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City of Fresno Destroys Downtown Homeless Encampments

By Mike Rhodes

The City of Fresno followed through on their threats to destroy homeless encampments in the downtown area last month by bringing in bulldozers, garbage trucks and sanitation workers who knocked down and hauled away dozens of shelters. They destroyed the last of the encampments in the downtown area on October 23rd. City spokespersons say they are determined to stop any encampments from reemerging. To accomplish that goal, the Fresno Police Department has established a task force to keep the homeless on the move.



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Heavy equipment destroying the encampment located between E street and Hwy 99, and California Ave. and San Benito on Sept. 3, 2013 Photo Courtesy Mike Rhodes

FOOD NOT BOMBS CONFIRMS RIGHT TO SHARE FOOD WITH THE HUNGRY

-- Staff Report

On a recent fall afternoon, pausing for a moment in front of the serving table at Cesar Chavez Park, Davida, an organizer of

"Food Not Bombs" (FnB) in Sacramento, described how she made the dark purple topping for the spice cake. "Well," she said, "you know we cook what comes to us from donors, what

we happen to have on hand. This week we had plums. I cooked them up and then we had some tapioca too, and some agave. I put all that in." The taste was unique – fresh, tart and sweet.

not leave the park. When FnB moved across the street, the police blocked the entrance to the park and turned diners aside when they tried to enter carrying their plates. One officer told FnB's Petey, "We're really trying to keep homeless out of the park and away from the area around the park."

At the City Council meeting a week later, FnB supporters silently filed into the chamber holding signs that said, "It's Not A Crime To Feed The Hungry."

In the latest development, the City has agreed that FnB should be allowed to continue to share food in the park. "People really count on us, really look forward to our food. Many of the same people line up every week," says Ani, an FnB organizer.

Sacramento needs Food Not Bombs. Both the hungry and the well-fed have a right to our parks and our downtown streets. Let's quit being a mean city.

Food Not Bombs' symbol, appropriately, is a fist holding a carrot. All across the world, FnB volunteers return week after week to set up their tables, lifting huge pots of vegetarian soups, stews, and casseroles, serving up salads, fresh fruit and homemade desserts to the patient lines of people. Here in Sacramento, Food Not Bombs has shared food in the park every Sunday at 1:30 pm for the past 20 years, often serving over a hundred meals in an afternoon.

Recently, on October 6, 2013, this tradition was put in jeopardy when Sacramento Police – seven to eight bike cops, a police wagon, an unmarked police car, and two marked cars – threatened the group with confiscation of their pots and pans if they did



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A STRUGGLE FOR PLACE AND SPACE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

by Cathleen Williams

This is a story of the struggle for place – for a place to kick off your shoes and call home – and for a space where that home can be found, in the midst of the coldly predatory real estate market of post-industrial L.A.. As investment returns to the inner city, the question is who can be there – who can frequent the streets, who can rest in the parks, who can even shelter in a doorway – and, more than ever, the answer to this question is all about money. It's a crisis, and it's not unique to L.A.

This is also a California story, one of migration, resilience, and resistance to displacement, one fought out over the worn sidewalks and aged, but solid, brick and tile buildings of L.A.'s Skid Row, a 25 square block area of downtown.

According to Freedom Now, a book recently published by LA's Community Action Network (LA CAN), an estimated 95% of Skid Row residents are extremely low income, more than one third of them are homeless, and nearly 75% of them are African-American.¹

Why here? As Freedom Now explains, "Locked into crumbling neighborhoods with few economic opportunities but a huge influx of police," L.A. has created a racialized "poverty corridor" that runs from Compton to South Central to Downtown. It reflects decades of segregation and then, in the 1970's, economic restructuring that left residents unemployed when unionized industrial jobs were replaced with sweatshops.

