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A LONG JOURNEY HOME

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS
ANNUAL REPORT 2023



CLARENCE GALTNEY: THE O.G. OF HARRISON STREET

Bradley Penner



Clarence Galtney, 65, takes a break from organizing his belongings on Harrison Street on, November 8, 2023. (Bradley Penner)

Clarence “OG” Galtney, 65, spent the morning of November 6 bagging possessions and clearing the perimeter of his tent on Harrison Street, a process he says he’s gone through over twenty times in Berkeley over the past ten years.

The sweep Galtney was preparing for had been a long time coming. The city has been trying to clear the encampment for years but was stalled in recent months by a temporary restraining order under Prado v. City of Berkeley, a lawsuit by encampment residents that sought to stop the city from evicting them until adequate shelter was available. It also asked the city to provide adequate notice, and accommodate their disability-related needs in shelter or housing offers.

After two months of litigation, Judge Edward Chen of the North District court dissolved the restraining order, allowing Berkeley’s Homeless Response Team (HRT) to schedule a three-day “nuisance abatement” to begin on November 7. Public postings for the abatement stated that it intended to target the “streets and sidewalks of Harrison St [sic] between 7th St and 8th St,” the stretch of the encampment that Galtney has called home for the past nine years.

To ensure his possessions wouldn’t be thrown away in the flurry and chaos of the sweep, Galtney methodically organized clothes, hygiene supplies, and cookware in stacks along the sidewalk. Things he didn’t want or need were thrown into a pile for the city to remove in the morning.

“It’s like every time I buy something, by the end of the week, they come and say, ‘You don’t need this, you don’t need that,’” Galtney said as he swept debris into the street.

“How do they know what a person needs and doesn’t need? If I just bought this pot—because I need this pot—how are you gonna sit up and say I don’t need this?”

The city’s abatement on November 7 was planned for one section of the larger encampment, but many of the residents at Eighth and Harrison—some of whom have accepted city offers for transitional housing only to end up back on the streets within weeks—understand the city’s ultimate goal is to close the encampment once and for all.

Galtney’s past experience has taught him to suspect the worst from the city’s scheduled cleanings of Harrison Street. Just over a year ago, in October 2022, he lost his RV and all of his belongings during a sweep that the city later admitted was “overhanded,” during which officials gave vague and conflicting messaging, SF Public Press reports.

A carpet and floor fitter by trade with a penchant for hard work, Galtney has not relied on social services such as general assistance or food stamps to make ends meet in the decade he has lived on the streets. Instead, he collected recycling on a route he had established through Berkeley, and soon developed a working relationship with the local Blue Bottle Coffee on 7th Street, which allowed him to collect aluminum coffee cans on a weekly basis.

“If it wasn’t for that coffee company, I wouldn’t be surviving right now today,” Galtney said.

His effort and frugality soon paid off. After months of collecting recycling and saving the money he made at the Berkeley Recycling Center, Galtney was able to purchase an RV for \$2,000. With the title in his name and engine problems to work on, he had been speaking with an outreach worker to get the RV’s registration up to date. Galtney also continued to gather recycling from Blue Bottle’s facility—sometimes in huge quantities—in hopes of rebuilding the engine of his new home.

“They made an order one day,” Galtney recounted, “and the order was so humongous it accumulated nine big bags. I’m talkin’ nine big, huge bags.”

The aluminum cans inside the bags did not include lids, which would have substantially increased their refund value. Galtney decided to hold off on his return until he could gather the lids from Blue Bottle when they became available.

“But every time the city came by it was, ‘Clarence, what are you gonna do with your recycle?’ Well, I’m trying to get around that, put the lids on and take them on in.”

On October 4, 2022, the day before the outreach worker would return with paperwork to register his RV with the DMV, he woke up at 6 a.m. to a knock on the door. The HRT had scheduled

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COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

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

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

STREET SHEET STAFF

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

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Chris Lee, Bradley Penner, tiny, daughter of Dee, mama of Tiburcio @ povertyskola, Pearl Ubungen, Ken Miller, Jack Bragen, Street Spirit

Street Sheet is published and distributed on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone peoples. We recognize and honor the ongoing presence and stewardship of the original people of this land. We recognize that homelessness can not truly be ended until this land is returned to its original stewards.

a sweep of the entire encampment, which Galtney believed was intended to clear the sidewalks of trash and debris. The sweep resulted in the loss of 29 tents, three self-made structures, and four vehicles—including Galtney’s RV and recycling.

“They asked me to come out and talk to them for a minute. If I had known what they meant by that, I would’ve slammed the door, locked it, and not said a word,” he said.

Once Galtney stepped out of his RV, the HRT did not allow him back inside. Citing the RV as a health and safety hazard due to rodent infestation, and without any time or permission to remove his possessions, the city towed it to an impound lot. The city also

confiscated the large bags of recycling he had stored along the fence—an amount Galtney believes would’ve allowed him to work on his RV and live comfortably for up to six months.

Any recourse to retrieve his RV was futile. Galtney was ultimately allowed a 30-minute window to collect as many possessions as he could from the impound lot before being escorted off the premises. Fifteen days after the city towed his home, it was demolished.

