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# STREET SHEET



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MILITARIZED  
POLICING OF  
UNHOUSED  
FOLKS

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20 YEARS OF  
WESTERN  
REGIONAL  
ADVOCACY  
PROJECT

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WE WILL NOT DISAPPEAR

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WHAT  
MILITARIZED  
POLICING OF  
HOMELESSNESS  
LOOKS LIKE

NICOLE ROWLAND &  
LUKAS ILLA

The following speech was delivered at a teach-in sponsored by the Western Regional Advocacy Project and other organizations at Lake Merritt in Oakland, California on April 22, 2025. The teach-in was part of a nationwide effort to educate people about the impact of sweeps had on unsheltered people since last year’s Supreme Court ruling on *Grants Pass v. Johnson*, which overturned a 2016 ruling that prevents local governments from arresting unhoused people for living outside when there is no shelter or housing available. Street Sheet edited this piece for clarity and brevity.

Nicole Rowland:

What does militarization mean? What does it look like in our communities?

Militarization, culturally and physically, shapes society to prepare for violence. If we think about the police, they are the most visible city workers that hold guns, batons, and handcuffs, and now rubber bullets, Tasers, stun grenades, tear gas, drones and mass amounts of surveillance technology.

Since 1990, city police departments have been given more than \$7.5 billion worth of retired military equipment straight from the U.S. Department of Defense. Hundreds of thousands of American police officers have trained with the Israeli Defense Forces, a foreign military that is actively committing war crimes and genocide against the Palestinian people.

But who faces the brunt of these attempts to militarize our police force? Homeless folks, of course! Some of the country’s richest cities—San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Portland, etc.—also have the largest unsheltered homeless populations, the largest and most well-funded police forces, yet some of the lowest crime rates on record. The focus of police and their violence target our unhoused neighbors and family, first and foremost.

Militarization looks like a man sleeping on the sidewalk being woken up by eight cops, some of whom already have their hands on their holsters.

Militarization looks like a woman sitting in Civic Center, being harassed to move every hour by Urban Alchemy workers.

Militarization looks like a community member entering a private park or business improvement district, having their every move tracked by a dozen surveillance cameras.

Militarization looks like an undocumented couple being tracked by geolocation data collected by SFPD and shared to ICE.

Militarization looks like housed neighbors using the 311 app to report someone they have profiled as unhoused.

We must resist militarization everywhere!

Lukas Illa:

The Grants Pass decision was greatly affected by Bay Area Democrats, particularly San Francisco ones. Trump-appointed Justice Neil Gorsuch cited the legal brief filed by San Francisco eight times in his opinion criminalizing homelessness across the country.

While we hear our liberal politicians decrying Donald Trump’s attacks on immigrants and trans folks, Mayor Daniel Lurie announces his new plan to deploy centralized teams of armed cops on homeless communities, which are disproportionately made up of our immigrant and trans community.

But this isn’t new! We all know that these politicians will use identity politics to enact their violence; that they expect us to believe it a success when it’s the boot of a Black or gay cop on the neck of our homeless neighbor.

Hyperlocally, as we see a cavern of wealth disparity among the upper tech class, the working poor, and those living on our streets, capitalist politicians will frame the mere existence of someone in a tent as the sole deterrent to our economic revitalization; their lie that “economic revitalization” will include us; that it won’t mean a deeper investment in cops and surveillance tech and violence; that it won’t mean watching more of our neighbors die at the hands of racist classist cops.

To that I say, “Fuck that!” We will remain in solidarity against fascism and militarization levied against our communities— whether it comes in the form of the smug face of Donald Trump or the shit-eating grin of Gavin Newsom.



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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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Nicole Rowland, Lukas Illa,  
Western Regional Advocacy  
Project

*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](mailto: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](mailto:lpierce@cohsf.org)

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO JOIN OUR  
WORKING GROUP MEETINGS!



# WRAP HITS A MILESTONE: 20 YEARS OF UNHOUSED PEOPLE FIGHTING FOR DIGNITY AND RESPECT

When the Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) says “we,” we literally mean every single group and person that built and sustained our community organization for the past 20 years!

In 2005, representatives from seven organizations along the West Coast began strategizing around how to address the root causes of homelessness, starting with the actual day-to-day realities people experience in the streets. Since then, WRAP has grown to 12 kick-ass member organizations across five states, themselves comprising thousands of unhoused community members and allies; five central office staff members; an incredible board with deep roots in this work; and hundreds of dedicated supporters and volunteer artists, researchers, attorneys, organizers and others playing crucial roles in the fight to end the criminalization of poverty and homelessness and ensure housing for all. Building member power, sustaining funders, engaging volunteers—hell, even holding down the same office for 20 years in an ever-changing real estate market—is no joke and something WRAP can be proud of.

