

MINIMUM SUGGESTED DONATION TWO DOLLARS.

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



SUPREME COURT LEGALIZES **SWEEPS: ORGS RESPOND** 

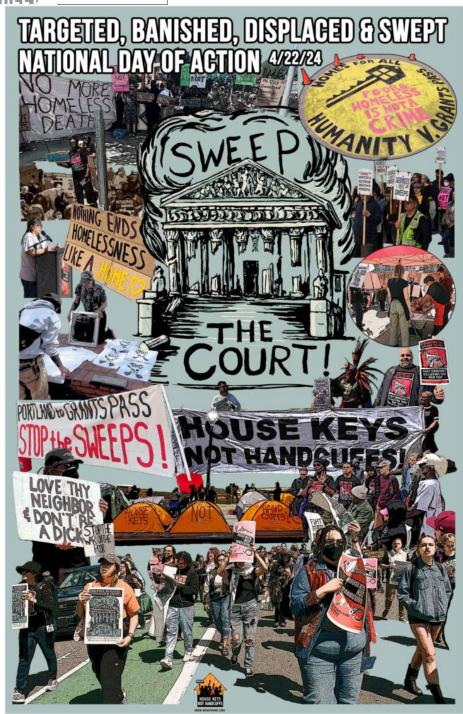
SF **BUDGET PROCESS:** A TIMELINE

SOBER HOUSING PLAN THREATENS HOUSING

6

CRIMINALIZED **8 VICTIMIZED** 





WESTERN REGIONAL ADVOCACY PROJECT:

### **SCOTUS TEARS UP UNHOUSED PEOPLE'S CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS**

Washington D.C. - The Supreme Court issued a decision today in the landmark case Grants Pass vs Johnson. This case centers on whether governments can fine and arrest unhoused people who have no other choice but to sleep outside. As expected our Dred Scott loving Supreme Court diluted people's 8th amendment protections against Cruel and Unusual punishment OR ...The court upheld this ruling deciding it is indeed cruel and unusual punishment to cite and arrest people for lodging when no shelter is available.

Lower courts had ruled that Grants Pass practices were in fact (insert unfavorable: originally) found to be unconstitutional as they were arresting and citing unhoused people for camping, who have no other choice but to live on the

"Anti-camping and lodging ordinances result in citations, arrests, and forced displacement for the inescapably human act of taking up space. These ordinances cause essential belongings, including items necessary to basic human survival, to be confiscated and destroyed. And they severely curtail people's ability to pursue economic and housing security." According to Terese Howard of House Keys Action Network in Denver, CO.

According to Paul Boden of WRAP "Criminalizing poverty and homelessness not only fails to address systemic causes of mass homelessness, it also exacerbates both the underlying structures of oppression that continue to plague our society, racism and classism'

"We want to see everyone have a safe and decent place to call home. Homelessness kills, housing saves lives – these protections against inhumane policing (unfavorable insert: were) are critical to forcing local government to solve the crisis." According to Jennifer Friedenbach of the Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco.

Ordinances criminalizing people for their status as unhoused people are not only cruel but are derived from rejected historical efforts to banish undesirable people from public spaces. The court (favorable: followed) (unfavorable: should have followed) historical precedent and deemed the criminalization of basic survival

Civil penalties and/or forced displacement of unhoused residents is a clear form of punishment, with severe collateral consequences that make obtaining housing impossible.

The decision to side with Grants Pass concretizes displacement into law which will continue to exacerbate the already negligent and abusive conditions unhoused people face everyday simply to survive in this country.