“All my clothes, my recycling, but most importantly family heirlooms from my mother and grandmother,” Galtney said. “You cannot put a price on that. That was the most crushing thing in my whole life.”

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COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS: A LONG JOURNEY HOME

The Coalition on Homelessness was formed in 1987 by homeless leaders and front-line service providers to address the crisis of homelessness with permanent solutions. For over three decades, our organization has continued to center the voices of currently and formerly unhoused San Franciscans in pursuit of that goal. Our path of progress has been a long one, and despite many successes it is far from over. Nevertheless, we keep pressing forward with our community by our side because we know that this long journey ends at home.



From the beginning, our direction has been guided by the needs and input of homeless people themselves. We conduct weekly outreach to unhoused adults, youth, and families across the many streets, shelters, and SROs of San Francisco to identify not only the most important issues facing them but also their solutions. From there, our organizers and members collaborate to build people-powered campaigns that will achieve those solutions while empowering homeless leaders. Each of these campaigns builds on the last to get us one step closer to a world where every San Franciscan has a safe place to call home, and we won't stop moving forward until we get there.

In this year's annual report, we share with you our latest strides towards that goal. From our fight to Save the Oasis Family Shelter to our lawsuit against the City's cruel and illegal encampment sweeps to our work that has led to hundreds getting housed, we've been hard at work pushing San Francisco in the right direction. 2023 has been a difficult year, with homeless San Franciscans coming under attack like we haven't seen in years while facing an unprecedented epidemic of fatal overdoses. In times like this, it's more important than ever that we come together as a community, keep moving forward, and celebrate every step in the right direction. Together, with sure feet and steady progress, we continue our long journey home.

HOUSING JUSTICE CAMPAIGNS

FUNDING PERMANENT SOLUTIONS

When the mayor began putting together her budget proposal for 2023, there was a lot to be concerned about. The City was facing a funding deficit, key programs were under threat of being cut, and the mayor was attempting to pit homeless families and youth against homeless adults by moving \$60 million in funding away from housing homeless youth and families towards shelter for homeless adults. In response, we brought those youth and families to the steps of City Hall and fought alongside them to protect against these cuts. Instead of getting drawn into a divisive battle, we fought and won both. Not only were the housing dollars protected, but we also managed to ensure the 123 tiny cabins and prevention services that funding was being moved to were protected as well.

SINCE OUR SPEARHEADING THE PROP. C

Homeless Gross Receipts tax in 2108, we have been working hard every year to ensure those dollars bring people home. By the end of this year, each of those fights will add up to over 4,000 people moved out of homelessness and into a home of their own. It also has led to over 1,000 people being sheltered, and serious gains in our behavioral health treatment system. Over 400 treatment beds have been added to serve people such as women with dual diagnosis, Spanish speaking people struggling with alcohol addiction, and individuals leaving the criminal justice system. In addition, intensive case management for individuals with severe mental illnesses living on the streets, and street-based work to link those surviving an overdose with medically

assisted opioid treatment have brought hope to hundreds on the streets. Through homelessness prevention services, Prop. C investments also continue to prevent thousands of households from being displaced and becoming homeless every year.

FIXING COORDINATED ENTRY

In 2022, we released "A New Coordinated Entry," a research report based on the input of hundreds of homeless San Franciscans, who developed a list of reforms for San Francisco's housing allotment system. Since then, we have been working collaboratively with the City to implement these reforms. All of our recommendations were adopted, and one of our organizers is serving on the City's Coordinated Entry Implementation Oversight Committee to implement the changes that our community has asked for.

SAVING THE OASIS FAMILY SHELTER

At the end of 2022, dozens of homeless families staying at the Oasis Family Shelter got the shocking news that they would soon be asked to leave. The shelter, the City's only low-threshold emergency shelter for families, was a sanctuary for those with no other place to turn. Our organizers quickly responded by organizing these families, helping their voices reach the owners of the hotel and the City of San Francisco. In early 2023, we were able to convince both parties to reach a deal for the City to permanently acquire the Oasis Inn with donated funds from a private party. The Oasis now continues to serve homeless families, helping them stay safe and stable while they search for permanent housing.

HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGNS

ORGANIZING VEHICULARLY HOUSED SAN FRANCISCANS

Homeless people living in cars and RVs saw challenges and successes this year. In July, we won our lawsuit against the City's policy of poverty tows. Unhoused people will now no longer have their homes towed away because of unpaid parking tickets. We have also been organizing with adults and families who live in over 100 vehicles near Lake Merced to fight for housing and a safe parking site. This community is at risk as the City seeks to get rid of the parking spots they currently live in by adding parking meters without delivering on safe places for displaced residents to go. Finally, we worked to extend the safe parking program at Candlestick Park.

WATER FOR ALL

We continued our work expanding water access for unhoused San Franciscans by working with SFPUC to install two new water taps in the Mission and Bayview neighborhoods. We also fought to include new shower resources in this year's City budget, but were unsuccessful due to this year's budget deficit. Since 2021, we have successfully installed six new water taps across the city, bringing us steadily closer to our goal of Water For All San Franciscans.