Over the past 20 years, we have never forgotten our roots. We continue to be accountable to people living in the streets, parks and encampments, people in vehicles, in single-room occupancy hotels and motels, in public housing and on the margins of cities, small towns and rural areas. We do this by channeling local organizing work and leadership development into a larger regional and national forum. WRAP also provides a peer-based support system to sustain this local organizing work with and among poor and unhoused community members.

WRAP facilitates discussions, analysis, sharing and skill-building across groups. WRAP staff visits with local groups to provide guidance on their particular needs, like outreach or fiscal training, and to learn from each other. We work together to collectively design and create outreach tools which seek the input of homeless people into all the policy positions, campaign priorities, artwork, and public education documents we create.

WRAP believes that it’s crucial to bring the voices of homeless people to the forefront of homeless policy and organizing discussions on the national level. WRAP’s entire work is oriented around deepening and building on the social change work that our members do, while building the capacity and leadership of WRAP members to more effectively engage in social change. Through issue-based inclusive community outreach, WRAP members document the voices and priorities of poor and unhoused people—many of whom are experiencing acute personal challenges, disabilities, and living on fixed incomes or with insecure part-time jobs. These are the community members who are most marginalized and misrepresented in our nation’s political process, and who often are not represented by mainstream “poverty” associations. Outreach to unhoused people—talking to people about their experiences, needs and priorities in our campaigns—has been, and still is, the backbone of WRAP’s work.

Most recently, WRAP’s individual and organization members began conducting another round of systematic outreach to people on the streets to find out what’s been happening since last year’s U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling on *Grants Pass v. Johnson*. We are documenting how sweeps affect people. Sweeps entail police harassment, citations, arrests, displacement, and ultimately, when there is literally nowhere to legally sleep, banishment from our

communities.

Based on the initial responses we’ve documented from 223 people, some clear trends are already showing. From these initial responses, 93% of participants had been swept—displaced—in the past 30 days before being surveyed. Of those, 67% of respondents were given no advance notice. Belongings were thrown away 62% of the time. Absolutely no services, such as shelter or housing, was offered to 81% of those swept, while 92% of all respondents were unable to access legal assistance, despite the fact that 73% of sweeps were conducted by local or state police. After being swept, 81% ended up still living in the streets, while 61% of these people were given “stay away orders” by the cops. Of the people swept, 45% identified as living with a disability. Our goal is to survey at least 1,500 people, and it’s likely we will talk with many more.

This outreach illustrates the immediate effects of the Supreme Court’s decision: Cities are criminalizing people with ever more impunity for the human acts of sleeping, sitting, standing still and eating. This violent reality is informing our ongoing development of the Legal Defense Clinic Project—in partnership with the National Homelessness Law Center)—combining the power of legal representation with the power of accountable community organizing for short-term resourcing and long-term change. What we hear in outreach will also directly help WRAP strategize our organizing campaigns toward ending violent banishment policing, and continue our work with housing justice groups to make housing a human right.

Juxtaposed with this sense of accomplishment around how we have built incredible community strength is the deadly reality we are witnessing today: police brutality in the streets, unabashed racism, transphobia and xenophobia, and dehumanizing, neoliberal policy and funding priorities. Wiping out federal funding for access to health care, housing, medical research and livable income is gonna kill people. They know this, and we know this, so the question becomes “What the hell are we gonna do about it?” Just as we didn’t survive the last 20 years alone, none of us are gonna survive the shitstorm that has formed over all of our heads alone. We will continue to learn and build together, with love and respect for each other.

The lives of poor people will not be made better by the charity of others. Rather, true systemic change comes from the power of all of us working collectively, led by those who know the impacts of unjust systems firsthand. We need you to help us bring more people into this movement to continue building power. Your support gives us hope that, collectively, we can build a society in which a well-housed, healthy, vibrant community becomes a reality.

We need a dramatic shift from the “I” (the unhoused, elderly, tenants, immigrants, trans, etc.) to the “WE” (humans, people, us, everyone). While we acknowledge that some of us sure as hell are targeted, attacked and hurt much more than others, we also know that this is not their shit to fight alone. We build power when we collectively identify and call out the racism, ableism, sexism, and all other forms of oppression being instigated. It’s not up to individuals to fight oppression by themselves, and we can’t change the system that oppresses so many people by focusing on one issue area. If we continue to organize on just a single issue, we’re not going to change the overall system of oppression.