### 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

go to streetsheet.org and click DONATE

### **VOLUNTEER WITH US!**

**PHOTOGRAPHERS VIDEOGRAPHERS TRANSLATORS COMIC ARTISTS NEWSPAPER LAYOUT** WEBSITE MAINTENANCE **GRAPHIC DESIGNERS INTERNS WRITERS COPYEDITORS** 

### **DONATE EQUIPMENT!**

**LAPTOPS DIGITAL CAMERAS AUDIO RECORDERS** SOUND EQUIPMENT

CONTACT: TJJOHNSTON@COHSF.ORG

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

Editor: TJ Johnston Vendor Coordinator: Emmett House Artistic Spellcaster: Quiver Watts

Cover Art: Katie Kaplan, JustSeeds

Contributors: Western Regional Advocacy Project, LCCR & ACLU, National Coalition for the Homeless, Solinna Ven, Renee Tian, Eliza Cieutat, Jordan Davis, Jack Bragen

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

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!** 

### ORGANIZATIONS RESPOND TO SCOTUS' RULING

### SWEEPS ARE KILLING US

LAWYERS COMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS AND AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION:

## U.S. SUPREME COURT'S DECISION IN GRANTS PASS V. JOHNSON GUTS CIVIL RIGHTS PROTECTIONS OF UNHOUSED PEOPLE NATIONWIDE; LAWSUIT AGAINST THE CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO WILL PROCEED

Today, in a landmark decision, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Grants Pass v. Johnson, a case that had barred cities from citing and arresting people simply for being homeless. This ruling is a stark departure from established legal precedent regarding the Eighth Amendment's prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment.

"Today's shameful decision guts a key civil rights protection for unhoused people, but it will not derail our lawsuit against San Francisco, which has policies and an ordinance requiring the city to offer shelter before clearing encampments," said John Do, senior attorney at the ACLU of Northern California. "Because the city has a history of not keeping its word, we'll be watching closely. San Francisco should not interpret this ruling as a green light to unlawfully crack down on unhoused residents simply for being unable to afford housing, and instead must commit to moving more people off the streets and into affordable housing or emergency shelter."

Grants Pass addressed only one of 13 claims in Coalition on Homelessness v. City of San Francisco, which challenges the city's costly and ineffective practice of destroying unhoused individuals' belongings, and citing, arresting, and moving them without offering real alternative shelter. The Grants Pass case did not address the city's pattern of destroying property, its failure to provide accommodations for people with disabilities, nor whether the methods used to clear encampments unlawfully endanger people's lives. These claims remain unresolved and will be at issue when the case goes to trial in May 2025.

"We will continue to fight to ensure that San Francisco follows the law and its own policies in safeguarding the rights and property of unhoused residents," said Nisha Kashyap, Program Director of Racial Justice at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area. "This includes upholding critical Fourth Amendment rights to be free from property destruction by the government."

Allowing cities to cite and arrest unhoused people for sleeping outside will funnel vulnerable individuals into the criminal legal system. Even if they ultimately prevail in court, the damage will be done. Being arrested, or having a criminal record, warrant, or unpaid court fines can trap people in homelessness by making it more difficult for them to secure public benefits, employment, and permanent bousing

"Cities should not punish people for being poor," said Jennifer Friedenbach, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness. "While the most recent data shows that the number of people living on the street in San Francisco has decreased since we filed our lawsuit, homelessness has risen overall in recent years because people are struggling to pay rent and make ends meet. The solution is, and has always been, safe and affordable housing. But instead of tackling root causes, elected leaders have chosen to penalize residents who have nowhere else to go."

NATIONAL COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS:

### NATIONAL COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS CONDEMNS SUPREME COURT DECISION IN GRANTS PASS, OR

Washington, D.C. — In a profoundly disappointing ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court today decided that it is constitutional to arrest or fine homeless individuals for using survival items like blankets or pillows in public spaces when no alternative shelter is available.

"Arresting or fining people for trying to survive is expensive, counterproductive, and cruel," said Jesse Rabinowitz, campaign and communications director at the National Homelessness Law Center (NHLC). "This inhumane ruling, which contradicts the values of nearly three-quarters of Americans, will make homelessness worse in Grants Pass and nationwide. Cities are now even more empowered to neglect proven housing-based solutions and to arrest or fine those with no choice but to sleep outdoors. While we are disappointed, we are not surprised that this Supreme Court ruled against the interests of our poorest neighbors."