STOPPING THE SWEEPS

We are suing the City of San Francisco for its practices of illegally criminalizing and confiscating the belongings of unhoused people. This lawsuit comes after decades of pushing the City to implement common-sense, evidence-based policies grounded in permanent solutions. Instead, the City

has continually chosen the path of criminalization, a short-term response that only exacerbates the crises on our streets. So far, this lawsuit has led to an injunction against the City, barring them from continuing their sweep operations. It has also led to the creation of a shelter waitlist for single adults, one of our key demands. Our other demands include—but are not limited to—the permanent halt of the criminalization and property confiscation of unhoused people, filling the hundreds of vacant units of permanent supportive housing, and establishing a proactive and productive street response to homelessness. We ask that the City settles this lawsuit by meeting these demands, but until then will continue to defend the rights of unhoused people in the courts and at City Hall.



LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024

Our long journey home continues as we work to build on this year's victories. Next year, 2024, is an election year, and homelessness is already shaping up to be one of the main issues of the election. Our organizers will be challenged to keep us on our path of progress through all the noise and attention. Here's a look at some of our key priorities for 2024

STOP THE SWEEPS!

We'll continue to advocate for the human rights of unhoused San Franciscans in the courtroom and City Hall. We hope to pressure the City into permanently stopping its illegal sweeps practices. Together, we can create a street response rooted in meeting people's needs to get off the streets instead of sweeping them out of sight.

COORDINATED ENTRY REFORM

While the City's moves towards reforming Coordinated Entry have been promising, we still haven't seen any major reforms take place. In 2024, we will continue pressuring the City to make the changes that homeless people have demanded. As these changes are made, we will continue checking in with unhoused people seeking housing to ensure that access is improving.

SHOWERS FOR ALL

Our Water For All campaign has greatly increased access to drinking water for unhoused San Franciscans over the last three years. However, shower access still falls far below the need on our streets. We will push for next year's budget to fund new shower resources for unhoused San Franciscans, getting us one step closer to our goal of meeting every San Franciscan's water access needs.

HOUSING, HOUSING, HOUSING

As with every year, our primary goal for San Francisco's 2024-2025 budget will be to expand the City's housing portfolio with new units of permanent supportive housing, long-term housing subsidies, and rapid rehousing. We will also continue to advocate for the expansion of homelessness prevention programs to keep at-risk households in their homes, and shelter beds to provide respite for those without housing. San Francisco is still a long way from adequately investing in these desperately needed resources, but every year we make progress by fighting for budget priorities that help more unhoused San Franciscans find home.

HOMELESS IN GAZA

The Connections between our targeted, unhoused relatives in GAZA and our unhoused bodies on occupied Turtle Island

By tiny, daughter of Dee, mama of Tiburcio @povertyskola
Photos by Pearl Ubungen, Ken Miller and Tiny for PoorNewsNetwork

Greeting the big wigs flooding San Francisco for the APEC summit, these towering signs allege that APEC stands for Abusing People and the Earth for Corporate rule.

“WTF??? Three cops came up to me in succession, first cajoling, then demanding, then threatening arrest if I didn’t leave. This wasn’t just a sweep, this was terror.” Jonny X, longtime RoofLessRadio at POOR Magazine reporter from Occupied Yelamu, SF reported from under his tarp at 8th and Mission. While Jonny was calling me, my phone was pinging with updates of thousands of humans being removed, harassed, bombed and dying in hospital rooms and street corners in Gaza.

“This is my home, where will we go?” A Palestinian Mama cried holding her injured baby to face the camera from the streets of Gaza, standing in front of a frayed shell of her now bombed family home.

“This is the only place I have to live, where will I go?”

While the Israeli army descended on the biggest hospital in Gaza with lies about underground headquarters being under the hospital swirling through CorpRape media, a disabled houseless family member was facing eviction and removal from their RV in occupied Huchiun (Oakland). Another in a never-ending “Sweep” that has continued, uninterrupted, all across the Bay, from Oakland to SF, in an endless attempt to push houseless peoples out of sight and out of our homes.

Houseless in Huchiun or Houseless in Gaza... where will we go? Where can we go... Settlers have claimed Palestinian land on top of the people already inhabiting it, while here on occupied Turtle Island, poor, houseless and longtime working class residents are evicted and pushed out of their neighborhoods, tents and homes if that neighborhood is now seen as “desirable” for richer, whiter people to

live in.

Not only are the settlers ruthlessly bombing babies and families and elders in GAZA, they are also bombing people’s homes, apartment buildings, trees and entire neighborhoods and—just like the global CONtractors always do—will come in after the genocide and start more extractive CONstruction projects to build right on top of all they destroyed, receiving multi-billion dollar CONtracts for all that “re-building,” and best believe the multi-national devil-ops will be right there, getting right to work on top of people’s graves and lives.

As we all “live” in this settler occupied pseudo peacefulness of the U.S., with murder and genocide of Palestinian people happening in our name (not to mention Syria and Afghanistan, Africa, Iraq and beyond), it is extremely important for people to understand that our “neighborhoods” wouldn’t even be our “neighborhoods” of San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland or the entire United Snakkkes without the genocide of First Peoples of this land, removed in almost the same terror, genocidal playbook as our relatives in Gaza are being right now. Read the powerful statement by Tribal Chair Corrina Gould in her statement in support of Gaza.

