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### **AMERICA'S LATEST WAR TARGET:** THE TRUTH

**JACK BRAGEN** 

The U.S. is at war. Our government has been lying to us.

This war exists despite the absence of a specific external enemy. This is a war being waged from the inside out, on multiple fronts, with no physical line that could be drawn on a map. Our nation is fighting a war on truth. And its nature is analogous to being eaten alive by a horrible, gross and disgusting parasite.

The weapons of this war are words. And this doesn't mean the weapons are soft or lack impact. Words lead to thoughts and attitudes, and this leads to actions. Words can destroy life.

We have adopted a classic wartime culture accompanied by a Stone Age consciousness. During World War II, white Americans were taught to hate Japanese Americans and used it to justify imprisoning them. Today, undocumented workers are targeted, as are poor and unhoused people, as well as any easily identifiable people.

Tolerance of people with differences is American.

Homeless people are subject to public misinformation that promulgates stereotypes and blames the victim. People assume that if someone is homeless, it is their own fault--the person must be hooked on drugs or have some other moral deficiency.

According to reliable sources, disabled people born in the latter half of the Baby Boom are becoming homeless when parents die. They have depended on parents for housing and other needs, and when the parents aren't around any longer, they can't survive. Not on the 1,000 dollars a month given by SSI.

The consensus among academics: the lack of affordable housing is the primary cause of homelessness. But when people become homeless, all manner of garbage-like assumptions are heaped on them.

When you let go of facts, hate consciousness potentially comes into the mind to fill the ensuing gap.

And we know that governmental structures and institutions, in modern day, blame the victim, and they are geared up to make a person jump through endless flaming hoops and thick stacks of paperwork to get a little bit of cash to try to live on. A recipient of benefits must produce all manner of information and must endure threats that they will be fined and imprisoned when they sign an agreement that says they're telling the truth.

I sought help from the California Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. I'd like to get at least partway out of the yoke of government dependency. Ironically, the people you go so you can get past government control are the people who work for the government.

The "war on truth" affects the aforementioned. I was assigned a worker who ended up telling me abysmal things about my chances in the work world. This was a person working for the government whose job was to help me get and keep a job. Where's the usefulness of that?

He handed me a brochure for employment services that purported DOR services were geared to help people who are ready to work competitively. How does that help people with disabilities?

This is my point: the government can be counted on to lie to us. If all else fails, blame the victim.

If we are siding with those who tell the truth, we are losing this war. And I don't have any authority to define who is telling the truth versus who is lying or mistaken.

No person can force another person to do or not do anything, with some exceptions. We can't force people to tell us the truth. The best we might do is throw some salt over the shoulder, and to disbelieve.

Jack Bragen's writings are searchable.



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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

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

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

### ORGANIZE WITH US

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

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

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO JOIN OUR WORKING GROUP MEETINGS!

# A HOTEL RESIDENT ON CITY-FUNDED NONPROFITS THAT MANAGE SROS

**KENYOTA** 

The need for stable housing is of utmost importance to the unhoused because with it they have a basic human need met: the need for safety. San Francisco's city leaders and its citizens have demonstrated a great empathy to a large number of its homeless population by providing affordable housing in the form of single room occupancies (SROs). Nonprofit property management agencies, under city contracts, oversee housing placement and management of these SROs located in the Tenderloin.

These nonprofits not only provide stable housing for the city's low-income residents, such as myself, They provide a number of resources such as employment opportunities, resume development, job training referrals and individual case management to determine the specific needs of the residents.

Two organizations that are tasked with serving SRO tenants illustrate what SROs do wrong and right.

The Vincent Hotel, an SRO managed by the Tenderloin Housing Clinic and where I live, provides an example of the positive impact these SROs can have in residents' lives.. Some of its residents have become fulltime employees with the clinic in the form of custodians, front desk clerks, and case managers.

At the same time, staff's apathy towards residents and a high turnover rate have hampered some agencies' effectiveness in offering resources designed to elevate its renters into self-sufficiency. This fact is demonstrated vividly in the case of the Vincent. Custodians rarely clean the hotel throughout their shifts, a number of the front desk clerks are rude and hostile to its residents and case managers spend more time on the phone than with its clients. There is a grievance process, which is a good system in theory, but residents fear retaliation if they pursue. This has created an environment that closely resembles the cities' shelters, which are notorious for being chaotic and dangerous.