The Supreme Court decision has set a dangerous precedent, allowing cities to continue to criminalize homelessness instead of addressing the root causes of the issue. People experiencing homelessness should not be punished for their circumstances; all levels of the government have a responsibility to protect the most vulnerable members of society.

Donald H. Whitehead, Jr., executive director of the National Coalition for the Homeless states, "How a society treats its most vulnerable members reflects its values, priorities, and commitment to social justice. Criminalization has consequences. This decision will result in higher costs, more suffering, and death. We are deeply saddened by the Supreme Court's supreme injustice."

In Justice Sotomayor's dissent, the justice states that the ruling, "leaves the most vulnerable in our society with an impossible choice: Either stay awake or be arrested." Further, Sotomayor says, "I remain hopeful that someday in the near future, this Court will play its role in safeguarding constitutional liberties for the most vulnerable among us. Because the Court today abdicates that role, I respectfully dissent."

As the dissent states, the Court's decision today ignores the need to protect people currently experiencing homelessness from harassment, violent attacks, or targeted enforcement of local ordinances.

Housing ends homelessness. The National Coalition for the Homeless, in partnership with the National Coalition for Housing Justice, calls on federal elected officials to invest significantly in housing now. For over 40 years, we have seen federal affordable housing programs decimated, and it is time to transform the trajectory of our housing policy.

As a down payment to ensure that everybody has safe, decent housing that they can afford, we call for:

- Universal rental assistance for lowest-income households
   Dublis housing repair and proservation
- Public housing repair and preservation

  Full funding of the National Hausing T.
- Full funding of the National Housing Trust Fund
- Eviction and homelessness prevention
  - Voluntary supportive and emergency services
- The long term investment in our communities and country requires a recognition that robust social housing will end homelessness.

Despite this Supreme Court ruling, we know that housing, not handcuffs, solves homelessness, and we will continue our work to ensure that everyone, regardless of race or background, has the housing they need to thrive.



# AND SOCIAL **ANCING SAI**

### INA VEN, AND UTAT TIAN, SOLIN ELIZA CIEL RENEE

Mayor London Breed's budget proposal for fiscal years 2024-25 and 2025-26 has sparked significant controversy and is raising important questions about the city's direction in addressing public safety, social services, and community well-being.

proposal is a notable increase in funding for law enforcement agencies, including the Police and Fire departments, District Attorney's office and the Department of Emergency Management. The proposal allocates a staggering \$100 million increase and includes provisions for surveillance cameras and data collection retention increases, and increased SFPD At the heart of Mayor Breed's budget salary raises, incentive packages,

roles in supporting vulnerable populations within San Francisco. The San Francisco several vital social service programs and nonprofit organizations that play crucial Breed also proposed significant cuts to

V011+1

Donortmont of Children

hearing was about the mayor's proposal to reduce the Sugary Drinks Distributor Tax city, especially in ensuring that Black public Beilenson hearing, which is required under the California Health and Safety Code to discuss any proposed reduction in public health services. The 1.88 million, which would eliminate food educational and advocacy programs. GLIDE policy associate Shiba Bandeeba discussed the importance of soda tax-funded programs to educate and advocate for healthy eating across community members have a voice in five addr the

organizations] that provide food services like [GLIDE's] meals program," she said. "But even those programs don't address the overall demand, nor the structural "Most marginalized residents have been recommends that these funds be used heavily reliant on [community-based root causes of the varying health disparities. The Soda Tax Task Force

# CITY BUDGET

REGARDING THE SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY BUDGET PROCESS A COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF KEY DATES AND EVENTS



Phase 1



May 31st

departments to find areas

Mayor requests

to make cuts in order to

decrease the deficit.