Removed for what? For the right to steal, buy, sell, hoard and extract Mama Earth and her resources for a few wealth-hoarding humans and to perpetrate the krapitalist lie of private property and the business plan of selling and buying her for profit.

“Who is coming to town cause they were more brutal than usual and DPW showed up and took everything, I had no chance to even leave,” Alice, another long-term, disabled POOR reporter cried out to me from her little corner behind a building in the Embarcadero. Incidentally, Alice is neuro-divergent and used to dwell silently and peacefully in the TransBay terminal before she was brutally evicted for

the ridiculous purpose of re-building a perfectly good building so it could become SalesForce, another CorpRape extractor on that site.

But the other urgent dot we need to connect is that houseless peoples, who don’t extract and destroy, but merely try to survive closest to Mama Earth with no walls, or doors, or PGE or grant deeds or leases or stolen land ownership lies are brutally, constantly, harassed removed, targeted and swept from every street, park, doorway, corner, lean-to and tent, across this stolen land. And to make it even more ironic, in the face of this idiotic APEC—another corpRape poltrickster CONFERENCE—where they are convening to plan the destruction of more indigenous lands from the Phillipines to West Papua, they put up 12 foot tall iron fences and have harassed and removed literally hundreds of houseless, disabled elders and folks holding on by a thread to “prepare” for APEC.

Let’s not understate the settler Lies being perpetrated in Gaza, that somehow the settlers lives are more important than the people already living there, and with the Settlers presence the Palestinian Mamas, grandmommas, Uncles, Fathers, and Babies already living there must be erased. And the CorpRape media tropes about the people already living there are also rampant. Poltricksters talking about the “Palestinian problem” like they talk about the Homeless problem.

In a worldview rooted in truth, we would not only recognize the sovereign rights of the original Palestinian inhabitants of Gaza, but we would hold a conversation about the bizarre truth vacuum that exists when a new group of people goes somewhere and denies the presence of the people already there.

Another frightening example of this and how it impacts houseless, poor and working class relatives in Occupied Turtle Island is gentriFUKation itself. When a devil-oper “buys” a huge swath of Mama Earth like they did at 73rd and BlackArthur in Deep East Oakland (after it mysteriously burned down), or at 18th and Wood Street in West Oakland, only to construct some new monstrous CONdominiums being “sold” with an insane figure of “starting at \$800,000,” the new residents immediately launch a series of violent and consistent “Sweeps,” read: eviction of all of the houseless relatives who already have been humbly living in their own vehicles, on the street in a tent and wherever they can sort of safely hide. This is what happened to Wood Street Commons—a homeless people’s solution to homelessness— and continues to happen.

And then—like one of the badass revolutionary lawyers Ari Pomerantz, who helps us houseless people at Homefulness, pointed out in their statement in solidarity to Gaza—when we build our own solutions like Homefulness, the same Settler lies that rule this occupied land make it impossible for us to even build a self-determined, rent free solution to homelessness.

In the end, this violence of krapitalism is the system that extracts the most, kills the most and terrorizes the most and so like all bullying systems, it seems to “win,” but there is a new truth of Indigenous sovereignty, LandBack, Black Land Return and houseless peoples speaking for ourselves being lifted up all across Mama Earth. And even if they would like to, they can’t sweep us, kill us, or remove us all, and we are fighting back everyday from West Oakland to the West Bank.



Greeting the big wigs flooding San Francisco for the APEC summit, these towering signs allege that APEC stands for Abusing People and the Earth for Corporate rule.



Palestinian youth made sure that the genocide – the massacre – going on in their homeland is front and center at the APEC summit, where the heads of state of the U.S. and China met.

THE RIGHT TO EXIST IS A HUMAN RIGHT

Jack Bragen

"Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person." - United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 3

Every person of every race, religion, ancestry, sexual orientation and disability should have the right to exist, and people should let us be when we are minding our own business. If someone has a benign agenda, not actively doing something to disrupt the lives of others, and especially when engaged in efforts to better their lives and living conditions, there is no excuse for harassment, threats or outright attack toward that individual from any entity, including government officials, corporations or others.

Poor people in the U.S. are denied the right to exist. The cutoff of the right to exist is automatic: Some of its mechanisms are ingrained in the fact of everything costing too much.

Disabled people are also denied the right to exist, to improve our living conditions, to have a decent level of income and often, and to have autonomy in our lives.

The waters of poverty are deep and their surface is choppy. It takes bravery to navigate out of them. And poverty entails jeopardy from numerous directions. If you are not careful, your boat could take on water.

If escaping poverty is like crossing a channel, and the opposite shore is the income needed to protect you from the harsh mechanisms in society, and if you aren't powerful enough with your oars, your boat gets shredded by a great white shark, and you become its lunch, with smaller sharks in thanks for the leftover pieces.

Factors that impede well-being and comfort make it impossible for us to

think clearly and solve our problems, affecting our ability to exist. The conspiracy to dump people on the streets who can't make it in the conventional workplaces is a slap in the face to our rights to exist.

