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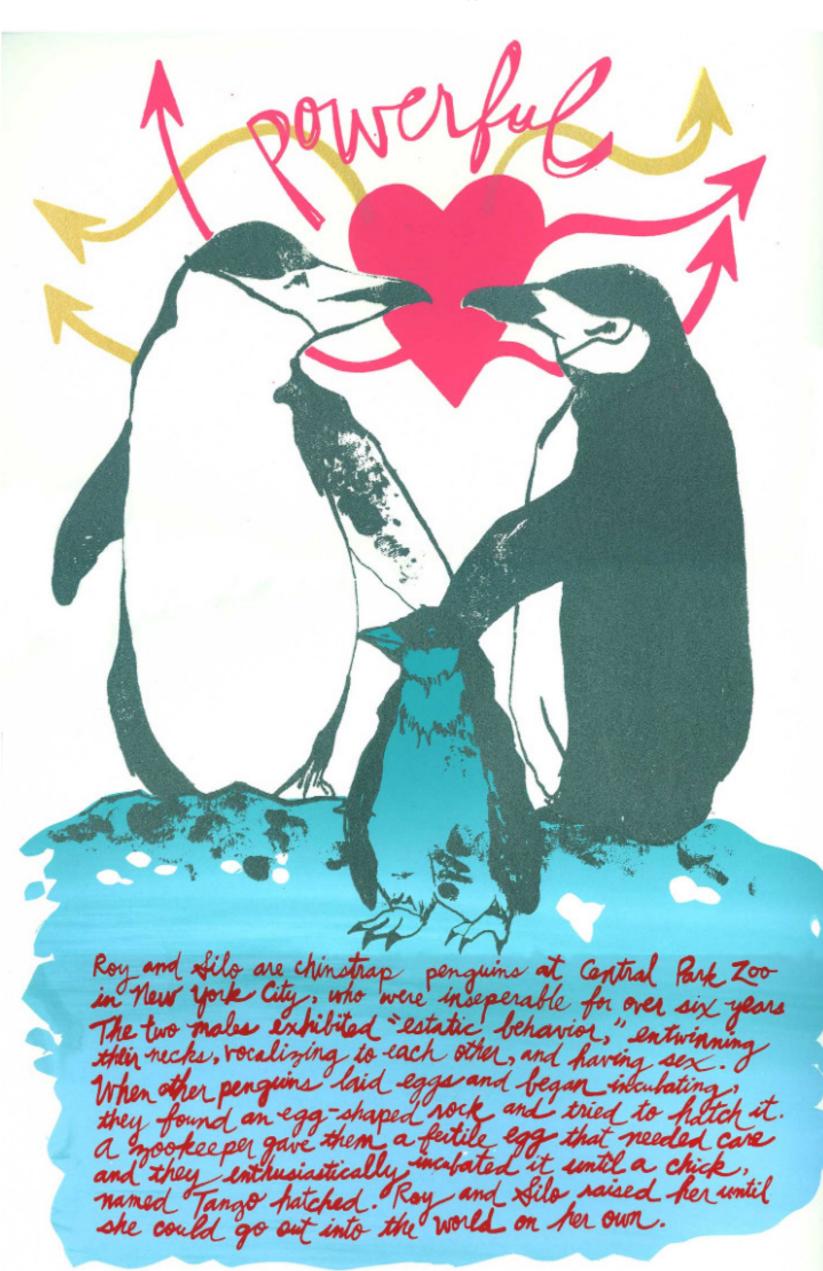
CAFETERIA FROM GEO GROUP

4

ON TRANS

6

NOTES FROM A TEXAS PRISON



TATIANA LYULKIN

It's not a good time To bring up the things We've lost-A cup of black coffee And a hug Are all I need. When the night Grows silent and cold And no one Remembers our names Or what we used to be Knowing that you're real And you truly care Gives me the strength To survive another day. Talk to me, My Victoria, My partner, My lover, My friend, We belong to these streets, This city by the Bay, We write our own scripts, Our future belongs to us. We're strong, We're wise, We don't have to pretend anymore, We're the flowers That grow in the dark, We will recover, We will overcome and triumph, Our truth is our own. But for now We're healing And growing And moving forward-One step at a time.