Tenants often file complaints of burglaries, thefts and resident-on-resident harassment with the management office, but little has been done to rectify these problems. This has left some residents feeling as though the transition from shelter to permanent housing didn't significantly improve their condition. Most of the Vincent's residents are unemployed, unemployable or not interested in finding work.

Case managers, who are charged with the responsibility of identifying and targeting specific needs of those on their caseload, do not involve themselves in the lives of those

whom they manage. Mental health disorder treatment, substance abuse treatment and employment training are critical and provide opportunities for case managers to assist its residents in finding the help they need. By neglecting to develop individual relationships with individuals in their caseload, managers can not identify their clients' specific needs or provide appropriate referrals.

In contrast, Delivering Innovation in Supportive Housing (DISH), a property management agency, takes a more active approach in improving the lives of its residents. Programs such as a Narcan overdose response training are offered and attendees are given a small stipend for participation. Overdoses are common throughout the city's SROs and a resident who is a fully trained Narcan administrator can help save lives.

Case management is held to a higher standard at DISH in that its managers regularly meet with those on their caseloads and offer suggestions to its clients for programs which focus on their individual needs. If a resident is struggling with substance use disorder, referrals for treatment programs are provided. If employment training is required then the DISH's case managers refer its own clients to an employer such as Goodwill or the St. Anthony Foundation. These actions have proven to be helpful in the development of residents to become more productive citizens of the city.

In closing, one must remember that funding for these nonprofit management agencies comes from public funding. Taxpayers should be informed of how these programs are managed and utilized to improve residents' lives.

This could be accomplished through a committee composed of residents of the different management agency's SROs. This committee could act as a liaison between the residents and higher management by voicing complaints, concerns or suggestions for improvement. By coming together they could compare SROs that actively meet their tenants' needs with those that offer bare minimum assistance. This would offer those in higher levels of management the opportunity to engage with representatives of the clients they serve, while also providing the residents a forum for growth and empowerment. I'm not an organizer by any stretch, I believe a committee should be able to see through the facade of bad-actor landlords. And this committee should strive for greater transparency and accountability within these SROs by regularly meeting with representatives from city government.

# **BECOME A VENDOR**

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## 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

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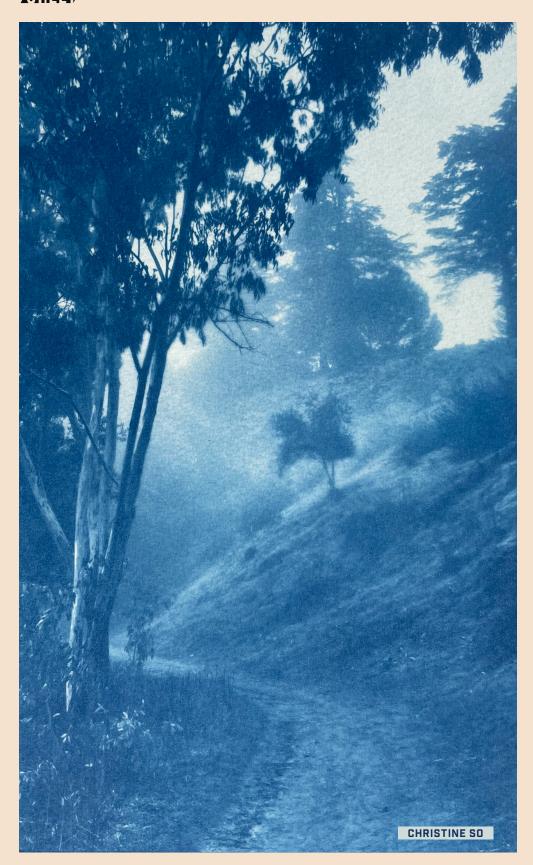
**WRITING:** Write about your experience of homelessness in San Francisco, about policies you think the City should put in place or change, your opinion on local issues, or about something newsworthy happening in your neighborhood!

**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!

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



# ArtAucti —HOUSIN

When: Thursday, September 11, 2025 | 5:30-10 PM

Where: SOMArts Cultural Center, 934 Brannan St, San Francisco, CA

A night of connection, fun, tasty bites and incredible art! This year, we're honoring the 36th anniversary of the founding of our street newspaper, Street Sheet, the longest continuously running street publication in the nation!

