

INDEPENDENTLY PUBLISHED BY THE COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS SINCE 1989



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

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

STREET SHEET

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BLACK HISTORY



BLACK FUTURE

INVISIBLE: BLACK AND HOMELESS IN SAN FRANCISCO

Akir Jackson

To most people, I’m invisible. Just another nameless Black man blending into the urban background. People avoid making eye contact as they walk past me on the sidewalk. Pretend not to notice me shivering on the street corner. But if you look closely at the worn lines on my face, you’ll see the story of how I wound up here.

I’ve been homeless on and off for the past decade since losing my job as a machinist. The company outsourced jobs overseas, and I was part of a mass layoff. Without work, I fell behind on rent until I was evicted from my apartment. Since then, I’ve struggled to get back on my feet while battling discrimination, mental health issues and an unforgiving housing market.

Being homeless in San Francisco means waking up each morning not knowing where you’ll lay your head that night. Some days I stay in shelters, lining up early to try and secure a bed. Other nights I’m turned away and forced to sleep on the cold concrete under an overpass or in a park. Every sound jolts your senses when you’re that exposed.

As a Black man, I face extra suspicion and harassment from police. They assume I’m up to criminal activity or on drugs. I’ve been stopped and frisked countless times as I walk down the street. It’s humiliating and dehumanizing. All it takes is one officer having a bad day to turn it into a violent encounter.

Many homeless service providers also discriminate without realizing it. When seeking housing assistance, I’m bombarded with questions about my drug use or criminal background. The assumption is that I must be a troubled individual who made bad choices to end up in poverty. In reality, one stroke of bad luck is all it takes now, with the cost of living so high. Landlords won’t rent to me even if I get a housing voucher because of my race.

Maintaining personal hygiene while homeless is a constant struggle. With limited access to bathrooms and showers, I do my best to keep clean using public sinks. But I still face judgment for my worn, dirty clothes. Passersby seem to think it’s a conscious choice rather than a lack of access to laundry. Without regular hygiene, health issues like infections easily arise.

Finding a legal place to relieve myself is nearly impossible, leaving public urination my only option. This opens me up to more harassment and tickets I can’t pay. I’m treated like a nuisance for just trying to meet a basic human need.

My physical health has deteriorated rapidly living outside. The cold and damp aggravates my arthritis to the point I can barely move some mornings. Simple colds quickly turn to pneumonia without a warm, dry place to rest. Lack of nutrition makes it hard to fight anything off. I have multiple chronic illnesses now that I can’t properly manage.

Perhaps the most painful part is the intense loneliness. I isolate myself to avoid judgment and misunderstanding. My family won’t speak to me while I’m homeless, even though it wasn’t my fault. The indignity and helplessness cuts so deep that I struggle under the weight of depression. My mental health suffers without proper care. It’s a vicious cycle of declining wellbeing with no end in sight.

But the story of homelessness in San Francisco isn’t just about personal troubles. It’s the story of a system that has failed. Failed to build affordable housing. Failed to provide accessible health care, job assistance and substance abuse treatment. Failed to offer community support networks that could help people get back on their feet after a crisis.

So here I remain, clinging to life and hope on the harsh streets of the city I once loved. I know I’m just one of over 8,000 homeless residents here. Our struggles may overwhelm the senses of those who only view us from the outside. But we are human beings worthy of dignity, compassion and care.

All I want is a stable home where I can rebuild a sense of purpose. A place to sleep where sirens don’t wake me hourly. The comfort of a hot shower, clean clothes and a nutritious meal. Resources to manage my health conditions and mend my spirit. I don’t think that’s too much to ask in a country overflowing in wealth.

But until society’s moral compass shifts, the only things protecting me are anonymity and invisibility. Just another Black man rendered nameless on the streets of San Francisco.

HELP KEEP
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PRINT!



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 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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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.

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!



TJ Johnston

SUPREME COURT WILL EXAMINE GRANTS PASS HOMELESSNESS CASE

WHAT WILL IT MEAN FOR SAN FRANCISCO’S?

The Coalition on Homelessness’s lawsuit may be put on hold after the City of San Francisco filed a motion to pause the ongoing case. The City Attorney’s office announced its request to the federal district court for a stay days after the U.S. Supreme Court said on January 12 it will review an Oregon case, which has close parallels to the homeless advocacy organization’s ongoing lawsuit.

The Supreme Court will decide whether it should be illegal to arrest and cite unhoused people for unauthorized lodging without offering immediate available shelter.

The outcome of the Supreme Court case could reverberate in the Coalition’s lawsuit against the City, which was filed in 2022. The suit accuses the City of criminalizing unhoused people for inhabiting the street as long as they have no other shelter, as well as destroying their property in sweeps, against City policy.

The Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights of the Bay Area, which

represents the Coalition and seven unhoused plaintiffs, maintains these practices violate constitutional rights against illegal search and seizure, and cruel and unusual punishment. The Lawyers’ Committee said that its action is guided by a case called *Martin v. Boise*, which the 9th Circuit upheld in 2019.

That could change if the Supreme Court—with its conservative majority—overturns a decision in the 2018 case *Johnson v. Grants Pass*. In that case, a court said the city of Grants Pass in southwestern Oregon could not issue citations to people for sleeping on public property while no shelter beds were available.

But attorneys for the plaintiffs in the San Francisco case aren’t deterred by the City’s motion to stay the case—or the nation’s highest court granting a review of the Johnson case to be heard in June.

“Even with the Supreme Court’s review of Grants Pass underway, the case in San Francisco should proceed,” said

Nisha Kashyap, senior staff attorney with the Lawyers’ Committee and one of the attorneys representing the Coalition in the case. “Unhoused people should not continue to be subject to these unlawful practices, and the entire community deserves a timely resolution to all the important issues at stake in the case.”

In 2023, Mayor London Breed wrote a brief supporting Grants Pass’s request to the Supreme Court. As part of the brief, she urged the Supreme Court to summarily reverse the 9th Circuit’s decision, an extraordinary request aimed at invalidating the ruling.

Julian Highsmith, the Coalition’s communications and policy director, worries that homeless people’s rights would be in jeopardy if the Supreme Court sides with Grants Pass.

“The City can address street homelessness while respecting unhoused individuals’ rights,” he said. “To see the Supreme Court contemplating taking away yet another set of basic civil liberties is deeply

disturbing.”

John Do, a senior staff attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California, which is also representing the Coalition, said that the cruel and unusual punishment aspect is just one of several claims in the Coalition’s lawsuit, and he doesn’t see any reason why the litigation should be stalled.

“The Supreme Court can and should affirm that the government can’t jail you based on your status, who you are, or a condition you have,” he said. “The case can proceed and take into account any future Supreme Court ruling. The majority of our case is unrelated to whether the City’s practices are cruel and unusual punishment under the Eighth Amendment and must be resolved.”

The Lawyers’ Committee said in a press statement it will respond to the City’s request for a stay in district court later in the month. The trial is scheduled to begin in October.

AS CALIFORNIA EVICTIONS BOOM, WHETHER TENANTS GET LAWYERS DEPENDS ON WHERE THEY LIVE

Felicia Mello, CalMatters

San Francisco provides all tenants facing eviction access to an attorney. Across the Bay, in Contra Costa County, it’s a different story. Two tenants’ stories show the difference a lawyer can make.

After years of living on the streets and in single-room-occupancy hotels, the cozy studio apartment in San Francisco’s Japantown felt like a sanctuary to Corey Lafayette. He’d moved with no furniture, so friends found him a mattress on Craigslist and contributed a massive globe and a mirror framed in wrought-iron leaves. He bought pots and pans and dreamed of decorating.

As he cared for the plants on his sunny patio and walked through the building’s tree-lined courtyard, he could feel stress peeling away. No more stops by police. No more neighbors in his business or strict hotel rules. At the apartment, he was free.

But now, three years later, he had received an eviction notice. A building manager had raised concerns about the behavior of Lafayette’s guests. The notice said Lafayette had a right to legal counsel and gave a phone number. The streets were scary; he couldn’t go back there.

He picked up the phone.

Lafayette was lucky: San Francisco is the only city in California that guarantees tenants access to an attorney in eviction proceedings. The city is one of 17 nationwide, plus four states, that have launched right to counsel programs since New York City pioneered the idea in 2017.

While the Constitution grants all criminal defendants the right to counsel, that doesn’t extend to civil cases — even those with unusually high stakes, such as when a person risks losing their home. Nationwide, fewer

than 5% of tenants in eviction cases are represented by an attorney, compared to more than 80% of landlords, the National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel estimates.

As evictions soar across California now that Covid-era moratoria have expired, tenant advocates are pushing for more cities and counties to follow San Francisco’s example. Los Angeles city and county took the first steps toward establishing a tenant right to counsel last year. Having a lawyer, tenant advocates say, can make the difference between a tenant keeping their home — or having the time and money to find a new one — and being put out on the street.

But access to this legal help varies widely depending on where you live, even among cities that are just a few miles apart.

Floods, then an eviction notice

Across the Bay in suburban Oakley, Nancy Wiles also was facing eviction. She’d lived in The Oaks Apartments, a sprawling low-income housing complex, since 2014. At first, she liked the ample grounds studded with oak trees and the fact that her nephew lived nearby.

But then the 63-year-old hairdresser says, her building suffered a series of floods, starting with a pipe bursting just outside her ground-floor apartment. Ankle-deep water filled the hallway, with tenants trying to block their doorways with trash bags. Another time, she said, water from a third-floor leak cascaded down the stairs like a river.