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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 STA

DISCLAIMER: The editorial in our May 15 edition, "City Cracks Down on Neighborhood Soup Kitchen," reflects only the opinions of select volunteers at Martin de Porres House of Hospitality who wrote and submitted the piece, and not necessarily representative of Martin's, nor should it be inferred as an official statement from Martin's.

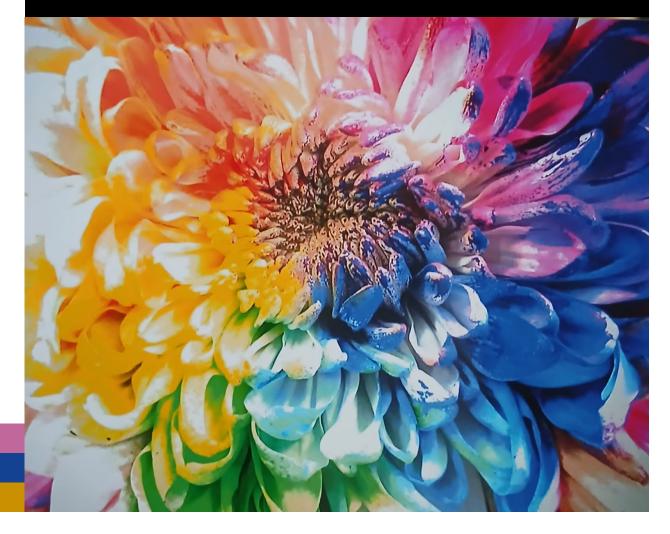
The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

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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.



SOBER LIVI **PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING HOW EXACTLY DOES JORDAN WASILEWSKI** THAT WORK?

In springtime of 2025, the conversation around sober and recovery housing continues from San Francisco to Sacramento. Matt Haney's Assembly Bill 255 allows cities and counties to set aside up to 25% of state homelessness funds for sober living quarters. The set-aside is not required: It's merely an ask for permission to allocate funding for up to 25% of permanent supportive housing units of funds for sober living, which a county can decide to either a) ask for the full 25%, b) decline altogether, or c) modify to some number up to 25%.

I'll concede that some people may need and should access drug- and alcoholfree environments. However, this is something that a prospective tenant should decide to commit to: It should never be the default option for those in the pipeline for permanent supportive housing.

This raises some important questions about the plan's workability.

1) What is the real demand for this type of living situation?

Last year, I wrote about the Tenderloin Housing Clinic's survey on sober housing and its questionable methodology. To truly gauge support for sober living, an independent party should conduct a poll among permanent supportive housing tenants to determine their specific needs, with nobody's thumb on the scale. An even better idea would be for the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to make available applications for sober-living units before they make the pipeline. Should any sober housing go forward, there needs to be an accurate assessment of the true demand, otherwise, there will be empty sober housing units.

2) What does sobriety mean?

As a marijuana consumer, I am concerned that this type of housing would ban drugs with lower risk of addiction, such as marijuana, mushrooms, LSD, etc. In addition, there are people who may wish to use alcohol and marijuana—two drugs that are considered more "acceptable" by San Franciscans and, increasingly, the rest of the country—but may wish to have an environment free of hard drugs. If we

are to have recovery housing, there need to be various intermediate options, like scattered-site housing where landlords might be reticent to rent to someone who uses hard drugs but could rent to someone who uses marijuana and alcohol while shying away from hard drugs.

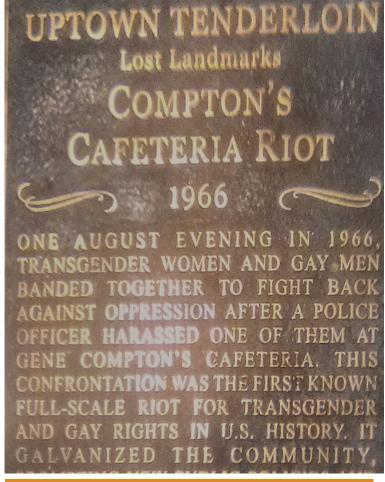
3) What happens during a relapse?