Bid online on hundreds of art pieces at a variety of prices and styles starting on August 15th and join us in person on September 11 for a night of celebration, community building, and beautiful art that you won't soon forget!

All proceeds from ArtAuction25 support the continued publication of Street Sheet and proceeds will fund our Human Rights and Housing Justice Organizing programs so we can continue advocating with and for the unhoused, ensuring that humane, empathetic, solution based policies to end homelessness are prioritized over political theatrics that do nothing but waste money and harms unhoused San Franciscans.

Raffle prizes include a free tattoo session, SF Giants tickets, a bowling party, and a Sonoma getaway!

Grab your ticket for the live event today before it's too late!









# on25 GHEALS











# SURVIVOR'S GUILT: THE EMOTIONAL TOLL OF HOMELESSNESS

JANITA-MARJA JUVONEN

I get this feeling a few times a year; sometimes there are six months or more of nothing. Especially in beautiful moments, survivor's guilt can suddenly come crashing down on me. It's as if it's punching me in the face, reminding me of all the people who didn't survive. Survivor's guilt refers to the feeling or moral burden that people experience when they survive in an extreme situation while others die. It is often associated with a feeling of injustice or pressure to survive.

I see them in my mind's eye, but also in real life. I can't simply block them out or overlook them: the many people who have similar experiences today and have to fight for survival, just like I did in the past. These memories make me feel helpless – as helpless as I was back then. This helplessness sometimes makes me sad and often angry. Because on many issues, such as homelessness, I believe that we could change things if we really wanted to.

When I talk about my experiences and feelings with survivor's guilt, I am often met with a lack of understanding. For many, it seems like the worst is behind me. I even go along with that. But in the minds of those who do not know such experiences, everything is "over". And that's where I stop going along with it.

I often hear phrases like, "Just don't think about it anymore,"
"That's in the past, just forget about it," or, "Look forwards, not backwards, and be grateful for what you have now." My personal "favourite" is "Just be grateful and happy." Sometimes I just can't hear that anymore.

Such statements are anything but helpful. On the contrary: they reinforce my feeling that I am doing something wrong in the moments when I feel survivor's guilt. I should just feel differently – skip through life permanently grateful and happy. Then it would disappear. They make me believe

that I'm not right, that I don't feel the right things and that I'm not behaving properly. It is something that characterised my life a lot when I was homeless: being misunderstood.

I am grateful and happy! Except in a professional context, I very rarely look back. I love my life and enjoy it. But that doesn't change the fact that I suffer from what is known as complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD), which is not simply cured by housing and gratitude. And "meditating it away" or other such things just doesn't work either.

What I experienced, my previous life, cannot be excluded from my new life with my own flat key and a door. Even though meditation and yoga are very supportive in many areas and have found a place in my everyday life, they are not a universal remedy. We want simple solutions for complex problems. But often, they don't exist. I can deal with what I've experienced better through yoga and meditation, but homelessness leaves lasting, deeply ingrained traces.

I have to live with the fact that I have seen many people die on the street. That I lost friends and had to watch some of them die. I have to live with the fact that many people continue to die on the streets and that I am not in a position to really do much about it.

That I alone cannot save these people. I have to live with the fact that I still feel guilty, even though I'm doing well today. I am still actively working on clearing this emotional debt. But I won't feel any more guilty for feeling the way I do.

Homelessness has severe and often lasting psychological consequences - and it can kill. Having your own living space can prevent this. Being lectured by people who have not experienced this situation does not help. And once a person has the chance to get a flat, it takes time to really come to terms with what they have experienced on the street. Some people don't manage to allow that confrontation and can't get out of the cycle, fleeing further towards alcohol in order to forget, not to have to recognise it, not to work through it, because it is so painful and seems to be an insurmountable mountain.

But when people come to terms with their situation and thereby burden themselves with survivor's guilt, they cope with their story in the way that their body and subconscious can. Unfortunately, people experiencing homelessness are often denied their feelings and needs by people who have never experienced such an extreme situation.

I left my own street time behind me for almost as long ago as the amount of time I spent there. Nevertheless, I was only able to start processing a few years ago. Until then, I needed time and peace to reorganise my health and my life in order to be able to cope in the "living world" at all.