Apartment managers relocated Wiles to a hotel while they fixed the leaks, but she said the problem never seemed fully repaired. Mold sprouted on her bathroom ceiling, said Wiles, who

suffers from asthma and began using her breathing machine three times a day.

The costs also added up, she said. While she paid her normal rent during weeks-long hotel stays, she had to buy takeout food and, eventually, a slow-cooker to make meals. When apartment management failed to make minor repairs, like fixing a sink that wouldn’t drain, Wiles would pay a family member to take care of it. Already working less due to the pandemic and a disability, Wiles started falling behind on rent.

By September Wiles had had enough. She and her 23-year-old son were packing their bags to move to a new apartment when there was a knock on the door: Wiles had been served with eviction papers. “My heart went boom,” she says.

Then she remembered she was moving out anyway. The paperwork, she figured, could wait. She stuffed it in her purse and kept packing — a decision that would cost her later.

Navigating the system

Evictions can happen fast and are often confusing for tenants. After receiving a first notice that their landlord has filed an eviction case against them, called an unlawful detainer, tenants have five days to respond in writing or they may automatically lose their case. Once a response is filed, a landlord can request a hearing and the court must schedule it within three weeks.

In Contra Costa County where Wiles lives, the vast majority of tenants are unrepresented and face numerous barriers in navigating eviction court, says a 2022 report by the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy.

Without legal counsel, tenants often don’t realize they need to respond to an

eviction notice and so they lose their cases by default.

Court staff encourage tenants to resolve their cases through mediation, the report found. But in these informal conferences overseen by volunteer mediators, they face off against landlord attorneys who are far more seasoned.

When tenants do make it to court hearings, they often don’t realize that the case will be decided then and there. They don’t bring evidence that could help their cause, such as proof that they paid rent, or that the landlord refused to accept funds from rental assistance programs.

Eviction “is a very opaque, technically complex and legalistic process,” said Alex Werth, a policy consultant who wrote the report. “And it is particularly difficult to navigate — whether you are a tenant or a landlord — without an attorney by your side.”

Studies show legal representation increases favorable outcomes for tenants. In Philadelphia, which launched a right to counsel program for low-income tenants in select zip codes in 2022, tenants facing eviction in those zip codes were less likely than others to receive default judgments in favor of the landlord or be locked out of their homes. And eviction cases were more likely to be withdrawn, according to a report by the Reinvestment Fund. (Cases also took longer to resolve, an outcome that might concern landlords.)

Choosing to fight

Back in San Francisco, the city’s taxpayer-supported Eviction Defense Collaborative matched Corey Lafayette with Jacqueline Patton, a tenant

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FIGHTING EVICTIONS CONT...

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attorney with six years' experience. A week later, they gathered in Lafayette's apartment along with a social worker for the collaborative to talk strategy.

Unemployed and relying on disability checks, Lafayette had fallen behind on rent during the pandemic. But when he tried to cover the debt, he said, the apartment manager wouldn't accept his money.

Lafayette, who is Black and gay, said he thought discrimination was at play. He recalled a conversation he'd had with the apartment manager two years ago.

"A week after he took over, he told me this is a family-orientated facility and I don't fit in here and he's going to get me kicked out however he can."

The manager denied making that statement when questioned later by a reporter. "I would never say anything like that," he said, declining to comment further.

Lafayette's eviction notice contained a laundry list of complaints, from keeping the unit in an "unsanitary condition," to allowing guests to visit at night, to causing a fire hazard by "putting aluminum foil under the burners of your stove." Patton and the social worker, Brandon Williams, looked around at Lafayette's neatly arranged sneaker collection and sparkly red dinette chairs. They'd seen hoarder apartments; this wasn't one.

Video evidence Patton requested from Lafayette's landlord showed people loitering near the apartment building, Patton said, but no proof any of them were his guests. Lafayette, who walks with difficulty due to an old gunshot wound, said he sometimes relied on a friend to open the gate for him when a delivery arrived, or to help with chores like laundry. He admitted that one of his guests had taken packages belonging to another tenant, an incident mentioned in the complaint, but said he was "devastated" when he found out and told the person to return them.

Williams empathized with Lafayette's complaint of discrimination. "You have to realize you're in San Francisco in 2023 being told by a white man that you don't belong. It's a shame but it's the reality of this city," said Williams, who also is Black.

Eviction disproportionately affects Black people. In a large nationwide study, Princeton University's Eviction Lab found fewer than one in five renters nationwide are Black, but more than half of eviction filings are against Black renters.

Patton had considered proposing a compromise to Lafayette's landlord, the non-profit Chinatown Community Development Center: They could transfer him to another of their buildings. But at the meeting, the three decide that they will push for Lafayette to stay in his home.

"I want to fight this," Lafayette said.