Phase 2

Mayor presents initial

budget proposa

**June 14-16th** 

Phase 3

departments' feedback on the proposal. This phase City supervisors listen to also includes public comment.

lune 20th

Financial analyst from

Phase 4

the board of

June 21-23th

their Families (DCYF) faces a substantial reduction of \$2.9 million in funding, 2026 which will affect mental health and of the most contentious cuts includes an housing, as well as outpatient programs critical for community well-being. One prevention programs. Additionally, the Department of Public Health (DPH) is facing a cut of \$9.8 million in FY 2025in preventing evictions and providing stability for households facing financial up to 50% reduction in funding for the particularly impacting school violence Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), which has been instrumental substance use services in shelters and

family and youth resources in underserved activists, and concerned citizens gathered spoke on the importance of funding for communities such as her neighborhood. voices heard. Vanessa Bailey, a mother and resident of the Bayview District, As San Francisco approaches a critical at City Hall on June 24 to make their point in the budget cycle, families,

them a safe and nurturing environment to thrive," she said. "The consequences of such [budget] cuts are a direct blow to resources, extracurricular activities, and the aspirations and dreams of working-class families and our inner-city youth. centers, play a crucial role in providing They are denied access to educational needs, such as after-school programs, mentorships, and community service "Programs that cater to [children's] opportunities for personal growth.

the Homeless Prenatal Program, addressed the Budget and Finance Committee at the Board of Supervisors, citing the need for permanent supportive housing, rental vouchers and subsidies, and shelter beds. Shellena Eskridge, executive director of proposal on vulnėrable communities. regarding the impact of this budget Others echoed similar sentiments

away a pregnant person or a person with small children, informed that they have to sleep in their car or turn to the streets." "I can tell you as a service provider: There sleep in their car or turn to the streets," Eskridge told the panel. "Please continue is nothing worse than having to turn to invest in families."

The following day, many participants expressed similar concerns during the

overall quality of life among historically marginalized San Franciscans. Education is prevention."

Like the Black community, Pacific Islanders in San Francisco also face

disproportionate health disparities. Tina Faitala, program coordinator of All My Usos, spoke on proposed reductions' devastating impacts on programs that previously distributed healthy and culturally relevant food and nutrition resources if All My Usos loses its grant funding.

them alive will no longer be offered due to budget cuts," she said. "Remember these "We are now left wondering who will tell our people that services that help keep cuts, because our community will. "We

Throughout the hearings, a common refrain from the general public has been the significant impact on San Francisco's concerns. He pointed out the effects that neighborhoods such as Bayview-Hunters Point, the Tenderloin, the Mission, Potrero and South of Market would bear more vulnerable communities. District 11 Supervisor Ahsha Safaí echoed such cuts would have on neighborhoods in his district, such as Crocker-Amazon, Visitacion Valley and the Excelsior District. He also said that other brunt. the

said. "It just doesn't make sense to me. We have an overdose crisis that is climbing by city that need food education activities the most, and we're taking it away," Safaí the day, and we have food insecurity and "Those are all the neighborhoods in the education that is completely being undermined by this action. food

Residents, advocates and public officials engaged in robust debate throughout this process, emphasizing the diverse needs of the public. Recurring themes of equity and justice, as well as balancing community well-being with public safety, underscored these discussions. Activists often say that budgets are moral documents. The outcomes of these budget financial priorities but also reaffirm San Francisco's values as a city dedicated to discussions would not only determine fostering resilience, compassion, and opportunity for all. ■

### 6

lune 26th

### Phase 6

directly with the board o asting all day allowing Public comment day, supervisors to voice the public to speak concerns.

# lune 28th

00

Phase 8

Supervisors do a final amended budget review on their

### **July 31**

Phase 10

The mayor signs the Budget

### Phase 5

1011 SUND SINGS CITUE

d LIOIIS

and interventions that support the

DIO O

Jai cilicile of Cillialcil, Toucil

Second round of requests departments with made by the city supervisors.

### June 27th

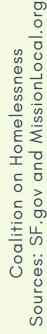
Phase 7

present a revised version public, supervisors will departments and the After the input from of the budget.