It takes patience to admit to yourself that things can be the way that they are now. The constant ignoring, fighting against it because others give you the feeling of "you're not normal" takes, at least for me, much more strength than finding and following my path of acceptance. Incidentally, several psychology experts told me at a conference, "You're reacting quite normally." Since then, I've been thinking to myself, finally, I'm normal for once, and not always the alien!

Let's treat each other with more understanding and respect. I once read about the library of "living books". There, people can read other people. A person sits there with a "heading"; for me, it would be homelessness or adoption, for example. Then other people sit down with the "headline" that interests them and read its story from the "Book of Man". That should exist everywhere.

Translated from German via Translators Without Borders Courtesy of Trott-war / INSP.ngo





## TRUMP'S CRACKDOWN ON HOMELESSNESS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR CALIFORNIA?

#### MARISA KENDALL/CALMATTERS

Trump's call to enforce bans on encampments echoes Newsom's policy. But the president wants to upend two other core tenets of California's homelessness response.

President Donald Trump's new law-and-order approach to homelessness bears several striking resemblances to Gov. Gavin Newsom's.

Trump wants cities to enforce laws that make it illegal for homeless people to sleep outside. So does Newsom.

Trump threatened to withhold funding from places that don't. So did Newsom.

And the president wants to make it easier to force homeless people living with serious mental illness or addiction into treatment. So does Newsom.

It's rare for Trump and Newsom, typically adversaries, to see eye to eye on anything. But when the president signed an executive order this week pushing cities and states to use law enforcement to get unhoused people off the streets, some of it read like déjà vu to Californians.

"I don't know that there's a huge contrast between parts of this order and what winds are already blowing toward in California," said Ryan Finnigan, deputy director of research for the UC Berkeley Terner Center for Housing Innovation.

But Trump doesn't want to stop at banning homeless encampments and pushing people into treatment, and that's where he and Newsom diverge: The president wants to upend two core tenets of California's homelessness policy.

Trump wants to abolish federal support for "housing first," which is the idea that homeless individuals should get housing even if they are still using drugs, and "harm reduction," which focuses on preventing overdoses and otherwise making drug use safer.

Both tenets are backed by research and have been the gold standard in California — and at the federal level for years.

The threat of abandoning those philosophies has left local service providers scrambling to figure out whether they'll have to change how they've helped homeless Californians for years or risk losing out on federal funds.

"For all of that to be upended, the entire structure of service delivery is going to be turned upside down," said John Maceri, CEO of The People Concern, a nonprofit that serves unhoused people in Los Angeles.

More of the same in California?

Trump's executive order, titled "Ending crime and disorder on America's streets," seeks to prioritize funding for states and cities that enforce bans on open drug use, camping, loitering and squatting. It also orders the Attorney General to make federal funds available for removing encampments in places where state and local resources aren't enough.

The order comes a year after the U.S. Supreme Court removed protections for people living on the streets in California and other western states, ruling cities can ban camping even if they have no shelter beds.

Newsom already was pressuring cities to crack down on homeless encampments long before Trump's order. In May, he urged every city in the state to pass an ordinance making it illegal to camp on public property. As an example of how this should be done, he released a model ordinance that would make it illegal to camp in one place for more than three nights in a row, block streets or sidewalks and build semipermanent structures.

But Newsom was quick to distance himself from Trump's policies.

"Like so many of Trump's executive orders, this order is more focused on creating distracting headlines and settling old scores than producing any positive impact," spokesperson Tara Gallegos said in an emailed statement. "But, his imitation (even poorly executed) is the highest form of flattery."

Some experts say Trump, who has a history of holding funding hostage over perceived slights, could use his new executive order as a way to cut off money to California.

The order doesn't specify exactly what compliance looks like, Finnigan said. At least 50 California cities have banned homeless encampments in the past year, according to a study by UC Berkeley researchers. But if homelessness doesn't decrease in a way Trump is satisfied with, the president

could accuse California of failing to enforce those laws and cut the state's funding, Finnigan said.

That threat comes as the Trump administration already is cutting funds for homeless services, affordable housing and Medicaid.