A lawyer shortage

They'd have to fight quickly. While San Francisco provides all tenants with representation, only about 75% get the so-called "gold standard" of legal defense — an attorney to carry the case from start to finish. The rest, like Lafayette, get a lawyer for just one mandatory settlement conference; if the case isn't resolved then, the tenant has to go it alone.

It's one of the most often-cited problems with right to counsel programs: There simply aren't enough experienced tenant attorneys to go around. That mismatch has become more obvious this year as eviction moratoria have expired across California, leaving courts clogged with cases in some areas.

In counties like Alameda and Los Angeles, which don't have right to counsel ordinances but have networks of tenant attorneys offering free legal help, it can be difficult to hire for a job that, while potentially rewarding, pays less than the private sector.

Ora Prochovnick, litigation director for San Francisco's Eviction Defense Collaborative, said she needs 50 experienced attorneys to handle the roughly 2,500 eviction cases the city sees each year. She has 45 lawyers now, though some are brand new to the field. The city spends \$17 million a year providing free lawyers for tenants and has set up a fellowship program to lure more law school graduates into the work.

The collaborative triages cases, handing them off to a network of attorneys at eight nonprofit groups and deciding who will get full-scope representation based on factors like whether tenants are elderly or have children, a disability or a language barrier.

The effort, which launched in 2019, is paying off, says the Mayor's Office of Housing: About 70% of San Francisco tenants who receive full-scope legal representation end up staying in their homes.

"We are correcting a power imbalance that has existed for way too long," said Prochovnick. "We are preventing displacement to the streets and outside the Bay Area."

An unwelcome surprise

Weeks after getting her eviction notice in Oakley, Nancy Wiles still wasn't sure what to do. She showed it to a friend who is a tenant advocate on the board of the nonprofit Monument Impact. They went to the Pittsburg courthouse to investigate.

At the courthouse, Wiles got discouraging news: Because she hadn't responded to the notice in time, the court filed a judgment against her. She owed nearly \$7,000 to her former landlord, the court said. The eviction also could go on her credit history, reducing her chances of landing an apartment in the future.

Wiles, who survives mostly on \$1,000 a month in disability benefits, was crestfallen. "I can't afford anything like that."

While she admitted she'd fallen behind on rent, sometimes making partial payments, she pointed to receipts showing she had paid more than The Oaks was alleging. The Oaks' property management team and lawyers for the property owners did not respond to messages from CalMatters seeking comment.

Wiles thought she should be compensated for the cost and stress of living in a poorly-maintained apartment, but without understanding how eviction proceedings worked, she'd never appeared in court to make those arguments.

Contra Costa County last fall began paying nonprofits to run legal clinics at courthouses for tenants like Wiles. But attorneys say court staff barred them from advertising the clinics within the courthouse and many tenants are still falling through the cracks.

"It's the savvy tenants that know how to Google and find resources" that come to the clinics, said Mihaela Gough, an attorney with Centro Legal de la Raza. "When we do go to court, there are always a lot of tenants who aren't represented that we haven't heard of."

Right to counsel campaigns launch

Elected officials in some California cities and counties are hoping to set up right to counsel programs similar to San Francisco's.

In December the Los Angeles City Council asked its city attorney to draft an ordinance guaranteeing legal counsel to tenants who face eviction and earn 80% or less of the area's median income. Funded by a tax on real estate sales of \$5 million or more, the program would phase in as money becomes available. LA County supervisors passed a similar measure in July.

"We're facing at this moment a city that is completely crippled by its housing costs and as a result tenants are facing incredible challenges," said Nithya Raman, the city councilmember who led the effort.

Community groups in Fresno and Bakersfield have unsuccessfully pushed to establish a tenant right to counsel. Both cities, however, have set up eviction protection programs to offer

education, mediation, and in Fresno's case, legal help to tenants when the city attorney says their landlords have acted illegally.

The right to counsel is "having a moment" partly because "the pandemic shone a light on tenant housing precarity and the widespread nature of evictions," said Werth.

Landlord groups have opposed some right-to-counsel campaigns. "Providing a taxpayer-funded attorney to a tenant who did not pay their rent does not stop the eviction," said Joshua Howard, an executive vice president of the California Apartment Association. "Those funds would be better used to provide rental assistance to prevent the eviction process from ever starting."

Heading to court

On a November Monday, Lafayette walked into the San Francisco Superior Court building, his hands trembling.

"I'm nervous. I just want this to be over," he said.

In a courtroom packed with tenants, landlords and attorneys, Patton and the lawyer for Lafayette's landlord told Judge Ronald Quidachay they were close to reaching a deal. He sent them into a hallway to negotiate.

Patton had drafted a settlement agreement in which Lafayette agreed to pay \$2,700 in overdue rent, with help from a city program, and ensure his guests do not disturb other tenants. For him to be in violation, the landlord would have to prove that any "guests" were actually there to visit Lafayette. And Lafayette would get two things he'd been requesting for years: access to a parking space and for his name to be added to the apartment's call box.