The legislation has an answer to this question:. If a person relapses and recovery housing does not work for them, they can be referred back to permanent supportive housing that does not have sobriety requirements. On paper, this seems fine, as this emphasizes eviction prevention. Still, there are unhoused individuals and people in shelters waiting for permanent housing, meaning that a non-sober unit may not be available in a timely manner for someone who has relapsed.

4) Could there be time limits or an incentive to move on for some sober sites?

Some individuals who have made a commitment to recovery may only need sober housing during the early parts of recovery, when relapse is most likely. They could still move on to a subsidized unit without sobriety requirements in the community. There are many individuals who have maintained sobriety without living in sober housing. This could be a new form of contingency management, where if you live in sober housing for a certain amount of time, you can get a voucher for a subsidized unit.

In a city where a large amount of permanent supportive housing is outnumbered by an even larger population eligible for permanent supportive housing but unable to access it, policymakers must be thoughtful and intentional about expanding sober living opportunities. We must have rational actors, not recovery grifters at the table. Such policies need to be created with a scalpel, not a mallet, and the guardrails written on paper must actually be workable in real life. This might mean that it won't be necessary for the City to avail itself of the state's maximum of 25% funding for sober housing, while exploring different avenues.





Do my shoes soak in Trans Magic At the intersection of Turk + Taylor? Spirits of queens, queers, outcasts Throwing shit at pigs who try to police our joy Try to extinguish our flames that burn together More radiant than the sun

Does trans magic last? When the building that used to nourish glorious queers Is now owned by a massive for-profit corporation And it is not a coincidence That GEO Group also imprisons our kin Along the U.S.-Mexico border

To steamroll over trans history— Our transcestors With this disgusting corporation—GEO Group ... Will we support this? In this alleged city for queers? Can we live up to the hype Of the First city To include a Transgender District?

If transcestors are our revered ones If gathering publicly, despite danger Is our form of worship ... If they attack our queer places of worship, Clubs + bars + marches+ Compton's Cafeteria, Is the magic gone? If I have any say We are here to stay No one can remove us Despite gunshots or legislation or burning hate

We are love We are a flame We are magical We demand the return Of Compton's Cafeteria to trans community. Give us back Turk + Taylor

ACTIVISTS SEEK "LIBERATION" OF TRANS RESISTANCE SITE FROM PRIVATE PRISON CONTRACT

On a bright Sunday afternoon on May 18, a group of transgender activists gathered at the corner of Turk and Taylor streets in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood. Local media, including Street Sheet, were invited to the rally outside the 111 Taylor St. Apartments, which stands on the site of a historic riot over a half-century before.

The rally culminated in two members of the Compton's x Coalition climbing a fire escape to the roof and dropping two vertical banners that displayed a single message: "Liberate Compton's."

The building at 111 Taylor St. is now a halfway house for people who were in prison. But in 1966, it housed a branch of the Compton's Cafeteria chain that served as a socializing place for trangender people, drag queens, sex workers, activists and neighborhood denizens.

On an August night that year—no one has ever since determined the exact date—that Compton's regulars rioted in response to police harassment and criminalization of wearing women's clothing for men.

But in time, a place heralded—and landmarked, literally—for resistance against police violence became a building operated by a private prison corporation under state and federal contracts to house parolees.

The activists who staged the banner drop seek to end that company's occupancy and transform 111 Taylor into a community hub for trans and gender-nonconforming people—a "just transition," as they deem it. That process could start as soon as this month if the Compton's x Coalition persuades the City to allow GEO Group's lease to expire at the end of the month.

Last month, the Compton's x Coalition won an opportunity at the Board of Appeals to challenge GEO Group's letter of determination that classified 111 Taylor's zoning "group housing." A hearing is scheduled for June 11.

At the May 7 appeals hearing, Chandra Laborde, an organizer with the Compton's x Coalition, told the panel that last year she requested updates from the Planning Department, but it never properly notified her of 111 Taylor's new classification while it was in progress. Had she been updated, Laborde added, she would have had 30 days to appeal and request a public hearing about the building—something GEO Group wanted to avoid, she emphasized.

"This quietly allowed a private prison corporation with active federal and [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] contracts to operate in the Tenderloin at the site of the 1966 Compton's Cafeteria riot," Laborde told the board. She also cited a history of health and safety violations, leaking sewage, broken elevators and general lack of disability access at 111 Taylor under GEO's tenancy.