I recently had the experience of winter temperatures affecting the indoor habitability of my rented unit. The heating system didn't work. It affected me. Cold temperatures and the inability to be comfortable adversely affect consciousness, so I couldn't get any work done. My mind kept obsessing with how I could get warm.

After about five days, someone gave me a space heater. (I could have also bought one, but it was the end of the month when my funds are limited.)

When a person is excessively cold or hot, starving, thirsty, or lacks shelter from the sun and wind, they can't think and can't bring about their higher faculties. It is only by having those faculties available that we can think well enough to improve our situations, or at least prevent ourselves from slipping backward.

Politicians and CEOs are quite aware of this, but they intentionally don't make efforts to solve it. This is yet another denial of the right to exist.

Primitive homo sapiens, our ancestors, no doubt were acclimated to cold, heat and going without food. But if you are acclimated to comfortable surroundings, you can't just snap a finger and become immune to this level of suffering.

Suffering isn't always fixable with cognitive work. Sometimes, there is no obvious method to avoid suffering. And along with this, we are less able to think clearly enough to fix our difficulties.

If someone is in your face and won't let up, that interferes with your thought

process. When someone constantly knocks you off balance, you can't even think well enough to devise strategies to deflect. The person getting in your face is impacting your right to exist.

When I was in my twenties, a man forced me into a fistfight, claiming that if I didn't get out of my car and face him, "I'm going to rip the door off this car." He was unhappy with me because I had a job and a moderate level of success in my life, which he wasn't able or willing to do for himself. I was permanently injured in the flight. I discovered decades later that most likely in this fight, a bone in my eye socket was fractured, leaving me prone to brain infection.

Other people have done similar things. The problem is where people won't allow others to succeed because they have sour grapes and want everyone else to remain down. People can't let you be.

This fight was the last straw that led me to apply for Social Security. This is because in its aftermath, I believed that people wouldn't let me be a success. It also led to a break in my forward momentum and a regression to a post-traumatized state where I couldn't think.

When people endure too many hard knocks, they can't bounce back. At some point they get knocked down for good, and that's the beginning of the end.

With technology as it currently is, we could make everyone reasonably comfortable. But the wealthy are afraid of this, because it will cause common people to want more for themselves, shifting the status quo. The rich don't want things to be equal. They don't want a person at the bottom obviously being smarter than they are. They want to maintain and increase their dominance.

Big corporations rely heavily on migrant workers and on outsourcing. Recently, they are relying more on automated systems and artificial intelligence, taking humans out of the equation entirely and eliminating jobs. I'm not just citing that we're not giving people of color work that bolsters our economy; the inequality of pay and the inhuman working conditions must also be addressed. In the 1990s, I made one last try at nighttime cleanup work. In the mid-'80s, I'd been able to make a living at it. The worksite was a giant office building, and there was a crowd of about 30 workers. And I discovered I was the only English-speaking worker there. The work I expected, but the isolation was far beyond what I could

bear, so I left.

Those who at one time worked in manual tasks and odd jobs sometimes end up on the street or incarcerated. Meanwhile, people acclimated to much harder, more demanding work without any complaints or demands have replaced them, because that's the sterilized, faceless, machine-like workforce corporate leaders want to see. This denies the right to exist of those displaced from work, those in labor unions, and the replacement workers themselves, whom corporate America has invited in to work harder with less pay than most documented workers are willing to do.

In the mental health treatment systems, I probably receive better help today than I ever have. This may be because I have demonstrated the complete unwillingness to become defunct. It is an irresistible force meeting with a stubborn, if not immovable, object. However, treatment professionals force antipsychotics on many of us. These drugs seem to work to alleviate symptoms; still, they are like a chemical straitjacket.

On antipsychotics, you can barely move your body to do physical work to earn money. You can barely assimilate and regurgitate dense academic material as you would have to do in college. In my writing, I've had to overcome the effects of antipsychotics through sheer effort and through taking breaks. Treatment practitioners can't argue with success.

Neurodivergent people are controlled in many if not most aspects of our lives. We are restrained through lack of income and through court actions. Psychologists know how to manipulate our thinking. Being in outpatient institutionalization is better than being homeless. The outpatient mental health treatment systems are partly helpful, but also partly restraining. It is part of their job to keep us controlled so that we don't disrupt the mainstream of society.

It could be interpreted from the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights that the right to exist isn't distinct from the right to create personal success nor from the right to create good living conditions. If we want to see the right to exist carried out, we must do that for ourselves. No one is going to stand up for us unless we do. We must be unwilling to go under. We must be determined. Other people won't have the same investment in our right to exist, therefore we must make it so.

Jack Bragen lives and writes in Martinez, California.

WHY SAN FRANCISCANS WEREN'T INVITED TO APEC'S PARTY

Javier Bremond

Living in San Francisco, it's fairly obvious that the ruling class has an unfair influence on our daily lives. But for an entire week last month, the City sent a message to its constituents: "We're throwing a big party, and you're not invited." Apparently, the closest comparison in terms of scale and importance is the establishment of the United Nations, which took place here in 1945. We had to put our "best foot forward," as Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff said, so that the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit, or APEC, could be "epic." To do this, the City closed down a 12-square block section to protect the attendees of the event from the sight of homeless people or anyone else they deem undesirable. The idea is if tourists and out-of-towners see other people living in tents, they'll be less inclined to return for a vacation or large event.

