends, back to the streets, the City came up with a fake-ass solution to homelessness called SRO. Most of these places were 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 addicts came up. Some of them never had 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 lay 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...

DONATE TO  
KEEP STREET  
SHEET GOING  
STRONG!



SCAN ME

[coalition.networkforgood.com](http://coalition.networkforgood.com)

COALITION  
ON HOMELESSNESS

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

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

WANT TO GET  
INVOLVED?

VOLUNTEER WITH US!

PHOTOGRAPHERS &  
VIDEOGRAPHERS &  
TRANSLATORS & ARTISTS &  
WRITERS & POETS & COMIC  
CREATORS & COPYEDITORS

DONATE!

LAPTOPS & DIGITAL  
CAMERAS & AUDIO  
RECORDERS & SNACKS

CONTACT:

[STREETSHEETSF@GMAIL.COM](mailto:STREETSHEETSF@GMAIL.COM)

STREET SHEET STAFF

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

Editor, Quiver Watts (they/them)  
Assistant Editor, TJ Johnston  
Vendor Coordinator, Emmett House

Our contributors include:

Jennifer Friedenbach, Jason Law, Miguel Carrera, Kelley Cutler, Jesus Perez, Armando del toro Garcia, Tracey Mixon, Shyenene Brown, Meghan “Roadkill” Johnson, Jacquelyn Evans, Ben Buczkowski, Olivia Glowacki, Mike Russo, Zach K, Tariq Johnson, Scout Tran, Kelliann Miranda, Carol Echeverry, Brian Edwards

WORKGROUP MEETINGS

HOUSING JUSTICE WORK GROUP  
Every Tuesday at noon

AT 280 TURK STREET

HUMAN RIGHTS WORK GROUP  
Every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m.

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

To learn more about COH workgroup meetings, contact us at : 415-346-3740, or go at : [www.cohsf.org](http://www.cohsf.org)

WRITING OUT  
THE PANDEMIC

Looking for something to do while self-isolating in your tent, RV, bedroom, or SRO? Here are some writing prompts to keep you busy!

- What is one way you have offered or recieved support from your community during the Coronavirus outbreak?
- What do you wish the City was doing to keep you safe?
- What helps you relax and stay grounded when the world outside seems overwhelming?

Send submissions to  
[qwatts@cohshf.org](mailto:qwatts@cohshf.org)

# FIGHT FOR ESSENTIAL TRANS SERVICES

Scout Tran

The seminal clinic that developed the gender protocols by which bigger, better funded medical providers 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 gender practices, ERs are still a terrifying place for 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 have 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 why do I keep going back? Because I don't get misgendered. Because my transness is not an issue. Inside that clinic my recorded birth gender is literally the least interesting thing about me, which means the world to me. While San Francisco advertises itself as a haven for trans acceptance—and sorry to burst your bubble, but—the only building where that actually happens is Lyon-Martin's. So while trans people continue to move to the Bay Area for safety and services, they are increasingly let down as The City's best trans service is a hole-in-the-wall clinic being run by underslept trans folks trying to keep it all together for their community with some string and duct tape. Lyon-Martin needs major funding. It needs its own medical director. It needs to be expanded and cherished and protected. But if we're going to be honest I would follow Lyon-

Martin anywhere even without those things, even if I'm still waiting hours to get my blood drawn after-hours in a hallway by a student, because when it comes down to it I still need those services. But regardless of the other services that will be reduced by this move, there is one thing I can't suffer Lyon-Martin losing: it's autonomous front desk. If that goes, I'd rather go back to mail-ordering my hormones and treating my illnesses by anecdotal advice from internet forums, even if it kills me.

If you're not trans, my terror of losing a front desk probably doesn't make sense: it's 2020 after all, no one dares to be openly transphobic anymore, why can't I just go to any other clinic? Because... because it's embarrassing to be trans. The gumption it takes to call up a general-practice receptionist and say, for instance, "I need an appointment. No

I'm not sick I'm... I'm a woman and I need hormones," is immeasurable. To have to do that once on the phone, again at the front desk, again to the intake nurse, again to your assigned doctor, again to your social worker, therapist, insurance rep, etc etc—the point is, we often just don't. I avoided medical care for 15 years because of it; I'm lucky I never had anything worse than a cold that whole time. This winter when I started leaking fluid out of a hole in my chest, I waited three extra days and rode 400 cold miles on my motorcycle to get back to Lyon-Martin for an antibiotic scrip, because I wasn't about to ask an ER doctor to take a look at my complicated body. I would have rather bought antibiotics off the street. If Lyon-Martin didn't exist in my world, I would have let the infection progress until it was unbearable, which could have easily killed me instead of just taking my right breast. Just because I'm trans.