This label change is not merely an administrative oversight, Laborde added. "It's not group housing," she said of 111 Taylor. "It's more of a detention center. It's not even rehabilitation."

GEO Group, a Florida-based multinational corporation founded in 1984, operates 129 facilities with 95,000 beds worldwide. While billing itself as a "re-entry program," it holds a major contract with the federal government to run immigrant detention facilities. In 2004, it assumed control of 111 Taylor.

In 2019, California passed Assembly Bill 32, which effectively banned privately run detention facilities statewide, but grandfathered those companies with existing contracts with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. It's because of this exception that GEO Group continues to operate at 111 Taylor—that is until now.

GEO Group's contract to run 111 Taylor expires on June 30, 2025.

* * *

On its website, GEO Group borrows a term that government agencies use to describe the time span over which they deliver services: "continuum of care." It claims to be committed to "providing leading, evidence-based rehabilitation programs to individuals while in-custody and post-release into the community through GEO Continuum of Care." But GEO Group "re-entry" houses mainly operate as carceral environments, according to people who have stayed at 111 Taylor.

"When I lived at 111 Taylor, I experienced first-hand the harm of a system that hides behind the language of 'reentry' while functioning more like a shadow prison," Sister Anya Streets of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence said in a Compton's x Coalition press release after the appeals board hearing. "I was promised support. What I got was surveillance, punishment and fear. There was no true rehabilitation, no investment in my healing. Only control, silent, suffocating control, by a corporation that profits off incarceration."

Before she became director of the TGI Justice Project, an organization that advocates for human rights of trans and gendernonconforming people who are entwined in the criminal justice system, Janetta Johnson lived at 111 Taylor. In an interview for the Liberate Compton's zine, she said that the facility's atmosphere was hostile and punitive.

"Everyone takes turns kicking your ass," Johnson said. "The mental health people, the people that bring in the food, all tell you that you're a prisoner, this is what you deserve. There's a huge lack of respect, it's really dehumanizing. If you want to return someone to society, you want to send them back as a human, not haunted by prison. Everyone who works there has to get their punishment out on you."

Johnson also faced discrimination as a trans woman: Staff misgendered her and she was not allowed to ride the same elevator with cisgender women. People who wanted out of 111 Taylor chose returning to prison and completing their sentences there, she added.

"People preferred to serve their time out than how they were treated at GEO—it was just like prison," Johnson said.

* * *

Historically, the intersection at Turk and Taylor has been home to low-income people and a center for LGBTQ+ sexualities at a time where cross-dressing was forbidden under City law. In addition, the Tenderloin was a Black neighborhood before redevelopment started taking place in the 1960s, as Miss Billie Kooper pointed out when she addressed people gathered for the May 18 banner drop.

Kooper describes herself as an "unapologetically Black, transgender woman" who has been involved with the neighborhood for over 40 years. "We need to talk about the Black history in the Tenderloin, because when I see publications, when I see museums and things, I don't see anything about Black history, because back in those days, the Tenderloin was basically Black," she said. "We had Latin people living over here, and we had other races living here, but the Tenderloin was really known as a Black neighborhood."

That August night in 1966, the riot began when police were arresting a trans woman who resisted by throwing coffee at an officer. Soon, other trans women and drag queens spilled out onto the street and fought back against the cops, using heavy bags and high-heeled shoes.

Predating the Stonewall Inn riot in New York City by three years, the Compton's riot became the subject of a PBS documentary by Susan Stryker and Victor Silverman in 2005, and today, it has been dramatized as an immersive stage play in San Francisco.

Standing in the middle of the Transgender District established in 2017, Compton's old site is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, with two plaques commemora

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Through put organizing w residents, th looming exp contract. It a civil rights co patterns of h

To grant an a Commission members mu GEO Group's email to Stree Wilder Zeise currently has the coalition vote to prevastand.

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letter of determination. In an
et Sheet, Coalition strategist
r pointed out that the board
s only four sitting members, so
's request needs a unanimous
ail, otherwise the letter will

in the hearing, the coalition will lents currently in 111 Taylor's transitional housing section under its "just transition" plan in finding noncarceral housing and care, Laborde said in an email to Street Sheet.