Trump's order also prioritizes committing more people to institutions from the street. The order seeks to make it easier to commit people with mental illness who can't care for themselves, while also promising grants and other assistance to help ramp up commitments, and threatening to divert funding away from places that don't push people into treatment facilities "to the maximum extent permitted by law." It also promises to prioritize funding to expand mental health courts and drug courts.

Newsom, too, has made it a priority to get people living with mental illness and addiction out of encampments and into treatment without their consent, if necessary. His CARE Court program, which went live in all 58 counties at the end of last year, allows judges to put people into mental health and addiction treatment plans, but stops short of allowing judges to force compliance. Newsom also supported a 2023 law that expanded who could be forced into treatment under a conservatorship.

Trump's order prompted a backlash from groups that support the civil rights of people with mental illnesses and disabilities. The National Alliance on Mental Health, which maintains that forced treatment should be used as a last resort, said Trump's order raises "grave concerns." Disability Rights California, which also opposed CARE Court, said Trump's order goes a step beyond what California is already doing.

"The playbook looks similar," said Greg Cramer, associate director of public policy. "But I think the consequences of the Trump action go even further."

But the order doesn't include funding for new mental health or addiction treatment beds. In a state already struggling with a lack of resources, some experts said Trump's order for more forced treatment feels hollow.

"Even if they agreed to go into treatment, where are these facilities that they're supposed to go into?" Maceri asked.

No more housing first

In ending federal support for housing first and harm reduction strategies to fight homelessness, Trump's order ends years of precedent. California has long practiced housing first, which means everyone is entitled to housing, even if they have an untreated mental illness or are using drugs. The idea is that it's much easier to receive treatment or get clean while housed than it is on the street.

Instead, Trump wants people in federal housing programs to have to submit to substance abuse treatment or mental health services as a condition of participation. His order also stops federal funding for harm reduction.

The People Concern, which provides street outreach and runs permanent housing, offers the opiate overdose reversing drug Narcan to its clients. It gives out antiseptic wipes to help people who inject drugs avoid dangerous infections, and it doesn't evict tenants just because they are using drugs.

The organization also refers people to treatment programs. But not everyone is ready for that, Maceri said. The harm reduction strategies help build trust — and keep people safe — until they are ready to get clean, he said.

The People Concern, like many nonprofits, uses state and private funds — not federal dollars — to pay for harm reduction services.

But Trump's order directs the Attorney General to review whether organizations that get federal funds and also "knowingly distribute drug paraphernalia" or "permit the use of distribution of illicit drugs" on their property are violating federal law and bring civil or criminal actions against them if so.

That could mean groups like The People Concern have to change their practices.

"If it goes that far," Maceri said, "I'm certainly not going to put our staff or our clients in legal jeopardy."

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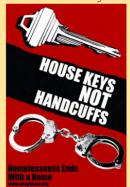
#### WRAP Approach to Artwork as a Key Organizing Tool

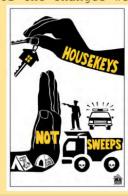
From the time WRAP created Without Housing, we have used art as a fundamental organizing tool. Our goal in Without Housing was to show data with more appeal than a bar chart. We gave artists the charts and asked them to come up with imagery that showed the real effects of that data on people's lives. An image can quickly capture and communicate a vital statistic and help to reinforce the meaning of those numbers.

Since then, our art has served several functions: street placards, announcements for actions, visualizing information, opposing or supporting legislation, statements of our core issues, giving life to campaigns. People identify with the visuals. They think of WRAP and they think of a potent image. We are making our own culture against the mainstream narrative, and unifying our message across cities. The art is not a decoration to the movement, but a way to say who we are.

How we create together: We treat art as part of a campaign. First we create the messaging. Then artists meet with organizers, and we go back and forth drafting and giving feedback until we come to a final creation.

In a nutshell, the community tells the organizers what's going on in the streets; organizers create messaging around that; then organizers work with artists to give visual life to the message, to fight for the changes we need.







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COMMUNITY SPEAKERS

AUGUST 20, 2025 10.00 AM - 3.00 PM

RAFIKI UMOJA HAP 5000 THIRD ST & QUESADA

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The BAACSG organizations & committed to ending the overdose crisis

in the Black/African American community, including:

**Brothers Against Drug Deaths** Code Tenderloin **Glide Foundation Harm Reduction** Therapy Center SF AIDS Foundation SFDPH Tenderloin Housing Clinic



Homelessness San Francisco