Starting in the 1970's, local neighborhood services were overwhelmed, and Skid Row, which had historically been a destination for unemployed, "transient" workers, became the main place where



LA CAN and the LA Human Right to Housing Collective at City Hall demanding that the Los Angeles City Council Recognize the Human Right to Housing
- Photo Courtesy Eric Ares LA CAN 2011

you could get a shower, find a meal, maybe a bed in the mission, and take advantage of the recovery services located here.² "And so they were basically just surplus human beings. They were not so much drawn to Skid Row as they were pushed out of where they came from because it was impossible to survive there."³

The displacement was accompanied by the influx of crack cocaine, high rates of incarceration and the discharge of parolees onto the streets. As in other cities, gentrification, the demolition of public housing, the loss of low income housing, as well as the abandonment of the mentally ill, all contributed to the suddenly visible presence of masses of homeless people in Skid Row in the 1980's.⁴ In L.A., the number of homeless residents is now conservatively estimated to have reached 50,000.

"I love this place," says General Dogon, long time Skid Row resident and organizer for LA CAN, speaking at the headquarters of the organization, a battered office building on South Main in the heart of Skid Row. Linoleum floors, political posters papering the walls, a narrow staircase up to a roof garden in plastic tubs, LA CAN operates as a fortress where the dispossessed can gather their forces.

Founded in 1999 by Pete White and twenty four Skid Row residents, LA CAN has staked out a powerful position in the ongoing battle against L.A. real estate titans and their city hall allies. These interests have wanted to reclaim this "historic core" of downtown L.A. for profitable development schemes, and to sweep homeless residents from the streets with co-ordinated campaigns of police harassment.

The most valuable resource they have wanted to take, originally at bargain basement prices, are the old brick hotels, built between the 1890's and 1930's,

which today house more than 15,000 extremely low income residents in single rooms, people living on disability, on General Assistance, on low paid work, often surviving on a few hundred dollars a month.

General Dogon, with the other activists and residents belonging to LA CAN, stands squarely in the way of the assault. "My parents met here in 1954. This was a major destination for Black families like mine migrating from Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas. There were churches – I served as an usher as a kid – but also night clubs, ball rooms, pool halls. My dad used to stay out late a lot."

"I was born right down here in General Hospital in 1962. I started running with other youth and ended up pleading to a laundry list of charges, incarcerated and in solitary confinement. In prison, I started reading and studying about Black oppression and liberation. I wanted to fight the system – but I didn't know how. When I got out, homeless but back home, here in Skid Row, someone eventually directed me over to LA CAN – said, 'check out that bunch of crazies.'" General Dogon laughs.

"I stuck my head in the door and stayed all day. An LA CAN activist, Bilal Ali, gave me a clip board and said, 'Patrol the cops and the BID (Business Improvement District) security. Use this disposable camera.'"

LA CAN has stood its ground against the campaign of police harassment intended to uproot the poor and homeless population of Skid Row. As reported by LA CAN's Downtown Blues: A Skid Row Reader, the City launched the so-called "Safer Cities Initiative" (SCI) on a November morning in 2006, as 50 patrol officers, 25-30 narcotics officers, and squads of mounted police filed onto the streets of Skid Row.

This small area came to have the highest concentration of police in the world, outside of Baghdad. In the first year, 2,800 encampments were torn apart, hundreds of shopping carts and other belongings were confiscated, 8,000 arrests were made, and 13,000 tickets were issued for "quality of life" violations such as sitting or sleeping on the sidewalk or jay walking. "No one was immune – not the elderly, the wheel chair bound, the mentally ill, or children."⁵

"I'll never forget that day," says General Dogon. "They came in a column, cops wearing white rubber gloves, all equipped with plastic handcuffs. I saw them arrest an old woman and send her dogs to the pound. I knew we had a hell of a fight on our hands."

LA CAN, with its community allies, Legal Aid, and the ACLU, followed up with a campaign to oppose and publicize the SCI, setting up Community Watch teams to monitor police and private security abuses, attending city council meetings, forcing the police to answer to the community in a public hearing, and filing an historic lawsuit in federal court against the ban on sitting or lying on sidewalks on the ground that it constituted cruel and unusual punishment. Ultimately, a settlement was reached permitting homeless people to camp on the sidewalks of Skid Row from 9 at night until 6 in the morning. Today 3,000 to 5,000 residents do just that, every night.