But if the board rules in GEO's favor, Zeiser added, the coalition is prepared to take legal action, possibly challenging the decision in court.

"We are also pursuing alternative enforcement avenues with other City and state agencies and using the public pressure campaign to mobilize support for removing GEO from the site," Zeiser said.

Still, Zeiser said they believe that the coalition presents a strong case. They also anticipate significant public turnout at the June 11 hearing.

"The widespread concern reflects how deeply people care about the future of this historical site and the city's responsibility to prevent harm and protect vulnerable communities," they said.

So far, Laborde is savoring these early-round victories. "This is a win for transparency, for history, and for the trans community," she said. "We now have the opportunity to make our full case before the City, and to demand that the legacy of Compton's be honored, not erased."



"I COULD SEE PIECES OF THE ADMANDED PIECES OF THE PUZZLE BUT NOT THE BIG PICTURE."

Lea's transition began four years ago. After more than four decades, it had become clear to her what had been bubbling under the surface all that time. She offers insights into her own development and society's responsibility towards members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Trott-war: I'm very excited to hear what you have to say. Before we get started, a simple but very important question: How are you?

Lea: I'm doing well! A lot has changed since back then. Above all, a lot of things have settled; four years ago, it was all new and different. I still didn't know where all this was going to take me. I still don't know, of course, but I have the feeling that I'm very much on the right track.

A lot of it probably has to do with the hormonal changes. When I started taking hormones, I didn't notice anything at first. At a check-up three months later, they doubled the dose, and then I really felt a big change! I became calmer, more balanced and saw things differently from how I had before.

I had to deal with emotional turbulence, a bit like during puberty. Now that I'm suppressing the testosterone with testosterone blockers and adding oestrogen, I'm also seeing the physical effects of female puberty. Do you think the hormones are what makes all the difference?

They play an important role, yes. But my family's needs and demands are changing too, for example. My children are getting older. And there's been another development in my job situation – a big change, but in the positive sense. I have to say, I was very hesitant before changing jobs, but I was introduced in an uncomplicated way. It was clear from the beginning that I'm a "she", and no-one had a problem with that. The team is also very young – and then it's just not a thing.

How do people react to you now? How is it with your colleagues?

I can take the application process for my new job as an example. I mentioned being trans because my status hasn't been changed officially yet, so some of my documents are still under my old name.

I'd come out while still with my former employer. I prepared it in great detail and talked to people individually to find out how they would react and what questions would come up. Then I wrote a text explaining everything and shared it internally, with examples, videos and all sorts, to also say, "Hey, this isn't something I've made up!"

It's something that affects a lot of people. In my view, this thorough preparation was one of the reasons I was so well accepted. Visually, I hadn't yet changed at all. I already had long hair – and then I just shaved off my beard. That was the only change. I then started very carefully with new clothes. What I wear now is also more cautiously feminine.

I feel good the way I am, and that's the most important thing. Of course, I'd like to be seen as a trans woman, and I don't kid myself that people perceive me as a cis woman. 90% of people aren't even aware that trans people exist, so I can't really expect to be seen as a woman. But most of the people I have direct contact with seem to think I'm a pretty nice person.

How do strangers react to you in public?

How I'm perceived in public is a totally different matter. What I've learned from all these processes is that you should see people as human beings. Don't stare at people you don't know! We all do that very subconsciously. But now, I myself get stared at the whole time, especially on public transport. I generally just keep reading or doing whatever I usually do when I'm out and about.

We communicate a lot visually. If I'd had my coming out at a conservative company with conservative customers, it would have been a catastrophe! Germany is a long way from employing trans people in service roles as a matter of course.



How do you see your role in relation to your children and, for example, their school environment?

Not much has changed there as I'm still the person I always was. My children don't see me any differently. They were still relatively young when I explained it to them. At school, I communicated very quickly and openly, so it wasn't ever a big deal there, either. Fortunately, it's a very open school.

Do you think the children will question the idea of a "father role" one day?