However, the irony of APEC's week-long occupation lies in its purpose. It was a meeting of cartoonishly evil CEOs and heads of state so that they could hatch plans for more efficient ways to widen the gap between the rich and the poor.

If you walked down the streets around the zone that was fashioned for that rancid affair, you would not see people in tents because they were pushed away. This is because the police and sheriff's departments, Homeland Security and Secret Service made sure people knew they needed to get out of sight until more important people left.

We weren't invited to their party because this conference was nothing more than a platform celebrating a cozy agreement between the world's worst criminals to commit more sophisticated economic violence. It was a strategic marketing meeting, conducted as casually as a tech startup brainstorming about slogans for handbags. But the workshops they held for "Innovation, Competition Policy and Finance" should have been named "Sweatshops, Lower Wages and Home Foreclosures."

The corporate and authoritarian elites that we hosted for APEC are attempting to hide that they're directly responsible for creating and maintaining this broken economic system because it's not broken for them. They use doublespeak and flowery language to talk about land extraction and raising medi-

cal costs, because they think we won't see through their nonsense.

We said "NO!" Thousands poured into the streets to tell the world to recognize the harm these bad actors are causing, and tell our city to get them the hell out of here.

So locally, we are experiencing law enforcement's paranoia of insisting that poor people cannot be around the rich, or else they might be a disturbance. Ultimately, APEC's goal was managing corporations' and nations' fears of people standing in solidarity and demanding fair wages and a right to live. It was a desperate attempt by the fattest cats to reassure themselves that more capitalism is the way and imagine having the right to manipulate the economy.

But corporate tax protection is not a human right. Stable housing, health care, food security, freedom of movement—these are the human rights that are understood across the globe. It's why the U.N. was founded in San Francisco. Instead of fantasizing about the unending "growth" of the economy, we should invest in people over profit because that would be epic.

THE O.G. OF HARRISON STREET

Bradley Penner

continued from page 2...

In October 2023, one year after the sweep during which Galtney lost his RV, he and Andrew Vanderzyl, another vehicle resident of 8th and Harrison, filed a lawsuit against the City of Berkeley. The lawsuit asked the city to reimburse a cumulative \$23,915 for lost property and emotional distress during the October 2022 sweep. The two plaintiffs are currently representing themselves and in the process of seeking legal counsel. But the Berkeley City Attorney’s Office filed a motion to dismiss the case in November of this year, arguing that Galtney and Vanderzyl failed “to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.” A hearing is scheduled for December 12, 2023.

After losing his RV, Galtney did his best to move forward. He received a housing voucher in early 2023 which allowed him to apply for apartments in Alameda County. Allotted 60 days to apply for housing and with little help navigating the application process, Galtney took the advice of an outreach worker and secured a single-room occupancy (SRO) at the YMCA in downtown Berkeley, paid for in part by Social Security checks that he became eligible for when he turned 65. But with limited storage space in his SRO and feeling homesick for his community, Galtney maintained a camp at Eighth and Harrison, which he would visit often.

In September 2023, Galtney contracted COVID-19 and decided to quarantine in his tent at the encampment out of concern for other residents in the SRO. After weeks of battling the illness alongside complications with his chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder, he learned that his room at the YMCA was under review, as staff believed he abandoned the space.

With his room at the YMCA in flux pending review, Galtney’s return to Eighth and Harrison has coincided with the city’s renewed effort to close the encampment in its entirety. The impending sweeps have reinvigorated

his commitment to advocate for the property and livelihood of his community.

Galtney is considered an elder within the community at-large, earning him the nickname and title of “OG.” He acts as the janitor, late-night security, and ensures that other encampment residents respect both each other and surrounding businesses. As development continues to close in around the long-standing encampment, Galtney has taken it upon himself to ensure that relationships with the larger West Berkeley community remain civil and in good standing.

“I love this family, and when we came into this family, I can understand why we were upside down,” Galtney said, “But now we have unity. We have dignity and respect. We respect these companies. And I hope, with my power, with my god, that they respect us also.”

Whether he is informing new encampment residents of community rules, incentivizing his neighbors to maintain tidy camp sites, or keeping a vigilant eye out for individuals who come to 8th and Harrison to dump trash, steal belongings, or harm its residents, Galtney believes his care and oversight has made a profound difference in the day-to-day workings of the encampment as a whole.

“We have guidelines here and we respect those guidelines. And if push comes to shove, we will come together to represent what we have here,” Galtney said.

But the city has begun to impose guidelines of its own. While not yet approved by Berkeley’s Homeless Services Panel of Experts or the City Council, the HRT has developed a list of Good Neighbor Guidelines that will dictate how the city prioritizes encampment cleanups and closures—a policy some residents believe is currently being piloted at Eighth and Harrison.

Citing existing municipal codes regarding obstruction of sidewalks and trespassing, the city’s abatement on November 7 completely closed a large section of the camp on Harrison Street, known among residents as “The Hovel.” The HRT arrested The Hovel’s primary resident for trespassing before the sweep began, removed the entirety of the structure, and erected a chain link fence along the edge of the sidewalk to prohibit residents from returning.