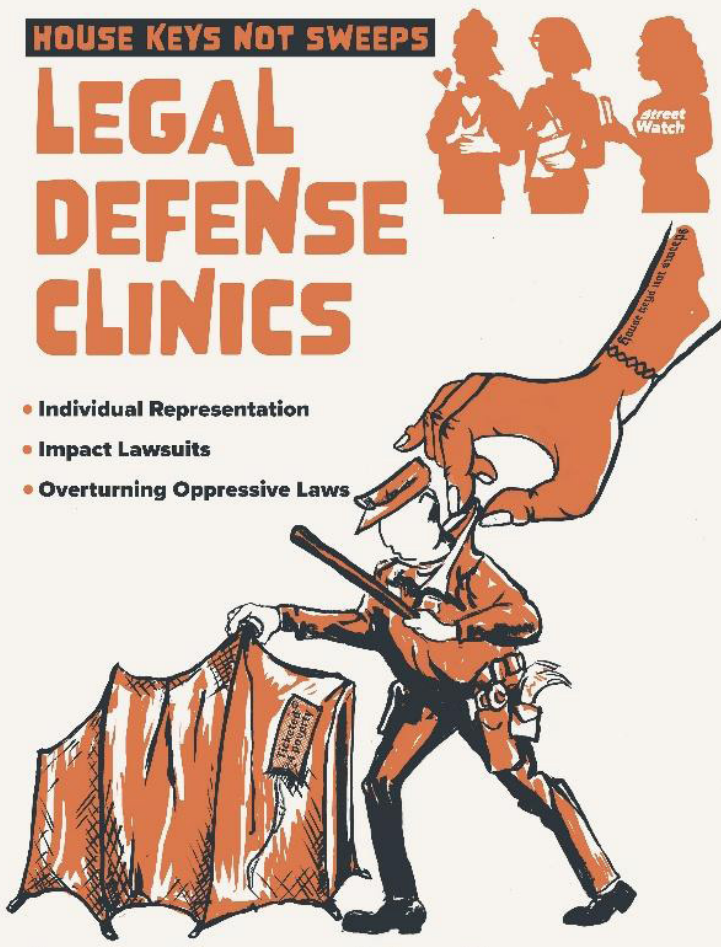
In this intense environment, the “tried and true” systems of “effective” community organizing, litigation and legislature strategies need to evolve. In every flyer, every T-shirt and protest sign we print, every demand we make, every press release we issue and every training session we conduct, we need to be sure we are talking about all people who are getting fucked throughout this process. Local organizers must still reflect the day-to-day priorities of their work, while at the same time, we shift our strategies in building collective power.

Visit WRAP’s website ([www.wraphome.org](http://www.wraphome.org)) to read our 20-year zine, see the video of us in action, check out amazing artwork, and the 20-year poster from our Minister of Culture.

\*\*\* The impetus for creating WRAP, the support and encouragement to have it be its own entity vested in its members is a testament to the Coalition On Homelessness, SF crew and members over the past 38 years of accountable community organizing at home.

**HOUSE KEYS NOT SWEEPS**

## LEGAL DEFENSE CLINICS



- Individual Representation
- Impact Lawsuits
- Overturning Oppressive Laws

**LAWYERS, ORGANIZERS & POOR PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER TO CONFRONT AND DISMANTLE THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HOMELESSNESS**

**UNITE THE FIGHT**

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NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS LAW CENTER

## IF EVERYONE CAN'T AFFORD THE RENT



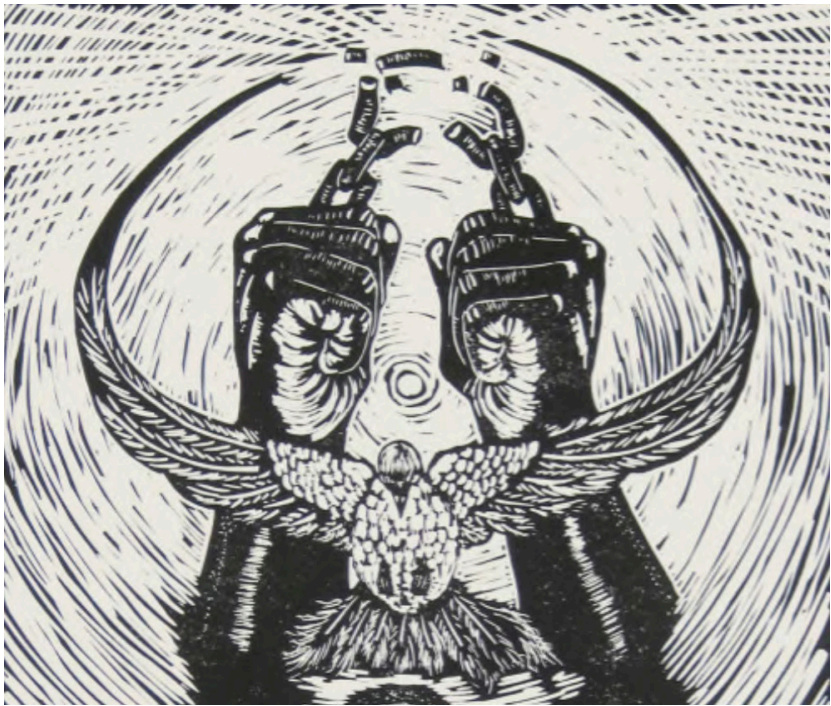
## THEY SHOULDN'T F\*CKING TAKE OUR TENT