At the same time, beginning in 2001, in coalition with other community organizations and Legal Aid, LA CAN waged a legal and activist battle to keep area residents stable in their "one room occupancy" homes. Outreach, mass complaints to the City's Housing Departments, multiple lawsuits, organizing against illegal evictions, rent hikes, hotel deterioration, and public housing demolition – a ten year record of hard won housing work. Ongoing campaigns focus on the disappearance of low income housing stock, green space, farmer's market access, and the "Dirty Divide" – the disproportionate lack of bathrooms and trash cans in Skid Row.

"We won the right to stay on the land," General Dogon says. "We are building a culture of resistance. We are targeting the one percent. We are demanding they share the wealth."

(Endnotes)

1 *Freedom Now: Struggles for the Human Right to Housing in L.A. and Beyond*, ed. Jordan T. Camp and Christina Heatherton, Freedom Now Books, Los Angeles, CA.

2 *Downtown Blues*, p. 20.

3 *Downtown Blues*, p. 12

4 *Downtown Blues: A Skid Row Reader*, ed. Christina Hetherton, LA CAN, Los Angeles, CA, p. 9, 43.

5 *Downtown Blues*, p. 9.



Dogon testifying at Los Angeles City Council
Photo Courtesy Eric Ares LACAN 2011

Fresno Destroys Homeless Encampments

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Homeless advocates have responded by calling on the City Council to set up safe and legal places where homeless people can live. They argue that until the City of Fresno has enough housing, homeless people need a place to live that provides basic public services (e.g., drinking water, trash pickup, toilets). City Manager Bruce Rudd told the advocates they should take their complaints to representatives at the County of Fresno. Homeless advocates reminded Rudd that it was the City of Fresno and not the county that was bulldozing the encampments and chasing homeless people from one vacant lot to another.

Most of the homeless living in downtown Fresno seem to be adjusting to the new dictates of City Hall. Many of them sleep on the sidewalks near the Poverello House and the Rescue Mission, get up early in the morning and move on, returning in the evening. Many homeless people have moved to other areas of the downtown area, like the Fulton Mall and Courthouse Park, and some have moved into north



Photo Courtesy Mike Rhodes



Photo Courtesy Mike Rhodes

Fresno. While there is frustration within the homeless community over the new city policy, they are resigned to this new reality. There has been shockingly little resistance to what will likely lead to a number of homeless people freezing to death this winter because they lack shelter and other basic necessities.

One of the tools homeless advocates have used in the past is to file lawsuits based on the City of Fresno's actions—usually because they have taken and immediately destroyed

homeless people's property. According to many observers at the demolitions, the city's practices have evolved to the point where they are technically not violating homeless people's constitutional rights. No litigation is anticipated based on the actions during these last demolitions.

Forcing the homeless to carry their property with them all day long will certainly make life more difficult for Fresno's most unfortunate. Not having a neighbor you can trust will likely make some people (particularly

homeless women) more vulnerable to predators who victimize them. Dispersing hundreds, perhaps thousands, of homeless people throughout the city (with no place to go to the bathroom) is unlikely to improve the health and public safety in this community.

There are several groups of homeless advocates that are attempting to

improve life and restore dignity and respect to their homeless brothers and sisters who are on the mean streets of Fresno. You can see what they are up to and contact them by visiting www.helpfresnohomeless.org.

Mike Rhodes is the editor of the Community Alliance newspaper. Contact him at editor@fresnoalliance.com.



Community Alliance Editor Mike Rhodes found this woman standing on Santa Clara Street at the conclusion of one of those demolitions. The dirt and dust that was everywhere was as amazing as her smile. Photo Courtesy Mike Rhodes

Anti-Homeless Movement in Northern California

By Bill Mash

I was full of hope, and yes change, when I started Without a Roof 18 months ago. I was certain the vital and worthy cause of homelessness and poverty in America articulated with admirable words, gritty pictures and moving images and sound would make quick and profound impacts in ending homelessness. People would quickly get involved, donate time, money, etc...