Galtney’s tent—which sits twenty yards away from The Hovel—was left untouched by the HRT throughout the abatement, causing him both relief and confusion. Galtney is working to reestablish his tenancy at the YMCA, but remains hypervigilant of the city’s efforts to close the encampment he has called home for nine years.

Those efforts appear to be imminent. The City of Berkeley has posted a Notice of Encampment Closure scheduled for December 5, again addressed to “persons encamped on

Harrison St [sic] between 7th and 8th.”

The notice states that, “the City of Berkeley will be closing the encampment and removing accumulated possessions,” and that residents will be offered shelter “prior to and on the day of closure”—the same shelter options that the plaintiff in Prado v. City of Berkeley argues are not adequate to meet the needs of unhoused residents at Eighth and Harrison.

Without adequate housing alternatives, mental health services, and empathy from the city or surrounding businesses, Galtney believes it is paramount that his community sticks together to the end.

”I understand we have different lives, lifestyles—we’re different people. But if you give us half a chance, you will see us as one community, just like any community you’d go to in this world today.”

Bradley Penner is the Co-Editor in Chief of Street Spirit.




Galtney sweeps debris into a collected pile just outside his camp, November 6, 2023. (Bradley Penner)

VOICES OF THE
UNSEEN:
A REAL COUNT
FOR HOMELESS
FAMILIES

When?
December 7th
2023, 12 - 1PM

Where?
Compass
Family
Services

37 Grove St. San
Francisco CA,
94102.



Participating Organizations:

Compass Family Services
Hamilton Families
SF City Vitals


Coalition on Homelessness
Homeless Prenatal Program

VOCES DE LO
INVISIBLE:
UN RECUESTO REAL
PARA LAS FAMILIAS
SIN HOGAR

Cuando?
Diciembre, 7
2023
12 Mediodía
- 1PM

Donde?
Servicios
Familiares De
Compass

37 Grove St
San Francisco,
CA 94102



Organizaciones participantes:

Compass Family Services
Hamilton Families
SF City Vitals

Coalition on Homelessness
Homeless Prenatal Program

OAKLAND ATTEMPTS TO CURB THE HOMELESS HEALTH CRISIS WITH STREET MEDICINE

CHRIS LEE



John Janosko pets his dog on the makeshift patio constructed outside the city-sanctioned cabin shelter site on Wood Street in West Oakland. (Chris Lee)

Homeless deaths have surged in recent years. In Oakland, Chronic illness and addictions make up most of homeless deaths by 47% and 31% respectively.

John Janosko has been on and off methamphetamine for the last several years while homeless in West Oakland. However, it may not be the addiction that kills the 55-year-old. His heart might give up first.

Janosko is one of thousands of homeless residents with comorbidities that put him at risk of an early death.

Homeless deaths have surged in recent years, according to the Alameda County 2021 Homeless Mortality Report, the most recent data. In Oakland, chronic illness and addictions make up most of homeless deaths, with 47% and 31%, respectively.

“I could literally die, have another heart attack that could kill me, and that scares the hell out of me,” Janosko said.

Poor access to medical care and lack of stable housing are major factors in the mortality of homeless people, according to research by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council. Black men in their fifties and sixties, like Janosko, are overrepresented in the county’s homeless mortality data and continue to die at disproportionate rates. Alameda County estimates that homeless people die 25 years sooner than the rest of the population.

Jenny Tsang, a nurse practitioner who leads one of LifeLong Medical Care’s Street Health teams, said there isn’t enough housing available for Oakland’s

aging homeless population to transition into. LifeLong is one of the nonprofits that the county contracts with to provide care to homeless people.

“Sometimes I see people who have been homeless for so long...I hate to say this, but sometimes people die within a few years of being housed because it took so long,” Tsang said.

In addition to LifeLong, the county has contracts with health providers including Alameda Health System and Roots Community Health, among others. While some providers receive federal funds, the city of Oakland doesn’t provide medical care to its homeless population because the region’s public health care is administered by the county.

One spring morning in 2022, after taking a few drags from his meth pipe, Janosko said it felt like a piece of cake was lodged in his throat. An hour later, the pain intensified to a sharp stabbing sensation in his back. He called 911.

“All I remember hearing was, ‘He’s having a heart attack. He’s having a heart attack.’ Then all of a sudden, I was under, and the next thing you know I was waking up from surgery,” Janosko said. “They told me, basically, you need to get clean because the crystal is not helping you at all.”

An emergency room surgeon at Alta Bates Summit Medical Center performed an angioplasty and placed a stent into one of his arteries. After that, Janosko said he managed to stay clean for about six months until evictions at his encampment on Wood Street began to ramp up.

Janosko had been living at Wood

Street, once the largest homeless community in the city, for seven years. A rash of encampment fires in 2022 prompted CalTrans to remove homeless residents and their belongings off the land underneath the I-880 freeway, displacing 200 to 300 people. About 70 people moved onto a smaller adjacent parcel owned by the city. Oakland’s Encampment Management Team (EMT) then removed people from that site, known as the Wood Street Commons, in order to develop a mixed-income housing community which originally included 170 units of affordable housing. But affordable housing developments in Oakland remain unaffordable for residents like Janosko.