"One of my goals is to not just stabilize the housing but to make it better for someone," said Patton. If tenants feel they are benefiting from an agreement, she said, they'll be more likely to keep it, avoiding another eviction.

Down the hall, Dylan Tong, the landlord's lawyer, said that as a low-income housing provider, his client was most concerned that Lafayette's guests respect the rules of the complex.

"There has to be a balance between enforcing the rules of a lease and also keeping people housed, giving them a second chance," he said. "So my client doesn't want to evict him but really wants him to know that he has to behave moving forward."

After a tense few minutes, Lafayette learned the landlord had accepted the settlement terms. His shoulders sank with relief. He glanced down the hall at the apartment manager who he'd said made him feel unwelcome.

"I just want him to see that I have people behind me," he said. "I'm not here by myself."

Nancy Wiles' story also had a happy ending: At a legal clinic at Pittsburg Superior Court she met Gough, the Centro Legal de la Raza attorney. Gough wrote a letter to Wiles' landlord, who agreed to dismiss the eviction case against her.

It's still unclear if the short-lived eviction will show up on Wiles' credit report, her attorney said. Added William Goodwin, the friend who helped her, "It burns me a little, because Nancy was fortunate, but how many others are out there being victimized?"

Originally published in CalMatters.org



Corey Lafayette and his attorney, Jacqueline Patton of the Eviction Defense Collaborative, prepare to appear in San Francisco Superior Court on Nov. 20, 2023. Photos by Manuel Orbeagozo for CalMatters

NO ON MAYOR BREED'S
PROP F

F Will Mean More
Homelessness in SF!



San Franciscans rightly deserve a city where all residents are housed and those at risk of overdose get the help they need. We deserve an effective response that truly addresses these important issues. Proposition F does not. It is a fatally flawed measure to cut vital assistance to those profiled as people using drugs. It was put on the ballot by Mayor London Breed as a political maneuver to shift blame for the overdose crisis onto the backs of the poorest San Franciscans. Prop F will make a bad situation worse, wasting taxpayer dollars in the process.



Proposition F is a cynical political ploy to shift blame onto the poorest San Franciscans.

Prop F will increase homelessness

Under the measure, those profiled as people using drugs who receive public benefits from the County Adult Assistance Program (CAAP) will be assessed, and will be required to enter treatment or lose assistance. At any point, if the individual misses appointments or services, they will also lose their assistance. They will lose their shelter. They will lose their housing. Even if they repeat the onerous process to become reinstated, they will owe back rent and can easily be evicted, making it more likely that the thousands of people who receive housing/shelter and cash assistance will end up on the streets.

Prop F will result in fewer treatment connections

Currently, individuals who receive public assistance are encouraged to seek treatment - as they can trade their work requirements for treatment. Under this proposal, individuals will be afraid to admit to substance use issues for fear of losing their tiny income, housing or shelter. While touted as a means to get more people into treatment, this will do the opposite, as less people will reveal to social workers that they use drugs.

Join These Organizations in Voting No on F:

- SF Democratic Party

SF Human Services Network

SEIU, 1021

San Francisco Tenants Union

Homeless Emergency Provider Assoc.

SF Women's Political Committee

Harvey Milk LGBT Democratic Club

Alice B Toklas Democratic Club
- Affordable Housing Alliance

SF Treatment on Demand Coalition

SF Small Business Forward

Bernal Heights Democratic Club

Haight Ashbury Neighborhood Coalition

District 11 Democratic Club

Latino Democratic Club



Prop F contradicts evidence-based approaches to public health

Prop F defies accepted best practices for addressing substance use disorders and homelessness and will have deadly results. Research by public health experts shows indisputable evidence that proposals such as Prop F, which mandate treatment, are ineffective and counterproductive. Worse, it will lead to increased rates of return to substance use, overdose deaths and suicide.



Prop F wastes valuable health care resources

Under this proposal, the Human Service Agency will have to hire clinicians to add assessments to their already over-extended workloads. San Francisco is facing a dire clinical shortage. *Prop F will actually result in more people being turned away for treatment and clinicians are diverted to assess welfare recipients.*



Prop F is a treatment shell game

It is a documented fact that there are not enough treatment services to serve everyone in San Francisco who currently need it. Those who need help should not be pushed aside to serve those who are obligated to get care as a condition of receiving benefits.



For more information or questions about No on F, visit www.ReduceSFHomelessness.com.

Created by Reduce SF's Homelessness; a Committee Against Proposition F. Financial Disclosures available at the San Francisco Ethics Commission, 25 Van Ness Ave, San Francisco 94102

NO A LA PROPOSICIÓN F DEL
ALCALDE BREED

¡F significará más
personas sin hogar en SF!