A trans-specific medical clinic is not a legacy service, somehow unnecessary now that Kaiser has its own trans pipeline and SFGH has finally figured out what pronouns are. Because until hospitals can figure out how to protect me while I'm in their care, they are not an option for me. And San Francisco—the city, nor any resident therein—doesn't get to claim an LGBT-friendly history, tout our Transgender Cultural District, or Pride at all, while it pulls the rug out from under its trans folks. We're still here. We can't leave. Please let us have this one little thing. ■

*Scout Tran is President of the Board of Traction Project, a founding member of The Degenderettes, an Eisner-nominated artist with work commissioned by the SFMOMA, and was born and raised in the Bay Area.*

## FORMER FOSTER YOUTH AND HOMELESSNESS

Kelliann Miranda and Carol Echeverry

As information regarding the coronavirus and its potential threat of becoming a pandemic permeate every media outlet arising in pandemonium, prolonged homelessness as a social problem continues to fall through the cracks. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness in 2018, a total of 552,830 people experienced homelessness. This is an estimate calculated by using the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department's annual Point-in-Time (PIT) count which is collected through Continuum of Care (COC) communities who 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 be a good start.

Recent statistics obtained by Foster Focus outlined that half of the national homeless population has involvement in foster care. When correlating this statistic with the PIT count in 2018, we posit that there may be over 250,000 members of the homeless population that have a history of foster care. As per The National Center for Housing and Child Welfare (NCHCW),

about 20,000 youth age out of foster care annually; roughly 25% of them experience homelessness within four years of leaving the system. Foster Focus also reported that 40% to 50% transitional aged youth (TAY) who leave care experience homelessness within 18 months of aging out. These astronomical statistics could be a result of the lack of a stable support system, limited access to affordable housing and ignorance to available resources. We believe that the earlier interventions can occur, the better the outcomes. Providing current foster youth with support and resources to aid their self-sufficiency will make them less likely to experience homelessness and in turn, help diminish the rise in homelessness.

Most foster youth enter into a state of dependence during childhood or adolescence. 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 discuss the implications of being unable to sustain housing, provide basic needs, and the importance of self-sufficiency. Furthermore, they should ensure that foster youth understand the resources available 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/employment 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. ■

# CONFRONTING THE CORONAVIRUS IN SAN FRANCISCO

Quiver Watts

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 weather 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 means that unhoused people 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 Shyhyene Brown, who lives in an SRO and spend 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 hire workers to deep-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 \$300 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 organizers 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 crisis, 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 preexisting 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 he also says we need to look to each other for support right now and not wait for city officials to take appropriate action.

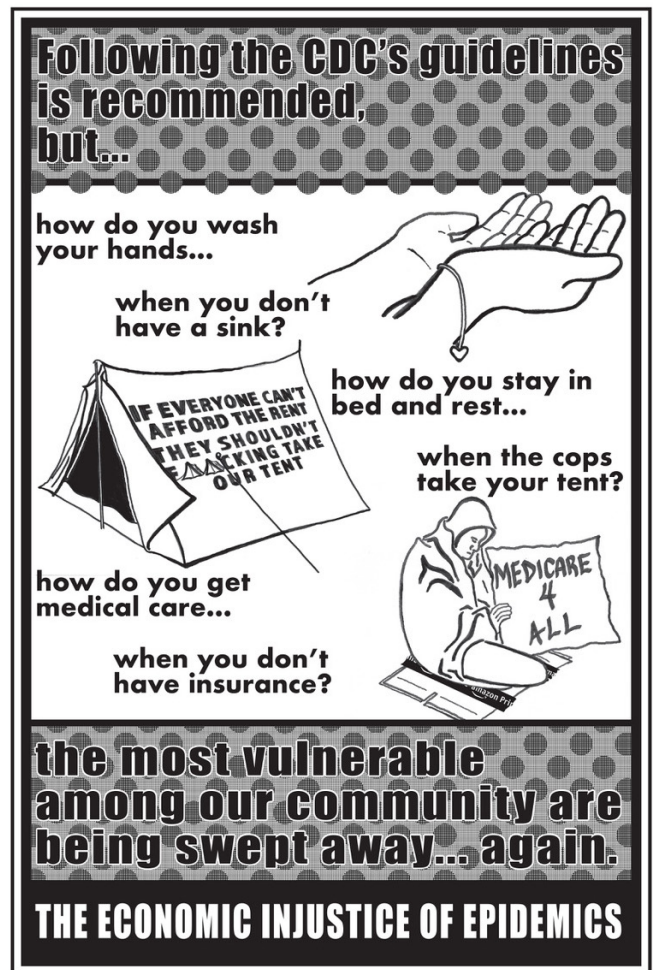
"We have a situation where, like in so many other crises, we're told to trust the experts and the institutions, and of course, they have access to all the important medical data and infrastructure, he said. "However we know from experience, both from our everyday experiences and from historical epidemics, 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, Shyhyene 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." ■

Poster  
Syndicate

# WHAT IF YOU CAN'T STAY HOME?

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT THE HEALTH OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS DURING THE CORNAVIRUS STATE OF EMERGENCY

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 info on 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 should be made publicly available on the HSH and DPH websites.