The reality on the street is bleak. Terms such as 'Clean and Safe', 'Civil Sidewalks', 'business improvement districts', and the most cruel of all, 'homeless by choice', supplanted compassion and understanding. 'House Keys not Handcuffs', 'Criminalization of the Homeless', 'Right to Exist', and 'Community is Everyone' became rally cries to educate a public programmed to fear the ever growing numbers of houseless in their communities.

My idealistic views of dramatic hope have been washed away by the growing chasm of hateful misinformation between those with roofs and those without.

Let's step back for a moment to a kinder, gentler period in American history, the housing crisis of the early 1980's which left hundreds of thousands of Americans houseless. American communities understood it was a public health crisis.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was the first responder to homelessness. HUD programs were expanded to address the need. The crisis was successfully managed, the economy recovered and people's lives were transformed. The country rallied, citizens cared. Compassion and hope were triumphant.

Today it's an entirely different perspective on the plight of the poor. The country that has been at war or conflict for all but two-plus decades of its existence has decided to wage a new war: The war *on* the poor.

In Redding California parks and wooded areas are being leveled under the guise of a favorite word of the oppressors of the poor - cleanup. Sleeping bags and cold weather gear are being withheld from those without a safe and warm place to rest their head. Perhaps if they're cold enough they just might leave town - is this the logic?

In Humboldt County people are

being beaten in the streets and told to leave town by vigilantes. The victims are silent as to who the perpetrators are, fearing for their lives. Several beloved and beautiful members of the community have recently died, their lives drastically shortened by the rigors and travesty that is life on the streets.

Chico California has come out in full force with all the weapons of misinformation, clean and safe, downtown ambassadors, business improvement districts with a new wrinkle - service engagement.

According to the Source Draft Agenda for 10/22, Chico Study Session; "If a person refuses service engagement, then a warrant is issued; noncompliance results in arrest. Can defer warrant if they leave the community."

I suppose residents are to be comforted by the Clean and Safe report dated 10/22 that 'recognizes the fine line between vagrancy as a social issue and a criminal issue.' Perhaps the authors of this document don't know, or perhaps care, that vagrancy laws were outlawed decades ago with the term 'vagrant' being a derogatory and bigoted term to those that were abused?

It continues, "While being homeless is not a crime, many kinds of public conduct are illegal and should be addressed. These include being publicly intoxicated, loitering, prowling, fighting, trespassing, aggressive panhandling, soliciting, urinating and defecating in public places, unlawful camping, littering, obstructing sidewalks, riding bicycles and skateboards on public walkways, living in a vehicle parked on a public street, disturbing the peace by loud and unreasonable noises, using offensive words, behaving in a threatening manner, public exposure to unlicensed, unvaccinated, and or unleashed dogs, etc."

This evil paragraph is wordsmithed to send the unobvious message of what those 'vagrants' are really up to. It also puts a stamp on the reality that there is no such thing as a 'fine line'. If you're homeless, you're engaged in criminal activity and are to be dealt with by the full force of the law. Rumor has it that walking and chewing gum is under advisement.

It's time to stand together as regional communities and turn back the tide of war on the most vulnerable and broken segments of our community, those without roofs.

Massive Medi-Cal Expansion Rolls Out with ACA

by Cathleen Williams

The devastating shutdown of the federal government and the effort to defund "Obamacare" has captured the headlines as we go to press - but in California communities, the process of enrolling low income and homeless residents into health plans (HMO's) under the Affordable Care Act or ACA (the real name of "Obamacare") has already begun.

The ACA, however, excludes undocumented immigrants - in California, this exclusion shuts out 2-3 million people. In Sacramento, and in other communities, if you are undocumented, you can continue to be seen at certain community clinics (there are eleven in the region, including, for example, Well Space Health (formerly known as the Effort) and the Sacramento Native American Health Center as well as hospital emergency rooms.

Nationwide, some 12 million undocumented people will remain without health care under the ACA - and the political campaign to widen coverage must continue as part of the fight for health care for all. We won't be well as a nation until we take the profit and the politics out of public health.

Right now, though, in Northern California, dedicated legal advocates are working to ensure that low income people get the medical care they need under the ACA.