Los habitantes de San Francisco merecen, con razón, una ciudad donde todos los residentes tengan alojamiento y quienes sufren de adicción reciban la ayuda que necesitan. Merecemos una respuesta eficaz que realmente aborde estas importantes cuestiones. La Proposición F no lo hace. Es una medida fatalmente defectuosa recortar la asistencia vital a aquellos perfilados como personas que consumen drogas. El alcalde London Breed lo puso en la boleta electoral como una maniobra política para echar la culpa de la crisis de sobredosis a los habitantes más pobres de San Francisco. La Propuesta F empeorará la situación, desperdiciando el dinero de los contribuyentes en el proceso.



La Proposición F es una estratagema política cínica para echarle la culpa a los habitantes más pobres de San Francisco.

La Proposición F aumentará la falta de vivienda

Según la medida, aquellos perfilados como personas que consumen drogas y reciben beneficios públicos del Programa de Asistencia para Adultos del Condado (CAAP, por sus siglas en inglés) serán evaluados y deberán ingresar a tratamiento o perder la asistencia. En cualquier momento, si la persona falta a citas o servicios, también perderá su asistencia inmediatamente. Perderán su refugio. Perderán su vivienda. Incluso si repiten el oneroso proceso para ser reintegrados, deberán pagar alquileres atrasados y pueden ser desalojados fácilmente, lo que hace más probable que las miles de personas que reciben vivienda/refugio y asistencia en efectivo terminen en las calles.

La Propuesta F resultará en menos conexiones de tratamiento

Actualmente, se anima a las personas que reciben asistencia pública a buscar tratamiento, ya que pueden cambiar sus requisitos laborales por tratamiento. Según esta propuesta, las personas tendrán miedo de admitir problemas de uso de sustancias por miedo a perder sus escasos ingresos, su vivienda o su refugio. Si bien se promociona como un medio para lograr que más personas reciban tratamiento, esto hará lo contrario, ya que menos personas revelarán a los trabajadores sociales que consumen drogas.



La Proposición F contradice los enfoques de salud pública basados en evidencia

La Proposición F desafía las mejores prácticas aceptadas para abordar los trastornos por uso de sustancias y la falta de vivienda y tendrá resultados mortales. Las investigaciones realizadas por expertos en salud pública muestran evidencia indiscutible de que propuestas como la Proposición F, que exige tratamiento, son ineficaces y contraproducentes. Peor aún, conducirá a mayores tasas de retorno al consumo de sustancias, muertes por sobredosis y suicidios.



La Proposición F desperdicia irresponsablemente valiosos recursos de atención médica

Según esta propuesta, la Agencia de Servicios Humanos tendrá que contratar médicos para agregar evaluaciones a sus ya sobrecargadas cargas de trabajo. San Francisco se enfrenta a una grave escasez clínica. En realidad, la Proposición F dará como resultado que se rechace a más personas para recibir tratamiento y que los médicos se desvíen para evaluar a los beneficiarios de la asistencia social.



La propuesta F es un juego de shell de tratamiento.

Es un hecho documentado que no hay suficientes servicios de tratamiento para atender a todas las personas en San Francisco que actualmente los necesitan. No se debe dejar de lado a quienes necesitan ayuda para servir a quienes están obligados a recibir atención como condición para recibir beneficios.



Para obtener más información o preguntas sobre el No a la F, visite www.ReduceSFHomebeing.com.

Creado por Reducir la falta de vivienda de SF; un comité contra la propuesta F. Divulgaciones financieras disponibles en la Comisión de Ética de San Francisco, 25 Van Ness Ave, San Francisco 94102

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IN THE WORLD OF HOMELESSNESS, MANY ARE PUNISHED FOR THE ACTS OF A FEW

JORDAN DAVIS

This year, I made a New Year’s resolution: No longer will I go on X, the social network formerly known as Twitter. Many of my peers have done so as well, since the rebranding has been accompanied by so much toxicity. X is starting to resemble an infamous website where trolls stalk transgender and autistic people.

If you have never been homeless without friends or family to house you, never needed to depend on systems for a roof over your head, then you don’t know how unsafe it feels when trolls write about “the homeless industrial complex,” attack housing first policies—the idea that housing should be prioritized with wraparound services—or weaponize the news about fentanyl use among homeless people to shame us.

This is called collective punishment: penalizing everyone in a certain group

for the actions of one or a few members of that group. This is the root cause of many “isms” that permeate society and exacerbate homeless issues.

We see collective punishment in all sectors of society: Palestinians in Gaza suffering Israel’s war crimes in response to an attack by Hamas; transfeminine people being excluded from women’s spaces over imagined fears about sexual assault; working class, disabled and homeless people who have whose participation in public comment at San Francisco City Hall has been curtailed because of a Board of Supervisors decision to end remote public comment last fall after a few Nazis called in with awful comments and were immediately cut off.