Poster Syndicate

HOUSING JUSTICE



WE WILL NOT DISAPPEAR:



20 YEARS OF UNHOUSED PEOPLE FIGHTING FOR DIGNITY + RESPECT

Created by the Western Regional Advocacy Project



We Will Not Disappear: 20 Years of Unhoused People Fighting for Dignity and Respect

Created by the Western Regional Advocacy Project, in celebration of our 20<sup>th</sup> birthday

**What We are Celebrating:** We created this zine to uplift 20 years of incredibly committed work by dozens of organizations and many, many people fighting the criminalization of homelessness and working to ensure that housing becomes accessible to all. The pages to come detail how the Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) emerged in 2005 and how its member organizations, staff, board, and supporters have worked fiercely for two decades and counting on behalf of unhoused people everywhere.

**Who We Are:** WRAP is a coalition of twelve homeless-led and accountable groups across the western US. WRAP was created to expose and eliminate the root causes of civil and human rights abuses of people experiencing poverty and homelessness in our communities. We use direct action, political education, art, media, policy advocacy, and legal approaches to amplify shared messaging developed by our members. We are fighting to end homelessness and the criminalization of poverty as it intersects with racism, transphobia, homophobia, xenophobia, ableism, misogyny, and other forms of oppression.

**Deep appreciation to all who made this publication possible!**

- WRAP members, past and present - who do so much worth documenting and celebrating.
- WRAP staff, board members, volunteers, past and present - <3
- WRAP supporters - for enabling us to do this work for 20 years.
- Erin Goodling - for writing, illustration, and layout.
- Paul Boden - for sharing his encyclopedic knowledge and decades of experience + support with writing.
- Maddy Lockhart - for editing brilliance!
- boona cheema - for editing and printing support, and being here since the beginning!
- Kaitlyn Dey - for badass editing support, especially on BIDs!
- Joemae Santos, Jonathan Lopez, Art Hazelwood - for keeping this ship sailing in a million ways!

**How this Zine is Organized:** This zine is organized chronologically from 2005 to the present, with occasional pop-out boxes to situate WRAP's work within a larger political, historical context (in grey) and to explain some of the key tenets of our approach (in yellow).

2024-25 WRAP members work throughout Oregon, Washington, California, Colorado, and Montana:



- WRAP's founding members:**
- Berkeley Oakland Support Services (BOSS)
  - Coalition on Homelessness - San Francisco (COH-SF)
  - Los Angeles Community Action Network (LACAN)
  - Sisters of the Road (Portland)
  - Street Spirit (Berkeley)
  - Real Change (Seattle)

WRAP's organizational membership has grown and evolved over the years. Local groups that are doing truly accountable organizing and want to unite around this broader movement are welcome at WRAP. WRAP also supports organizations taking various other approaches in myriad ways.

Front and back cover art by Ronnie Goodman.  
Rest in Power, Ronnie.

Taking a Radical Shift

Throughout the 1980s and 90s, statewide and national coalitions formed in response to the growing US homelessness crisis. They mostly focused on refining the shelter system and tinkering with national policies.

Local organizers with deep ties to the streets were involved, and knew this approach would never dismantle the deeply colonial, white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal roots of homelessness.





2005: Birth of WRAP

Out of this dynamic, a handful of west coast organizers decided to more formally connect several local groups. We joined together as a collective, and became laser focused on a few interconnected work areas:

- 1.Fighting the violence that community members on the ground were dealing with locally.
- 2.Continuing to bring attention to draconian federal housing and homelessness policies.
- 3.And creating our own voice to build a movement across city and state lines to address systemic roots of homelessness.



The original WRAP member groups opened a central office in the Redstone, in San Francisco's Mission District. Paul, Mikey, and Ruth became the main start-up crew. The Redstone has been WRAP's home ever since; carrying on the human rights activism legacy that has taken place in the building for over 100 years.

**The Redstone Building:** It is notable that WRAP has called the Redstone home for 20 years. Constructed in 1914 by the San Francisco Labor Council Hall Associates, it was a hub of union organizing for decades. Over the years it has housed dozens of labor, art, and community organizations. Until recently when a developer bought the building, the rent was reasonable, allowing WRAP to primarily focus on organizing rather than fundraising.