Stacey Wittorff, an attorney who coordinates health related advocacy and education at Legal Services of Northern California, is both excited and apprehensive that the opening day has finally come. "Roughly 55,000 people in Sacramento County are now newly eligible for Medi-Cal under the ACA," she told me over lunch at the restaurant across 12th St. from the Legal Services office in downtown Sacramento, "And we are here to help make sure people can actually use that coverage."

There's a new category of eligibility for Medi-Cal - the ACA adds people whose gross income is around \$1300 per month, that is, 138% of the federal poverty line (FPL). Non-disabled adults in this category without minor children, between the ages of 21 and 64, were *not* covered before unless they had certain medical conditions like end-stage kidney disease. *They will be covered now.*

Everyone *currently* covered by the County's transitional Medi-Cal program, LIHP, is going to be moved into Medi-Cal and will receive a big packet in November. That packet will give a choice of health plans - Molina, Anthem Blue Cross, and Health Net are the main HMO plans that have contracted with the

County to provide the actual care. If you don't make a choice, you will be assigned to Molina.

If you *aren't* currently covered by Medi-Cal, however, you will need to take action to apply for Medi-Cal - even if you are now in CMISP, the county's indigent care program. You can get the application and file it at the County welfare office or on line under the Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance. You can do this right away.

The ACA was built around the idea that there is no "wrong door" - everyone eligible (except the undocumented) should get some kind of coverage. If your income is over 138% of the FPL, you will be eligible to buy private insurance on the ACA exchange, and you will get a subsidy to help cover the premiums and some of the co-pays if you are low income.

Stacey sighed as she continued. "There are gaps and anticipated problems, big ones," she said, "and we are going to have to work at every level to help our clients deal with them."

Finding doctors to treat Medi-Cal patients, especially specialists, is going to be tough because the State has cut the re-imbursement to most doctors and other providers - the amount they receive from Medi-Cal for services - and it was already low. Less than 60% of office based physicians accepted new Medi-Cal patients in 2011, the second lowest rate in the nation.

"What should people do to protect their rights if they are now covered by Medi-Cal and are having trouble finding a primary care doctor or a specialist?" I asked Stacey.

"You have rights, now, as a Medi-Cal managed care plan member that you never had before," she said. As she explained, in plans governed by California law (the Knox Keene Act), you have a right to see doctors in a certain amount of time and within a certain distance from your home.

If you are in a Medi-Cal managed care plan, you are entitled to file a grievance with your health plan, and a complaint with California's Department of Managed Health Care. People will need to learn to "navigate" the system, and be persistent. Legal Services of Northern California offers *free* help to health care consumers regardless of what kind of coverage they have and, as well, to the uninsured.

As Stacey points out, "Legal Services wants to understand and to document how the changes to our health care delivery systems are working in our communities. That's our job. Call us at 888-354-4471."

Mean Cities – WHY?

By Cathleen Williams

Michael Hansen strums his ukulele on the street. Bearded, sturdy, he passes for Santa Claus even on the hottest July day. Earning about \$100 per month, his instrument case at his feet, he's a "busker" – a type of street performer who has brought music to passersby in a tradition that goes back thousands of years. Even the word is ancient.

Now he's being warned by the police that he's not welcome west of 15th Street – blocked from playing in the only part of town where people walk and stop and listen.

They call it a "City Crackdown," and it's much broader than reported. (Sacramento Bee, 8/20/13, "City Cracks Down On Street Performers In Old Sacramento.")

Churches and other groups that provide free meals downtown in the parks are being threatened with citation and arrest if they continue to serve the hungry without a costly permit and compliance with onerous regulations, as if their home-cooked food posed a newly discovered public health threat.

"Where is she supposed to go?" One resident asked an officer who had stopped to awaken a homeless woman who had settled down on Jay Street. "Anywhere but here," he replied. Obviously not his concern. It's illegal to *live* outside in Sacramento – on public *and* private property. This means there is *no place to be* if you can't afford a room at night. The legality of this ordinance is currently being challenged, and the issue is before the Court of Appeal here in Sacramento.