# July 11- 25th

Phase 9

budget will be reviewed occasions with the final vote occurring on July The final draft of the on three separate



### OP-ED: SUPERVISOR'S SOBRIETY PLAN ADDS ROADBLOCKS TO SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Five years after tenants experienced a giant leap forward in permanent supportive housing (PSH), they could suffer a gigantic leap backwards if Supervisor Matt Dorsey's proposed legislation for "recovery housing" passes.

At a June 18 press conference, Dorsey formally asked the City Attorney's office to draft legislation requiring that 25% of the City's PSH units be dedicated to sober housing. It also would align with proposed state legislation allowing up to 25% of state funding to cities for such housing and related services—effectively placing a moratorium on new PSH.

Housing for formerly homeless people is already scarce; resources for "housing first" accommodations would be further limited under this plan.

A knowledgeable, anonymous source who doesn't want their housing jeopardized informed me that Dorsey attempted to put it on the ballot, but could only get Supervisor Rafael Mandelman, who is the co-author of this legislation, to sign on as one of the four required Supervisors to do so. Even some of the moderates, as well as the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, thought that placing the proposal on the ballot was a bridge too far. In his announcement, Dorsey said he hoped to get his colleagues' support for his bill, even if it means accepting amendments. I find it dissonant that Dorsey, a gay man who undoubtedly was impacted by Proposition 8 in 2008, would put the rights of marginalized communities up for a vote. It's

giving pinkwashing vibes.

The San Francisco Standard article about this legislation cited a poll of tenants in Tenderloin Housing Clinic buildings in which 71% of the 450 tenants who responded to a survey said they would support sober housing. The Tenderloin Housing Clinic (THC) has over 1,900 tenants throughout its portfolio, which means less than 25% of tenants responded to the survey. THC's methodology was questionable: Its staff administered and collected the surveys in the presence of the tenants, which didn't guarantee confidentiality of the responses. Also, THC Executive Director Randy Shaw, one of the largest PSH evictors in San Francisco, has been an outspoken supporter of a renewed drug war and sober housing. In addition, the survey had leading questions, and THC also runs the Central City SRO Collaborative, which is frankly a fake tenants rights group. So, I have to call BS on this survey. While there is no meaningful opposition to sober housing options, this is not the biggest priority for PSH tenants.

I also want to push back on a statement from Del Seymour, the founder of the nonprofit Code Tenderloin, in the Standard article. Seymour said he was not able to recover from addiction in a "raggedy ass SRO"—Well, this should be a call to create more scattered site supportive housing, which would place more tenants across the city where drug dealers have a harder time locating them, and would encourage recovery, whether or not there were sober housing requirements. Given the conditions many of us live in, or

have lived in, and the way that PSH providers treat us, I don't blame my fellow tenants for doing drugs or drinking.

I am also concerned about the fact that there just isn't enough permanent supportive housing, and hobbling the creation of more PSH without sobriety requirements is going to create a logjam in the procurement of new housing. We are in a budget crunch. Where will the funding for so-called recovery housing come from? And how about funding for the shelters that will likely be more expensive to operate than permanent supportive housing?

I also am concerned about the stigmatizing language used by Dorsey, which includes referring to permanent supportive housing as "drug-permissive housing" and using the term "Recovery First." I have written about the success of housing first in a previous article, but using that type of language undermines Housing First best practices, and ignores the fact that stable housing is the first step to recovery, and that recovery and harm reduction are not at cross purposes. I personally stopped drinking alcohol, and didn't need sober housing to reach this goal.

Furthermore, this may lead to the Salvation Army, a nonprofit that has literally killed queer and trans homeless people through denial of services, getting more city contracts to run these sites. I can never trust them to run any part of the homelessness response system, even if they pinky swear to follow California and San Francisco's LGBTQ+ protections.