In November, Oakland’s Planning Commission issued new development permits for Phoenix Supportive Housing, a 101-unit affordable housing complex at 821 Pine St. According to SF Yimby, “The residential units will be available as low-market-rate units for residents earning 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI).”

None of the housing being developed at 821 Pine St. will be accessible to residents who earn less than 80% AMI, or \$78,550 as a one-person household.

In March, when the final sweep was imminent, Janosko relapsed.

“I just sorta fell back into it,” he said.

Janosko is enrolled in Medi-Cal. He carries in his wallet a blue-and-white laminated card distributed by Anthem Blue Cross, one of the insurance providers providing a Medi-Cal plan in Alameda County.

A statewide study conducted by the UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative found that of the 3,200 homeless residents participating in the study, two-thirds were enrolled in Medi-Cal. That study also found that homeless people often have difficulty accessing medical services due to extenuating circumstances. Being unsheltered, losing IDs or other documents in sweeps, lacking a cell phone or reliable form of transportation are some of the barriers, the study said.

Some homeless people distrust doctors or report experiencing discrimination in health care settings, according to Tsang.

In Alameda County, many homeless people also reported having a disabling condition or suffering from a psychiatric condition, according to the 2022 Homeless Count and Survey Report. Only 1 in 5 of surveyed individuals reported receiving Medi-Cal benefits.

The Office of Homeless Care and Coordination of Alameda County Health Care Services Agency said in a statement that the lack of coverage is not a barrier to accessing care.

“Our teams work to support enrollment in as many settings as possible, including during street outreach,” the statement said. “Most people experiencing homelessness are eligible for Medi-Cal, and importantly, everyone regardless of citizenship status may be eligible for county-level HealthPAC medical coverage.”

During the COVID pandemic, Medi-Cal coverage was automatically renewed in compliance with the federal COVID-19 health emergency declaration. Once the declaration was lifted, California began to once again require people to renew their eligibility for Medi-Cal each year. The state estimates that millions of people could lose their coverage as a result of this change.

Tsang’s team sees patients whether they have insurance or not, but if a person needs to see a specialist, their lack of health insurance can delay treatment. She described a homeless patient of hers who suffers from a wound that isn’t healing normally.

“We’re in a position where we need to find him, sit down with him and call Medi-Cal with him, which could take like 45 minutes to an hour, before the specialty clinic can see him and bill for his visit,” Tsang said.

Regulatory changes in 2022 have allowed doctors to administer much needed health care services directly to people on the street. That innovation, first reported by CalMatters, allows street medicine teams to reimburse themselves by managing their homeless patients’ Medi-Cal benefits.

That means patients like Janosko, who has now been sober for five months and temporarily sheltered at Oakland’s cabin shelter site on Wood Street, can receive prescriptions directly from the street doctor that visits his area. The same physician can also draw his blood to run tests and refer him to a cardiologist.

Danielle Williams is one such doctor. She is a primary care physician at Roots Community Health Center who directs their Street Team Outreach Medical Program, also known as STOMP. She currently works with homeless people in East Oakland, many of whom stay in RVs.

“My goal is to keep them alive long enough to get housed,” Williams said. “There’s only so much you can do in the clinic. A lot of the people I see have a lot of barriers in coming to the clinic.”

Addiction medicine and mental health treatment are the two most critically underserved areas of care among Oakland’s homeless population, according to Williams.

Chris Lee is a freelance journalist and visual artist based in Oakland.



ORGANIZE WITH US

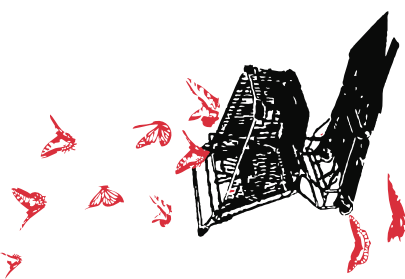
HOUSING JUSTICE WORKING GROUP
TUESDAYS @ NOON
The Housing Justice Workgroup is working toward a San Francisco in which every human being can have and maintain decent, habitable, safe, and secure housing. This meeting is in English and Spanish and open to everyone! Email mcarrera@cohsf.org to get involved!

HUMAN RIGHTS WORKING GROUP
WEDNESDAYS @12:30
The Human Rights Workgroup has been doing some serious heavy lifting on these issues: conducting direct research, outreach to people on the streets, running multiple campaigns, developing policy, staging direct actions, capturing media attention, and so much more. All those down for the cause are welcome to join! Email lpierce@cohsf.org

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO JOIN OUR WORKING GROUP MEETINGS!

Coalition On Homelessness
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San Francisco, CA 94102
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COMMUNITY WEBINAR ON HOMELESSNESS

Have questions about homeless encampments on San Francisco's streets? Get Answers.

- * San Francisco's homelessness crisis
- * Proven solutions that work
- * City activities that are/not allowed under the court's injunction
- * Q & A



December 7, 5:30-6:30PM



tinyurl.com/homelessnesswebinar



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