And, finally, in a metaphor for ongoing repression and loss, the willows on the path to the bicycle bridge have been

hacked down, just their pale trunks still pushing up, like raised fingers severed at the palm. People slept in those thickets, sometimes, and in the reeds of the field. Now it is barren, and the birds that flickered in the branches have flown.

Why such a mean city? Of course, it doesn't compare to Columbia, capital of South Carolina, where the City Council actually passed an ordinance in August of this year that would force "homeless looking people" to choose between going to jail and being bused to a shelter on the outskirts of town. Once there, they would need approval to return to downtown – *and the road back would be guarded by police to ensure they didn't.*

"What I see," said Cameron Runyon, the city councilman who proposed the ordinance, "Is a giant risk to business." (The law was later rescinded when even the Police Chief objected it was unconstitutional.)

But Columbia is not alone. Portland, Oregon has some 2,000 homeless residents. The police there have renewed enforcement of their camping ban, rounding up and arresting people for sleeping on the street, as they did, even across from City Hall. In Tampa, Florida, where there are over 7,000 homeless residents, a new camping ordinance was passed last summer which requires arrest of anyone seen sleeping in public.

Sleep...perhaps life's most innocent act. The deprivation of sleep is internationally condemned as torture.

Our cities' most vulnerable are under attack. Why? Because government policy has become corporate policy. The elderly, disabled war veterans, children, those most destitute – all are blamed for their plight, then stripped of their right to *be*. Like the willows. It hurts us all.

Exceptions to the Rule Should Be the Rule

By Erica Fonseca

I'm sure at some point in their life, everyone has heard the words, "I'm sorry, I'm just doing my job." Whether being denied access to a "staff only" restroom or forced into paying that late fee when you plead with the customer service representative to believe that you did pay your bill on time, this phrase is continually used to justify people's apathy towards a fellow human's situation and needs. At the risk of sounding misanthropic, why does it seem that most people are unwilling to go the extra mile or bend the rules even a smidge to greatly assist or relieve another person.

Could it be that these uncaring individuals are reflective of a society at large that just...doesn't care? A society where personal responsibility is glorified and the need for assistance, or the occasional "handout" is demonized. It isn't hard to see this sentiment engendered by policies that reinforce the social paradigm of personal responsibility. To be sure, the general fear of giving something away for free prevents many social services from operating to their full potential, as welfare to work programs police poor people and distinctions between the deserving and undeserving poor continue to influence many social service policies.

Personally, I can't help but shudder every time I hear the phrase! Too often is it used to justify denying someone water at a coffee shop (water is free), access to a restroom (would

you rather people go on the streets?), or a comfortable place to sit indoors (do you really think that if one person rests for a minute that ten others will quickly follow suit?). The logic most people use to justify those 5 simple words, "I'm just doing my job" goes something like this: "If I let you- fill in the blank (get water, use the restroom, sit down, etc.)- then everyone else will want to and our business will run out of cups or whatever else because we're giving them all away for free!"

But, will it?

Does one person making an exception to the rule translate into a total exploitation of that one person's kindness? By that same logic, if everyone on earth threw a rock into the Grand Canyon it would cause significant damage to the Colorado River, or worse yet, it would fill up! But of course, this will never happen, just as one person getting a cup of free water will not drive a restaurant out of business because the word got out and suddenly hundreds of people are lining up for free water.

I think questioning people's use of this phrase, or something similar, to deny water at coffee shops, access to restrooms, places to sit indoors, is a rich starting place to open up a conversation about rules and who they really benefit. To question, why am I really denying this person my total assistance and human compassion and who is really benefiting from me doing this? Without sounding too cliché (or

illicit) aren't rules meant to be broken? Aren't we all pleased when a customer service representative goes the extra mile for us, or that McDonald's worker didn't charge us for the extra barbeque sauce we wanted for our nuggets. Indeed, it is these moments when we most likely think "wow, people are nice" and it brightens our day just a little more.

For people who do not have readily available access to water, shelter, food, a place to sit/lie, etc. it is these exceptions to the rule that literally promote their humanity, and ours. It is when we go the extra mile for someone, or bend the rules by handing out a free cup of ice water on a hot day that we are actively aiding an individual in their daily quest for survival. Undoubtedly, making exceptions to rules has benefits of cataclysmic proportions for people whose basic survival is a continual struggle.