Now, collective punishment affects homeless people and supportive housing tenants in the form of stereotypes. Skewed images of poor

and homeless people using drugs influenced voters to pass “Care, Not Cash,” a policy that slashed cash assistance in San Francisco in 2002. Similar stereotypes about homeless criminality have informed multiple laws like sit-lie bans and park closures; now, guided by images of addiction among unhoused people, drug testing is on the ballot.

Trolls post toxic comments on X about some permanent supportive housing tenants or unhoused neighbors using drugs and/or decompensating—or, in an ableist terms, “going crazy”—in order to argue for draconian policies such as expansion of conservatorship, ending housing first, and drug testing recipients of general assistance. I would expect these types of policies and attitudes in Ron DeSantis’ Florida, not in San Francisco. Yes, fentanyl is a crisis, but we need real, humane solutions instead of a return to failed

Drug War policies in the past.

A lot of formerly homeless people, including myself, read these toxic tweets and worry about these inflammatory and oppressive attitudes turning into punitive policies: It’s raising my stress levels.

Permanent supportive housing tenants have to deal with landlords being afraid to rent to us and being placed into SROs instead of scattered site housing, with restrictive visitor policies imposed on us because of some tenants allowing their guests to run wild. Also, we’re not allowed to pay our rent by check because a few tenants bounced theirs.

Homeless service and supportive housing providers, as well as the general public, should treat us as individuals, not this monolith that wants to cause all the problems that are plaguing the city.

BLACKNESS AND HOMELESSNESS INTERSECT IN SF

Samel Leparan

The intersection of blackness and homelessness in San Francisco is a history that can be told in several ways. To intersect means having at least one element in common. But what do blackness and homelessness have in common? Where do blackness and homelessness meet in San Francisco?

Let’s dive directly into the most common views and well observed elements that directly or indirectly intersect blackness and homelessness in San Francisco. I am a Black homeless folk on the streets of San Francisco and in my life as on these streets I have interacted with many folks from different places and with different skin color who are also homeless, either by choice or by chance.

Why homeless by choice or chance? It is a million dollar question. Some are homeless because of the experiences they went through and the circumstances surrounding them forced them to the streets. Others

are homeless by chance due to the lack of opportunities they had when they arrived in this country. As Louis Pasteur once said, “chance favors the prepared mind.”

I have come to learn that there are actually a multitude of different paths that lead the folks you see, meet, interact and or read stories from in the Street Sheet to become homeless, regardless of their skin color or any other identities. But why are the majority of unhoused people of a certain skin color? Why so many Black folks?

At least for immigrants, the answer to that is not obvious. It lies in the reasons why people are leaving African countries and coming to America. Black folks are migrating to America for so many reasons. Many are trying to find greener pastures; some come to visit, others to study, others come for holidays, while still others escape the harsh reality of their poor homes and countries—failed democracies or persecution.

Some came in search of new opportunities or new challenges.

The limitations set by the intersection between Blackness and homelessness intensify when national identity merges with race and housing status. When one comes to America from an African nation, it may be because of what they have heard, read or been told about the great opportunities that lie ahead in this foreign country. They have the chance, they have the choice to benefit from the opportunities at hand, but after a while some succeed while others fall on hard times: they lose their passports, indulge in drugs and dealing, lose their dependants, join bad companies, fall out of favor with their employers, or lose their documents through evictions, theft, accidents, floods, fire and so many other ways. This forces one to be an illegal immigrant, forcing them to try and evade the authorities and the systems in place.

Without any other viable options,

one’s living choices narrow down to living on the streets, under bridges or in a car. The shelters put in place to help become more scary, especially to those who are undocumented and trying to hide from the system. Here is where you find the real relationship between Blackness and homelessness. People are forced into a choice: to be arrested or hide and remain homeless, having no one to listen or understand their stories and different experiences. These folks cannot even afford a meal, let alone other basic needs. Others cannot even find their way back home due to many factors like safety—especially those who seek asylum—affordability, or missing documents, while others just choose not to go back.

Blackness and homelessness intersect in so many ways, and for that reason folks need help and support, for you can never really tell why one is homeless or the reason here in San Francisco.

WE'RE NOT MENTALLY ILL PEOPLE ANYMORE. NOW WE'RE "THE CRAZIES."

Jack Bragen

We live in challenging times. Those who have power over others are waging a detestable war against the innocent, against those who merely want to make things better for themselves and their families, and those who make sacrifices to help others.

But those who have power over others cannot win—it is physically impossible. They could destroy all life and everything else, but they can not ultimately maintain a malicious dominance over the innocent.

Meanwhile, those who work for good and have good intent are on the other side of this war; our biggest weapons are the truth, the ability to see the truth and think clearly, and courage.

Among the first casualties expected to be harmed and killed by bad people are the mentally ill, the neurodivergent—aka “the crazies.” I, for one, am terrified, but I must speak.