No, I don't think so. They don't know any different. I don't know what they'd be missing. Of course, there's a difference if a child has two mothers, or two fathers. But it's also different if they're brought up by a single parent, and noone questions that. How can a child say what's more important? A child doesn't know if there's something missing, because if you're not aware of something, you don't miss it. It's like when I'm asked what it's like to be trans. Then I say, "No idea. I don't know what it's like to be cis."

I like being the person I am. I like being trans and I'm happy with how it's turned out, in spite of everything, even though, for a long time, I didn't know what was going on, and the 40 years were really hard. It's because of those 40 years that I'm here now. It was a journey that led to a goal.

These days, there are many initiatives and organisations that support trans people. Do you see them as important?

With regard to queer children and teens, I think it's important to have organisations and points of contact so that questions can be answered properly from the start. They don't immediately advise having gender-affirming surgery, as some might imagine. These are places that offer advice on topics that still aren't covered sufficiently in the mainstream.

The witch hunts by populist groups are totally unfounded. We're already beginning to see that trans and queer people in the U.S. can expect reprisals. I think it's awful and I'm very concerned. Trans and queer people don't do any harm and should be able to live how they want.

Do we still need more education around this?

Definitely! That's very important! I do what I can, such as giving this interview. Just to be clear: I am what I am because this is how I came into the world, not because I suddenly wanted to live like a woman. It's natural. When I was trying to live like a man, it felt wrong.

It's important that people who completely reject otherness understand that you don't actively decide to be trans or have an illness that can be healed. People need to get informed. It's a shame that many are ignorant and uninterested.

It's important to educate them, but of course that can only happen if they're open to it. It's a difficult thing to do. It's still crucial that even more people in this situation tell their stories, because that's the only way others can really grasp it. The media also needs to be more sensitive about this issue. Well-meant articles often only make a half-hearted attempt at informing people, or get it completely wrong. If it says, "He's now a woman!", that's simply not true. Because as a trans woman you're born a woman.

People also tell me I'm harming my children. But it would do so much more damage if I kept following the "fixed idea" of living as a man. Unfortunately, I'm often made to feel that I'm strange and not made for this world. These days, we live in a society in which physical differences between men and women are pretty much irrelevant – in theory! In practice, women are still treated as the "weaker" sex.

Of course, we can't bring in a pluralistic society from one day to the next, or even within 10 years. But we're actually on the right track at the moment. Unfortunately, not everything went as well as it could have with the new Self-Determination Act – but at least it was a step in the right direction.

Translated from German by Jane Eggers

Courtesy of Trott-war / INSP.ngo

NOTES FROM A TEXAS PRISON: BILLY'S STORY

EDITOR'S NOTE: Street Sheet is reprinting this piece from the 2024 Pride issue. Billy Thomas, an inmate at the John Wynne Unit of Texas State Prison in Huntsville sent multiple letters to ABO Comix in Oakland, California throughout 2022 and 2023. Street Sheet adapted these letters into a single piece, editing for brevity and clarity.

I am a 51-year-old person, a two-spirited transgender. I am a survivor of mental and sexual abuse from my time in the care of Texas Child Protective Services, state schools, homes and hospitals, and I was forced to overcome the long term side effects of mind-altering drugs.

I began sharing my story and pain of the abduction by CPS and the mental state that came from mental health meds and the sexual abuse through my art and bio at ABO Comix, with the friendship/mentorship of Casper Cendre.

I strive to heal and overcome this capital life sentence that I have now served 19 years of because of the mind-altering mental health meds and sexual abuse that crippled me at trial and during the crime, I now have an outsider interceding on my behalf to Texas Governor Greg Abbott for a new trial or pardon.

The mental illness was brought to the attention of the Johnson County judge in 1992 by a Vernon State Hospital doctor who informed the court after mental health evaluation that if I am not sent back for treatment that I can and will kill myself and/or others, and that my mental health will worsen.

The judge sent me to prison from 1994 to 1998, where gang members beat and raped me, and attempted to kill me by throwing off the thirdrow tier.

In 1998, I met my kids' mother only to find out she is my sister by my mother [and] yet another father. CPS took my kids in 2000 in Waco, Texas, which helped worsen my mental state and my flashbacks of the rape, then the fear of this same harm happening to my kid.