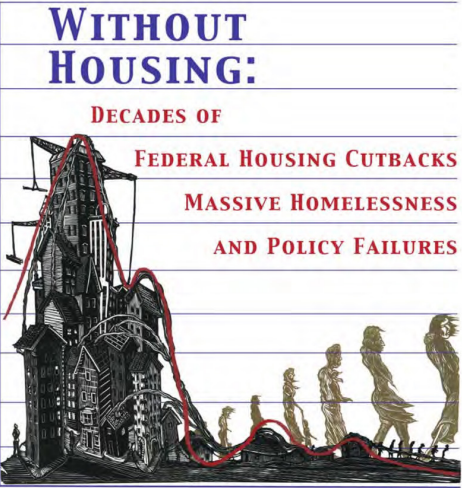
5

Without Housing:  
WRAP's First Big Project

We recognized that to feel confident in building a regional or national movement, we first needed a shared understanding of how we got here. Where did modern day homelessness come from?

To research and document the advent of contemporary homelessness, we created *Without Housing*. *Without Housing's* main message is that homelessness is not rooted in the pathology of individual people. Rather, the institution of homelessness comes out of policy decisions made starting in the early 1980s related to housing, healthcare, labor, and more. These sectors in turn are embedded in larger oppressive, centuries-old structures, in a society with a foundational history of criminalizing anyone who poses a threat to property rights, profits, and deeply held identities.

Not only did researching and creating *Without Housing* give WRAP members a shared analysis of the roots of homelessness, but it validated why WRAP existed. Previously, few people if anyone had publicly illuminated the structural roots of modern homelessness, and especially not by combining data and artwork designed to reach a mass audience – including unhoused people. And we did it in our own voice.



**Building on Without Housing:** We updated *Without Housing* in 2010, and in 2022 WRAP member organization Housing Action Network Denver conducted 800 systematic outreach interviews and significantly built on our original analysis in their own report, *Pipe Dreams and Picket Fences*. We are in the process of updating *Without Housing* once again, centering more of a racial analysis given the disproportionate rates at which Black and Indigenous people, as well as Latinx folks, continue to experience homelessness.

WRAP's Accountable Organizing Approach

From the outset, WRAP's organizing approach centered around the accountability structures groups were already using locally, adapted to a regional structure to build power more broadly. Outreach to folks on the street – going out and talking to people, documenting what's going on, building priorities from there – was and still is the backbone of everything WRAP and members do.

Later, even after WRAP hired paid staff, members continued to direct all priorities and processes. Combined with documented street outreach that keeps a pulse on what's happening on the ground, this approach ensures that WRAP's work is fundamentally accountable to people living unhoused.



WESTERN REGIONAL ADVOCACY PROJECT  
WRAP MURAL CELEBRATION, SAN FRANCISCO, JULY 22, 2016

An Abbreviated Federal Housing & Homelessness Policy Timeline, 1983-2009

Contemporary homelessness began in 1983 when the Reagan Administration slashed the affordable housing budgets of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). HUD's budget alone dropped by nearly 80 percent. The effect in the streets? A depleted social safety net combined with rising housing costs dramatically increased the number of people living on the street for the first time since the Great Depression.

Later in 1983, the Reagan Administration tasked the **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** with directing a national solution to rising homelessness. FEMA, the federal agency responsible for disaster relief, created thousands of short-term emergency shelters. For four decades and counting now, homeless shelters meant as a temporary solution to a temporary problem remain the primary response.

By 1987, the passage of the **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act** marked the first major federal legislation devoted solely to 'managing' the epidemic of homelessness.

In the 1990s, the federal government initiated the **HOPE VI** program to redevelop "severely distressed" public housing. Rather than bolster housing opportunities, however, the program displaced tens of thousands of people and reduced public housing stock even further. Black communities were hit particularly hard.

Starting in 2008, the federal government required communities to develop onerous "10-year plans to end homelessness" in a false effort to convince people there was actual political will to address it; years later the feds abandoned the effort, wasting tons of community time and energy.

In 2009, **recession** swept across the US and world. Homelessness spiked dramatically, especially amongst families, and tent cities reemerged around the country.





Also in 2009, the **Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act** passed. The HEARTH Act narrowed the definition of family and youth homelessness, which allowed the federal government to take money from those demographics and shift it into funding “Chronic Homeless Initiative” – but with no additional money.

These are just some highlights. And of course this all took place in a larger context of a country founded on settler colonialism, white supremacy, and patriarchy (see pages 11 and 14-15 for more). No amount of tinkering with housing and homelessness policy would address the root causes of homelessness, nor the ways it disproportionately impacts people along lines of race, gender, immigration status, disability, and more.