### 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. Expand hours at existing pit stops.
- 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. This should include safe parking programs for people who are vehicularly housed.
- 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 other 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 should be open 24/7 and the city should be ready to open emergency shelter space if consistent with public health recommendations

### SROS

- 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](https://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](https://transformativespaces.org).*

## WHERE CAN I WASH MY HANDS?

### HAND WASHING STATIONS THE CITY HAS SET UP BY NEIGHBORHOOD

Vendor Contact:  
United Site Services: Rollin M. Kay 508-250-4919

SF City Contact:  
Kendra Leingang: 415-310-3711

#### TENDERLOIN

Willow St. & Polk St.  
Hemlock Alley  
Ellis & Taylor St  
Turk & Leavenworth

#### UN PLAZA

Leavenworth & McAllister

#### SOMA

52 5th St./ MSC South @ Bryant  
Mission & 9th

#### BAYVIEW

Barneveld Ave & Loomis St  
1940 Evans Ave.  
1634 Armstrong Ave  
1150 Thomas Ave. @ Hawes  
Carroll & Ingalls

#### MISSION

Alabama St. & Mariposa  
Folsom & 21st  
1550 Bryant St.

#### HAIGHT

Ashbury & Haight St

#### LAKE MERCED/SF STATE

Winston Dr. & Buckingham Way

#### CASTRO

3565 16th before Market St.

#### EMBARCADERO

Market St & Steuart St.

#### CHINATOWN

Jackson & Powell St.

# HSH DIRECTOR STEPS DOWN TO STREET OPERATIONS

Jennifer Friedenbach

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 week’s 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 2019 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” Kositsky 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 2% acceptance of services by cops. 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 7 day 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 – they lost their safe space to sleep, contact with encampment mates or survival gear. Having the rug pulled out from under you can be damaging. Also – when someone with a gun in their holster tells you to go somewhere, it doesn’t really engender a positive attitude. For the outreach workers it is all about what they have to offer. Rarely do folks have an actual housing unit, which is what they really need and want. More frequently it is a shelter bed either in a traditional shelter or a navigation center. For many, these beds are welcome respite, but for many others, congregate living

is not possible for them due to a variety of reasons including PTSD and mental health challenges. Often it is the system that is resistant not the person – lacking capacity to offer what is truly needed. When outreach is combined with police operations, relationships between outreach workers and homeless people disintegrate. Nevertheless a downward turn in moving unhoused individuals off the streets, during a time of increasing resources is not a good sign.

According to Kositsky borrowing from a line in Lord of the Rings as quoted in the SF Examiner on March 2nd, “Essentially, we tried to spread not enough butter over too much bread, and running around responding to 311 calls had a number of impacts,” “In addition to the 311 calls increasing slightly and the problem not getting better, we were really harming people experiencing homelessness, not intentionally,” he said. “Our outcomes were not good.”

Not only were complaints up, but worse, before the police took over HSOC, 58% of encampment residents reached by the city entered permanent housing, whereas after only 5% went into housing. If you look at the big picture, with all the money spent on this operation, only 5% of the street residents they come into contact with are transitioning into housing, that really is a horrendous track record.

The problem circles in part back to Kositsky. In a June 15, 2018 memo to then Department of Public Works Director Nuru (recently arrested by FBI), he stated “Our goal is no 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 Kositsky 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.

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

Part of the HSOC process is to encourage people to complain via 311, and they could even download an app for their phone that showed them the status of the complaint. Pictures would go up of before and after, and notes would be taken as to the status. Sometimes SFPD would even brag of taking away people’s property

such as in this social media post that clearly shows SFPD’s disposal of homeless people’s property.

One of the many complaints of the current HSOC operations is the lack of transparency and community engagement. According to federal guidelines, best practices include engagement and collaboration with community. HSOC initially had a member of the Local Homeless Coordinating Board present at their meetings, and once when they were sick, they had another member attend who happened to be a staff person at the Coalition on Homelessness. They banned outsider attendance from then on.

At this last quarterly presentation at the Local Homeless Coordinating Board, Emily Cohen from the Mayor’s Office, and Jeff Kositsky announced that the city would shift its focus away from using police and toward social workers and paramedics. Complaining about the leaderless nature of HSOC (it is currently led by a woman from the city’s Department of Emergency Management), just two days later, the announcement came that Kositsky would be taking the lead. Part of the presentation covered how the number of tents has increased throughout 2019.