This led me to killing a man, which got me and my brother life for the crime I did while mentally ill and full of mind-altering meds. I blacked out in 2002 and killed [him]. No mental health evaluation was offered at trial, and all mental health history was offered to the jury.

The Fort Worth District Attorney and courtappointed worked out a deal with others facing life to lie on me in exchange for their freedom. Other charges were pending in my indictment to make my charge capital murder.

I am IQ 70, on Thorazine, which altered my mind on trial and kept me from a fair trial and mental health evaluation.

For the past 19 years, I've been played/extorted out of my money by fake jailhouse attorneys. Refusing the mental health meds, I underwent healing through mentorship of my friend and family Casper Cendre, who helped me grow in art skills and heal. I share my story with others in hope of helping others and myself find help from outsiders with the heart, money and/or legal schooling to help me get my case back into court or pardon, with the

understanding that I'll be sent to Vernon State Hospital.

I pray you will petition the Governor and Senator John Whitmire for their grace in the Integrity Division [illegible] my mental state that I still strive to fully overcome as I, a transgender person, survive COVID and further abuse by gangs and corporate guards here in Texas prison as medical attention is kept from me.

Now at the age of 51, I look back over some years of my past at the many mind games I have witnessed.

Now I am healing and dealing with being a two-spirited person, both male and female, and the strength it takes to avoid the queerbashing guards and gangbangers.

I have overcome mind-altering meds and the mental illness they caused me on top of the rape that I suffered in CPS care and state prison.

I am still overcoming the death of my mother and loss of my kids to CPS and now COVID-19 and the unsafe housing for transgender, LG-BTQ, and mentally ill people.

Waking up in Texas State Prison at age 51, I am still healing and overcoming with the help of friends, family and mentor at ABO Comix, Casper Cendre, at home seeking help in sharing art and the bio of my life, and the life I am now coming to walk proudly without hiding in fear of queer bashers.

Sincerely, Billy D. Thomas 01275621

LA COMISION DE **DERECHOS HUMANOS**

JUEVES 5 DE JUNIO LA COMISION DE DERECHOS HUMANOS SE JUNTARA A LAS 5 PM EN EL AYUNTAMIENTO DE SAN FRANCISCO

SALA 416

- Vivienda accequible
- Incremento en familias desamparadas
- Problemas de los refugios para familias
- Gestion de recursos



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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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Thursday June 5 human rights commission at 5, City hall room 416



- Affordable housing
- Increase in family homelessness
- Family shelters issues
- Management of resources

AUDIENCIA

LEGISLACION PARA LAS FAMILIAS VIVIENDO EN ALBERGUES

- Derecho a la política de quejas si se les niegan extensiones.
- Restaurar la lista de espera para asegurar que las familias en hoteles y las familias viviendo en condiciones de hacinamiento puedan acceder a un albergue.
- Implementar un proceso transparente para las familias que solicitan extensiones de estadía en el albergue, que proporcione el apoyo adecuado.
- Asegurar soluciones de vivienda permanente.

We need your public comment in person

<u>Junio 9</u> **10 Am habitacion** #250

HEARING

FAMILY SHELTER LEGISLATION



- Restore the waitlist to ensure families in hotels and those living doubled up can access shelter.
- Employ a transparent process for families seeking shelter stay extensions, with adequate support provided.
- Ensure permanent housing solutions.

We need <u>your</u> public comment in person

June 9th **Room #250**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94188

PERMIT NO. 3481

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Miles podrían perder empleos y servicios en un añc histórico del proceso presupuestario de la ciudad. Únete a la People's Budg INO MÁS RECORTE CLASE TRAB

SAN FRANCISCO CITY HAL MIÉRCOLES JUNIO 4 - 12PM



BUDGET 101 MASS HUDDLE

SUNDAY JUNE 1: 5:30-7PM

SAVE THE DATE: MONDAY JUNE 23 10AM- LAST CALL FOR CHANGE AT

streetsheetsf@gmail.com **Coalition On Homelessness** San Francisco, CA 94102 www.cohsf.org 280 Turk Street 415.346.3740





Thousands could lose jobs and services in a historic year of the city budget process. Join the People's Budget Coalition to say:

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