**The bottom line? This country is far more focused on fixing “broken people” than fixing a deeply broken housing system. The federal government has never had a serious plan nor devoted adequate resources to address homelessness. The burden has fallen to jurisdictions, which by and large have taken a punitive approach. Meanwhile, profits pile up via the housing system at the expense of our communities. We are fighting for dignity and respect, and the right to exist!**



9

Fighting Sweeps & Criminalization

Yet, despite continuing to bring attention to national housing policy, WRAP organizers knew that working at the federal level would not overturn the local “time, place, and manner” laws that govern the lives of unhoused people.

The most urgent thing people in the streets were facing (and continue to face) is criminalization: getting harassed, fined, cited, and arrested for the “crime” of sitting, standing, eating, and sleeping in public. In other words, for existing.

As homeless numbers swelled following Hope VI, welfare reform, and the Great Recession, local governments began sweeping people with even more impunity.

**What is a Sweep?**  
Sweeps are when police or private security harass unhoused people, issue citations, arrest people, force people to move, and ultimately, when there is literally nowhere to legally sleep, banish people living unhoused from our communities. Sweeps are traumatizing and cause people to lose lifesaving and treasured possessions.

**Racialized “War On Crime”:** Sweeps occur within a larger context of the “war on crime”. Vagrancy Laws, Black Codes, Sundown Towns, and anti-Black policing were foundational to slavery and that persisted and evolved through Jim Crow. They continue to underpin today’s deeply racialized system of mass incarceration and closely related institution of homelessness and sweeps.

Condemning “welfare queens” and “criminal predators,” President Reagan’s 1980 campaign catalyzed today’s era of mass incarceration. When he took office in 1981, Reagan immediately dismantled social programs and bolstered police departments. In October 1982, Reagan announced the War on Drugs, shifting massive resources to drug law enforcement that especially targeted Black communities. Between 1980 and 1984, the FBI’s anti-drug budget went from \$8 million to \$95 million. The Department of Defense, FBI, and DEA’s anti-drug budgets ballooned accordingly. And yet, crack cocaine did not appear on US streets until 1985 – four years after Reagan announced the drug war.

In an extremely destructive cycle, the federal government also began to deny housing support to those with criminal records. Given targeted anti-drug policing in Black communities, this lack of housing support contributed to dramatically increased rates of Black homelessness – in turn resulting in disproportionate exposure to police violence while attempting to survive on the streets.

11

Fighting Against Federal Fuckery

From 2006 when we released *Without Housing* to 2012 when we began running Right to Rest Act legislation in multiple states, much of WRAP’s work toggled back and forth between fighting local criminalization and bringing attention to the federal government’s abysmal housing policy and response to homelessness. Through a litany of funding cuts, watered down homeless action plans, and byzantine hoops set up for service providers to jump through backwards and forwards, two things became clear:

- 1.The federal government had completely absolved itself from any previous responsibility to ensure poor people stayed housed.
- 2.The federal government had no real plans to ever actually address homelessness.

WRAP staff and members did a ton of political education around all this. We spoke in rural and urban communities about the impacts of the HEARTH Bill, ran a 2009 campaign called “Where’s Our Change?”, and organized demonstrations and direct actions across the west.

One notable action we organized was the 2010 “TARP Tour,” bringing attention to Obama’s “Troubled Assets Relief Program” and how it bailed out banks from the mortgage crisis while deepening poverty for ordinary people. While all our members were in San Francisco for our annual face-to-face meeting, we organized a massive demonstration of over 1,000 people. We got tons of union members and others to march with us down Montgomery Street, to the Hilton Hotel. Then we shut down Wells Fargo on a Friday afternoon. We danced, we did street theater, we marched on BID headquarters and Senator Feinstein’s office. It was a massive party, critically connecting so many disparate groups together in a way that we could easily see how federal policies wreaked havoc across our communities – and how much we could accomplish if we worked together in solidarity.



10

Outreach to Document Criminalization

While WRAP members had been doing street outreach for years, around 2010 we got very serious about systematizing our outreach as a collective, in order to understand the frequency, severity, and impacts of local governments criminalizing the existence of unhoused people across the west more broadly. We created a survey, and by 2017, we had conducted nearly 1,800 interviews with people living unhoused about their experiences being cited, fined, arrested, and harassed for the “crime” of existing in public space.



- Frequency, Severity, and Impacts of Criminalization:**
- **82%** of survey respondents reported being harassed, cited, or arrested for **sleeping**.
  - **77%** of survey respondents reported being harassed, cited, or arrested for **sitting or lying on the sidewalk**.
  - **75%** of survey respondents reported being harassed, cited, or arrested for **loitering or hanging out**.
  - Only 26% of the respondents said they knew of a **safe place to sleep** at night.