I also find it dissonant that the term "harm-reduction housing" is used to disparage permanent supportive housing without sobriety requirements more than the many market rate, rentcontrolled or below-market-rate apartments, or even single family homes. I'm sure there are raging coke parties in Marina mansions, SOMA condos, Noe Valley duplexes, and other places, but the city has to go after our poorest tenants. This type of stigmatizing language results in real-world consequences: I have experienced stalking from those who oppose my advocacy, and this legislation is putting our lives in danger.

While the overdose crisis is real, and there are tenants in all forms of housing who struggle with substance use and who may be impacting other tenants, this legislation is not the answer. Everybody needs a chance to get into recovery, from tenants in Dorsey's building in gentrified Mid-Market to tenants in SROs run by the Tenderloin Housing Clinic. Subsidized sober housing should also be available.

However, I have to put my foot down and strenuously oppose dismantling Housing First and the safety net writ large to appease those who weaponize hysteria for their own ends. During a budget crunch and when we still have a lot of unhoused neighbors, we cannot be putting any roadblocks in front of more permanent supportive housing. Solutions to these crises should be vetted with tenants who aren't under the control of PSH housing providers with their own agenda. ■



**WRITING:** Write about your experience of homelessness in San Francisco, about policies you think the City should put in place or change, your opinion on local issues, or about something newsworthy happening in your neighborhood!

**ARTWORK:** Help transform ART into ACTION by designing artwork for STREET SHEET! We especially love art that uplifts homeless people, celebrates the power of community organizing, or calls out abuses of power!

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Have a keen eye for beauty? Love capturing powerful moments at events? Have a photo of a Street Sheet vendor you'd like to share? We would love to run your photos in Street Sheet!

VISIT WWW.STREETSHEET.ORG/SUBMIT-YOUR-WRITING/

OR BRING SUBMISSIONS TO 280 TURK STREET TO BE CONSIDERED PIECES ASSIGNED BY THE EDITOR MAY OFFER PAYMENT, ASK FOR DETAILS!

# CRIMINALS AMONG THEY'RE NOT ALWAYS WHO THINK THEY ARE

Criminals really exist. They aren't just a figment of the imagination of political conservatives. Having been a victim of crime myself constitutes one of the reasons that I don't agree with defunding police. Much of the time, the only thing that can get a criminal out of one's face is the certainty that the cops are on their way. I'm saying this as a mentally ill adult with an imperfect past, in which I have been disproportionately punished for supposed antisocial behavior.

While criminals really exist, the systems we have for dealing with them barely if at all work. Most of those who behave violently or who commit other crimes have been raised in abusive situations. Most of them haven't been encouraged and helped to better themselves and their lives. As role models, they might be looking toward people who espouse violence.

Criminals are often predatory toward nice people. They will often equate being nice with weakness, and they will treat good people as human doormats, if they can get away with it.

Towards me, if I'm smoking in public, many have approached and have tried to give me cash for a cigarette. This is a first step toward an attempt to sell drugs or recruit me for drug trafficking. It starts with cash for a cigarette and then it progresses to further involvement in a criminal scheme. Then, when police come around, the hapless victim is the fall guy.

When someone tries to give cash for a cigarette, I have some tactics that work to get rid of them. One of them is vocal pushback as a first line of defense. Following that, if they persist, the cell phone comes

out of my pocket.

(But if someone just asks for a cigarette as a favor, I'm usually glad to give them one so long as they are not underage.)

"Criminals" and "homeless people" are not the same thing. Maybe some mainstream individuals lump both types of people together. Homeless people are just trying to survive, are probably not violent or set out to intentionally hurt people. They may eke out by collecting cans, vending street papers or asking people on the streets for money.

Begging in the history of Buddhism was considered an honorable tradition if you were a spiritual seeker.

Homeless people may be victims of criminals. Yet homeless people may not have anything of value that a criminal would want.

Criminals tend to presume they can intimidate me because I am a smaller, nicer man. When I don't go along with their plans or just stand up to their bullying behavior, they become incensed. And yet to keep my self-respect intact, I'm willing to risk being clobbered by a bigger, stronger man to avoid humiliation.