A while ago, as I wrote a preliminary note for this work, I spotted two old ladies seemingly terrified of me because I was sitting in my car smoking, not far from them, when it was dark out. Do I really look that scary to people? I doubt it.

Former President Trump has perpetrated a disservice to humanity in his creation of fear and hate towards people with mental health diagnoses. Hate is a cornerstone of Trump’s political platform. He finds vulnerable demographic groups that have difficulty vocalizing for themselves and casts them as villains. They have difficulty fighting back and become hated by mainstream society. The two examples are Spanish-speaking people and mentally ill people. Other groups can do a better job of standing up for themselves.

These two old ladies will go home and tell tales of how brave they were. People who appear mentally ill have become objects of fear, hate,

alienation and dehumanization: a direct result of Trump’s hate speech about “the crazies.”

The following is conjecture:

Here, I’d like to make a distinction between two types of mentally ill people, each in Trump’s crosshairs. The first group is made up of unhoused, untreated mentally ill people who are either gradually falling apart on the street or just barely surviving.

The second group of neurodivergent people consists of those who are probably in treatment, are in remission from severe symptoms, are housed and may be actively participating in society.

That second poses more of a threat to Trump’s power, because we probably have most of our rights intact and we may be capable of activism as well as whistleblowing.

A potential second Trump Administration might take different approaches to attacking each of the targeted groups. The groundwork for rounding up mentally ill in both groups, in both cases, could be completed quickly.

In the case of mentally ill people whose health has grown better, the strategies entail overcoming more obstacles. Since I don’t want to give out ideas on exactly how this is to be done, I will only comment that governmental structures seem to have been created.

We are probably not looking at a scenario resembling the Holocaust with a different target—mentally ill people rather than Jewish people or members of the LGBTQ+ communities. Instead, it could resemble the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. The latter was also a crime, and imprisoned American citizens paid profoundly.

Admittedly, I’m making a conjecture with highly limited evidence to back

it, might seem far fetched. But then again, who would have expected a deadly attack on Congress while in session to ratify the election of a new President? We are in uncharted waters.

Trump’s rhetoric— when he advocates reopening the state hospitals or calls us “crazies”—adds fuel to the flame of hate, and it also makes us seem less than human. Trump probably wants to come after us “crazies” more than he wants to go after Spanish-speaking workers. In practical reality, our economy won’t function if we deport all the people who do hard work for us for the privilege of staying here.

There are limits to what I can do to protect myself. If the government truly wanted to come after me, there is not much I could do about it. But for now I can speak out, and that’s the most powerful tool I have.

We have to push through the mass misconception that “the crazies” are dangerous and depraved people. The PR campaign I’m proposing is accomplished by getting out in society, rejecting attempts at segregating us, and participating in the world, even if we’re just getting some iced coffee at the Starbucks drive thru. Going to the library and finding a book that interests you is another activity. It doesn’t involve caffeine, and usually it won’t cost you anything. You don’t have to read an entire book, especially if the book goes on too long and when the last two thirds of it are too boring.

When we go out in public, we should try to behave in the same ways others do, and we should try to conform to the norms that people have created. Being social is a skill. I admit to being deficient at it because I have spent far too much time at the computer and not interacting with people.

Many people with mental illness have become attracted to writing self-published books. If you are not careful about it, the cost can be

huge, and you won’t make any money at it. If you want to write, here is my suggestion: I got my start more than thirty years ago through submitting letters to the editor. If enough mentally ill people can just do that, it makes a big difference. People read letters to the editor. You don’t have to be a best-selling author to write a letter to the editor. All that’s needed is an articulate opinion, in the word length the newspaper or magazine specifies, and with spelling and grammar errors corrected—bear in mind that your first attempt at it might or might not work. Also, you should never pay any money to be published.

The above are concrete, stigma-busting activities that can reshape public perceptions about us. We need to begin now, because Trump is coming, and he’s coming after all of us crazies, unless we can produce enough shifts in people’s perceptions to make the public skeptical of Trump instead of us.

For mentally ill people and our families, the risks are real. And this can be a hard thing when we often have to overcome paranoia. We can’t always afford to let our guard down. And we must remain brave, remain kind, and remain good. And this is a tall order. But many of us have done this before. And many of us have looked death in the face, and death backed down.

Lastly, we should not give up on human beings to be intelligent and able to think. Americans just need to take a closer look at what we’re getting with Trump. I know people are unhappy with Biden. But we could do worse than Biden.

Jack Bragen is a fiction and essay writer, and lives in Martinez, California.

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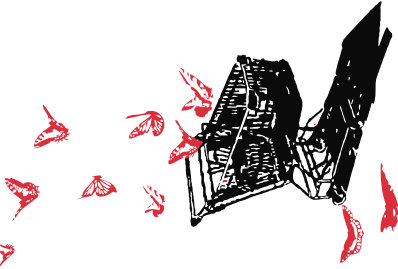
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