We used these statistics to create fact sheets and artwork to use in our organizing, to let people know what was happening on the streets. We also launched the House Keys Not Handcuffs campaign to go along with our ongoing *Without Housing* work.



12

CONTRIBUTE TO  
**STREET SHEET**

**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.STREETSHHEET.ORG/SUBMIT-YOUR-WRITING/](http://WWW.STREETSHHEET.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!**



## Right to Rest Act

The results of our outreach directly informed what became the Right to Rest Act. We aimed to pass state-level legislation that we wrote, which proactively protected the rights of unhoused people to exist in public space. We wanted to END the criminalization of rest and accompanying violations of basic human and civil rights for all, regardless of housing status.

**The Right to Rest Act would guarantee:**

- 1.The right to rest in public spaces and protect oneself from the elements in a non-obstructive manner.
- 2.The right to move freely, rest, sleep and stand in public space without harassment or criminalization.
- 3.The right to occupy a legally parked vehicle.
- 4.The right to share food and eat in public.

Our members ran powerful, coordinated statewide Right to Rest campaigns eight times in nine years (2012-2021), in California, Colorado, and Oregon. Thanks to massive anti-homeless corporate campaigns, we lost year after year, sometimes without even a hearing. Yet we continued to build solidarity with groups working on a wide variety of issues, including labor, sex work, immigration, and prison abolition. Each time our bill was defeated we rebuilt energy and ran the legislation over and over again.



In the 20th century, banishment continued, via **Anti-Okie Laws** and others. During the Great Depression and Dust Bowl, local governments passed laws punishing the presence of hundreds of thousands of displaced farmers – derogatorily referred to as “Okies” – who lived in western US shanty towns.

**Laws banning homeless camping** are the 21st century’s version of banishing unwanted community members. When elected officials in Grants Pass, Oregon first enacted the anti-camping ordinance that became the basis for a 2024 US Supreme Court case, they made it crystal clear that the goal was to banish unhoused people from the town.

Today, substantial profits come via real estate, retail, and tourism. When the presence of unhoused people – who are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, Latinx, queer, trans, and disabled – threatens profits, the police and private security move in. Police cite, fine, arrest, jail, harass, and displace people surviving unhoused.

Instead of abolishing homelessness by providing public housing, tenant protections, and other support and safeguards, officials banish those who cannot afford housing. But we are organizing to fight back!



**BECOME A VENDOR**  
**MAKE MONEY AND HELP END HOMELESSNESS!**

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**

## A Brief History of Banishment in the U.S.

Governments have been using laws to control the presence and lives of particular people since the birth of this nation. Since the arrival of European settlers, criminalization of poverty and homelessness has existed to ease racist fears and protect (predominantly white people’s) property and profits.

White settler efforts to control public space began with the **genocidal theft of Indigenous lands**.

Early colonizers brought **anti-poor laws banning “vagrancy”** across the Atlantic, enacting “warning-out” laws that enabled towns to force unemployed individuals out of town.

In 1619, white plantation owners established the institution of **slavery**, attempting to control nearly every aspect of the lives of Black people.

Following the formal abolition of slavery, vagrancy laws were repurposed as local **Black Codes** in nearly every Southern state, establishing brutal punishments for unemployment. Tens of thousands of Black people were arrested and fined, and failure to pay fines resulted in forced labor – essentially slavery by another name.

Southern states went on to banish Black individuals from public space using **Jim Crow laws**, which persisted until 1965.

Simultaneously, cities across the country adopted **“Sundown Town”** policies, prohibiting the presence of Black, Chinese, and Latinx people after dark.

From the 1860s-1970s, **Ugly Laws** aimed to control the presence of disabled people, banning thousands from public space.

## Researching & Organizing Against Private Policing

### What are Business Improvement Districts?

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are bounded areas in which the local government collects fees or taxes from business and property owners. These funds pay for security, maintenance, communication, courts, district attorneys, and lobbying programs—administered by private entities—in the district.

### Why are BIDs problematic?

BIDs are among the most vocal advocates for laws that criminalize homelessness and poverty. And they use the revenue collected by local governments to pay for private security and policing, which pushes poor people out of our neighborhoods.

### What has WRAP done about BIDs?

For years, our members were noticing an increase in private security policing unhoused people, buskers, street vendors, and young people. We started digging in. Prior to our research into the inner functioning and public funding of BIDs, few organizers knew much about these entities. Over the past decade, we have worked with UC Berkeley Law School, WRAP volunteers and staff, and WRAP members to shine a light on how BIDs have facilitated a massive corporate takeover of public space. We have learned about policy tools, such as how in 1979 the International Downtown Association wrote boilerplate legislation for state governments to set provisions enabling them to collect property tax dollars locally.