But society is not innocent. A person who ends up as a "criminal" may have been doomed right out the gate. We have social structures that lock out anyone who has not walked the supposed "straight and narrow,"and not everyone can conform to that model, especially in the world of the affluent.

Yet, that doesn't mean that we can be nice toward a criminal and

expect good results. Many are people who prey on the vulnerable, or who exploit other people's fear, suggestibility and naivete. Their systems of ethics are less rooted in Buddhist literature, the Torah or the King James Bible, and more in dominance.

Still, many criminals seem to have a difficult time liking themselves, and this is often apparent in a verbal exchange.

I have met and dealt with criminals partly because of my long-term experience of living in lowincome rentals. In 1983, I also met criminals who held up an East Bay supermarket where I worked; I was an innocent bystander, only 19 years old. Both men carried firearms. I am alive today through dumb luck, and also because the gunmen said that they didn't want to shoot anyone "unless we have to."

When I was 25, a drug dealer assaulted me in the apartment complex where I was renting in Concord. Police called it "mutual combat," even though I was the victim who was defending himself.

Some criminals aren't on the street physically intimidating others. They might work on Wall Street, or in seats of government. Think Bernie Madoff, who fleeced wealthy people in a Ponzi scheme. Or Donald Trump, now a convicted felon who falsified business records to secure an electoral win. You can't be convicted of 34 felonies and try to say you're not a criminal—it is a simple equation.

This article is not easy to write because my talking points are not cheery, but I still need to talk about these things, if only to

benefit others. If I speak of being a victim of a criminal, there are probably readers who can identify. Also if I speak of being dealt with as a criminal, it could help a person heal and realize they too are human, and maybe they haven't had it very easy in life.

In my past, I have done things my own way and have followed my own rules. I've had unconventional ways of doing things that have made people wonder if I were a criminal.

I have been jailed when I was badly psychotic. It was the worst and most difficult thing to which I've been subjected. And in comparison, I have otherwise lived in a sea of difficulty. My experience of being jailed was painful enough that I am mindful of the law.

But later, I discovered that the authorities often jail mentally ill people far too often. We're punished for having a brain disease. The punishing of people jailed while in a psychotic episode is a shame on our supposed "criminal justice" system.

Having seen how those deemed "a criminal" are dealt with, it is very clear that society has created this. Even if we must protect ourselves from them and have an effective deterrent, the "criminal" is just a symptom. Our society rejects and condemns human beings, and that's a big part of the problem. ■

Jack Bragen is author of "Instructions for Dealing with Schizophrenia: A Self-Help Manual," and has other writings searchable on the web. He lives in Martinez, California.



STREET SHEET is currently recruiting vendors to sell the newspaper around San Francisco.

Vendors pick up the papers for free at our office in the Tenderloin and sell them for \$2 apiece at locations across the City. You get to keep all the money you make from sales! Sign up to earn extra income while also helping elevate the voices of the homeless writers who make this paper so unique, and promoting the vision of a San Francisco where every human being has a home.

TO SIGN UP, VISIT OUR OFFICE AT 280 TURK ST FROM 10AM-4PM ON MONDAY-THURSDAY AND 10AM-NOON ON FRIDAY

### THE SAN FRANCISCO PEOPLE'S DEBATE **FOR MAYOR 2024**

Hear from the candidates for San Francisco Mayor you haven't heard from

**EVERY SATURDAY 1 PM - 3 PM AT** THE HIDALGO MONUMENT ATOP DOLORES PARK

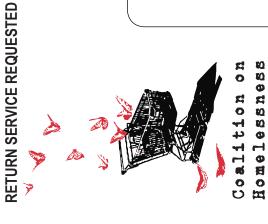


# 24 Open Cal ArtAuction

Homelessness tists to donate their The Coalition is calling all

learn more and Scan the code t donate:





San Francisco

www.cohsf.org streetsheetsf@gmail.com Coalition On Homelessness San Francisco, CA 94102 415.346.3740