The other two changes that have been outlined include moving away from complaint driven system and including community in oversight. Moving away from a 311 complaint response to what is being called a “slow-roll” approach would entail the establishment of zones. Using outreach, 311 complaints to identify

SFPD Tenderloin • 7/25/18  
Tenderloin Homeless Outreach Officers worked with @sfpublicworks today in the TL offering services and making the sidewalks safer for the community we serve.



8 12 58

homeless “hot spots” they will prioritize neighborhoods with the highest concentration of homeless people. So still using 311 data, but not alone. They also will open up HSOC to have community seats for various representatives, likely hand-picked likely by the new HSOC director.

Jeff Kositsky took a big pay cut, and a demotion, but swears it is entirely voluntary and this is where he wants to serve, going so far as to say it was his idea. The changes look good to the Coalition on Homelessness, however we would rather the operation be dismantled. The construct 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. ■

## Review HSOC process

HSOC – Extended Hours and Days

- SFPD has their Special Homeless Officers clearing encampments 6am to 11pm / 7 Days
- They will be calling to the Radio Room for debris
- The SFPD Shift Sergeant will call the Swing Supervisor for special needs.
  - We are to respond and assist with their requests
- The number at HSOC is 415-558-2723

We will have radio room dispatchers at HSOC starting Wednesday, 8/8

- Call Channel 1 for HSOC assistance
- 7 days / 7am to 11pm

We need to stay very diligent and proactive in addressing tents

- Take them down as you see them, and/or coordinate with HotSpot
- Resolved sites need to stay Tent Free Zones
- Keep reporting issues with SFPD

Email from Peter Lau, DPW, on HSOC Process to DPW workers (Aug 8, 2018). Obtained through Sunshine Act Request

# SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

## You are cordially invited to the Coalition on Homelessness' Annual BOCCE BALL FUNDRAISER!

**WHEN: Saturday May  
9th, 2020 @11am-3pm**

**WHERE: Aquatic Park  
Bocce Courts (Beach  
Street & Van Ness Ave)**

To register or sponsor  
a team email **Olivia  
Glowacki** at  
**oglowacki@cohsf.org**



## RALLY POSTPONED TO 3/25 AMID CITY'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

Keegan Medrano & Sara Payes Blanco

Set against the city's response to COVID-19, school closures, and 14 confirmed cases in San Francisco, the Coalition on Homelessness made the difficult decision Monday, March 9 to reschedule our "Not a Penny Less for Homelessness" rally to Wednesday, March 25. With hundreds prepared to attend and speakers slated to appear, the rally's organizers decided in the interest of protecting everyone involved to move the rally to two weeks later.

The city has attempted to slow down the spread of COVID-19, also known as the coronavirus, by declaring a state of emergency on February 25, starting novel testing on March 2, and ultimately banning gatherings of over 50 people on city-owned facilities on March 6. With these escalating efforts to address the COVID-19 spread, the Coalition acted in the interest of all its potential attendees, including those most vulnerable communities the unhoused, the elderly, the young and the immunocompromised.

The "Not a Penny Less for Homelessness" rally will seek to confront Mayor London Breed's continual dismissal and disregard of Proposition C - Our City, Our Home (OCOH), the 2018 measure, which would tax San Francisco's largest corporations 0.5% after their first \$50 million, providing the City with over \$300 million to address the affordable housing crisis and alleviate the suffering of San Francisco's homeless communities. For over a year, Prop.

C has languished due to an ongoing lawsuit, with the City collecting the money, but not yet releasing it for the solutions to the affordable housing crisis outlined in Prop. C. These months of inaction by Mayor Breed towards homelessness has forced OCOH to double down efforts to ensure she implements the measure as over 62% of voters intended it to be. On February 11, OCOH delivered a pledge to Mayor Breed's office asking her to affirm her support on seven points related to 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 five 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...

vicious 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.

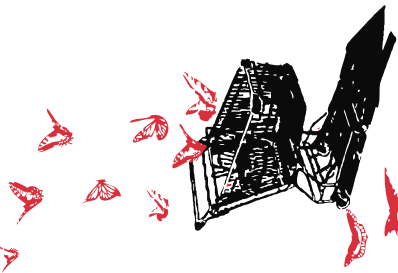
The manager acted like he either wouldn't or couldn't do anything about it. Then the chickens came home to roost and him, and his girlfriend started getting bitten by the bedbugs. The health department came out again and claimed they couldn't see any signs of bedbugs until I pulled one out of the boxspring, 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. ■



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

Coalition On Homelessness  
280 Turk Street  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
415-346-3740  
www.cohsf.org  
streetsheetsf@gmail.com

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Coalition on  
Homelessness  
San Francisco

# COMICS!!!

Send your comics to  
**QWATTS@cohfsf.org**  
by March 20th to be  
included in our annual  
**April Fools Day Issue!**  
Bring or send physical  
copies to 280 Turk St.