Most recently, we created a BID Research Toolkit with resources to help WRAP members and others investigate – and fight – their own communities’ BIDs. Groups in Portland, LA, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Boston, Rochester, Denver, Sacramento, New York, DC, and far beyond have taken on their local BIDs!





# How to be an Ally to people experiencing Homelessness

## Be a good neighbor. Introduce yourself!

Ask what their name is, how their day is going, or comment on the weather, like you would with your other neighbors. Build up to having more meaningful interactions. Ask how you can be of assistance. Here are some common needs:



**Hygiene:** Offer access to water for drinking, hand washing, and bathing. Share a list of bathrooms: [sfpublicworks.org/pitstop](https://sfpublicworks.org/pitstop)



**Trash:** Let them know the street cleaning day. Ask if they need extra trash bags. Trash can be left on the curb and will usually get picked up by the leading truck.



**Substance use:** Visit [harmreduction.org](https://harmreduction.org) to learn about available resources. Treatment can be accessed in-person at 1380 Howard Street.



**Charging:** Offer a power source for charging phones and other devices.



**Mail:** When trust is built, consider offering them your mailing address for their important mail. It is crucial to set boundaries and clarify expectations.

## Advocate for real solutions.

**Call** your Supervisor and the Mayor’s office and pressure them to open more “Pit-Stop” bathrooms, hotel rooms, safe campsites, and permanent affordable housing.

**Organize** neighbors to provide mutual aid. Reach out to groups such as Cole Valley Haight Allies or Rad Mission Neighbors. Host a speaker to talk about real solutions! The Coalition on Homelessness can help.

**Educate** yourself! Read the Street Sheet and make sure you know the basic facts: Most homeless people were San Franciscans before they lost their housing, and the reason we have mass homelessness is that rents have increased while naturally occurring low income housing has disappeared, and the city hasn’t prioritized budget dollars to fill that gap.

## Things not to do:

**Do not** call the police on people who aren’t causing or threatening violence. Thousands of homeless people end up cited and incarcerated every year for simply sleeping, and several unhoused people have been shot by police in the last decade. Police contact can prolong a person’s homelessness.

**Do not** call 311 to sweep away people experiencing homelessness. People who are working towards getting housed need to start over when their belongings are thrown away. You can call 311 to help with trash pickup, illegal dumping, or a blocked doorway, if you can’t sort it out with your homeless neighbors.

## Support outreach organizations:

The Coalition on Homelessness, North Beach Citizens, Homeless Youth Alliance, Dolores Street Community Services, Night Ministry, Faithful Fools, Project Homeless Connect, Glide, Youth With A Mission, Larkin Street Youth Services, Homeless Prenatal

For more information, visit  
The Coalition on Homelessness at:

[COHSF.org](https://cohsf.org)



**Psychiatric crisis?** Check in with them before calling Mobile Crisis at (415) 970-4000

**Medical emergency?** Call 911. Make it clear that this is a medical emergency and not a police emergency.

**Medically compromised** but don’t need an ambulance? Call street medicine: (828) 217-5800

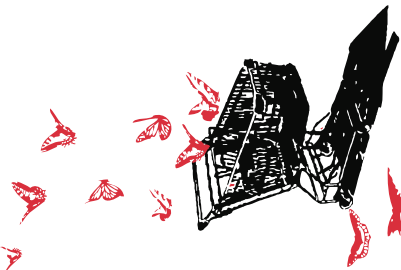
**Interpersonal conflict?** Call your neighborhood Community Ambassadors, listed at: [sfcap.org](https://sfcap.org)

**Unhoused people in need of shelter** or other services can show up by 6pm at Mission Action to see if they have a bed: 1050 South Van Ness

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Coalition On Homelessness  
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San Francisco, CA 94102  
415.346.3740  
[www.cohsf.org](https://www.cohsf.org)  
[streetsheetsf@gmail.com](mailto:streetsheetsf@gmail.com)

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Coalition on  
Homelessness  
San Francisco

# MOTHER’S DAY ACTION



## CUANDO?

8 DE MAYO a  
LAS 11:00 AM

## DONDE?

1 dr carlton B.  
Goodlett Place  
San Francisco  
afuera de los  
peldaños del  
ayuntamiento.

"Madres Resilientes,  
Familias Prósperas: Un  
Hogar Seguro para Cada  
Niño"

ACOMPANÉNOS !

# ACCION DEL DIA DE LAS MADRES



## WHEN?

MAY 8TH at  
11:00 AM

## WHERE?

1 dr carlton B.  
Goodlett Place  
San Francisco  
Outside in the steps  
of City Hall.

"Resilient Mothers, Thriving  
Families: A Safe Home for  
Every Child"

COME WITH US!