So the next time you feel yourself forming those five little words in your mouth "I'm just doing my job", pause and think about it. Do the ends justify the means? What if they don't? But what if instead, making an exception to the rule leads a woman and children into shelter, or provides a brief respite from the cold for an elderly homeless man on a winter day. Ask yourself, would you rather just do your job, or would you rather help your fellow human, and express your humanity? Exceptions to the rule are those moments when we relate to one another with empathy, respect, and compassion.

Ticketing the Homeless: Why Infraction Tickets are Perpetuating Poverty

By Erica Fonseca

On the average day at The Tommy Clinkenbeard Legal Clinic (TCLC) it is not uncommon to assist 10 to 15 people with their tickets. Occasionally, they come in flustered and incredulous by the exorbitant fine they will shortly have to pay, unless they are willing to have their license suspended, additional fines attached and potentially go to jail. Most often, however, they come in resigned to the fact that- yet again- they were ticketed simply for existing.

What is most problematic about the tickets brought in to TCLC is the overt prejudice with which they are issued. To be sure our clients are issued tickets that the "average" person would never be subjected to. These tickets range from: jaywalking, biking on the sidewalk, fix it tickets (for bikes!), riding without a bike light, loitering, etc. If you are not homeless and reading this, can you think of time you were even given even a "stern warning" for jaywalking? Undoubtedly, the Sacramento Police Department in conjunction with the Park Rangers, systematically

target homeless and no/low income folks, not only further perpetuating people's dire circumstances, but clogging the court system with tickets that will almost never be rectified.

At TCLC, most tickets range from "illegal" camping to light rail tickets to the arbitrary enforcement of vague laws that criminalize various forms of sitting, resting, laying, eating, etc. While we daily see multiple ticket offenses, or one person with multiple tickets, at TCLC it is most likely that we will assist clients with Light-rail or camping tickets. Like me (before I started working at TCLC) most people are unaware of the detrimental path a simple infraction ticket can lead a homeless or low/no income person down. I'll use an actual example from a client at TCLC to fully illustrate the point. What started as an infraction ticket for jaywalking (an offense that seems to be only applicable to homeless people) quickly became a barrier to this client finding employment.

Unfortunately, this client failed to appear at his court date and subsequently a *Failure*

to Appear Warrant was issued. This is extremely common, however, because court dates are scheduled for months after the ticket s are issued, giving clients ample time to lose their tickets, forget their court dates, or completely forget about their ticket altogether. After realizing he had an FTA warrant the client made another court date and appeared before a judge. Unknowing of our community service alternative to paying the entirety of his fine, he agreed to pay a fine he could not afford. Now within a couple of months he will be charged with a *Failure to Pay*, and even worse his ticket will be sent to a collection agency where exorbitant penalty fines will be attached to the original fine and a hold will be put on his license until he pays his debt in full.

Just like that, within the course of a couple months, this client has lost the privilege to drive which completely hinders his ability to find work, therefore allowing him to make payments on his fine. Caught within this Catch 22 cycle, he went from having a simple jaywalking ticket with a nominal fine, to having a suspended driver's license and a

five hundred dollar fine.

At TCLC we attempt to halt this vicious and impossible cycle by providing our clients with a letter to bring with them to court requesting community service in lieu of paying their infraction fines. The conversion rate usually translates to 4-6 hours for every hundred dollars, making most infractions clearable within one day's work (4 hours) of community service at Loaves & Fishes. Additionally, we are usually capable of clearing Failure to Appear warrants, by signing clients up to attend our "Homeless Court" date, which we hold monthly in Department 2 of the downtown court house.

All of us at TCLC are passionate about alleviating the consequences of unjust policies and the direct targeting of homeless people that greatly encumbers their ability to exist in peace and eventually escape poverty. If you or anyone you know has been issued a ticket that you cannot afford to pay, please contact the Tommy Clinkenbeard Legal Clinic for assistance and guidance. Phone: 916-446-0368

Right-Wing Vote Rebellion Fails, Closing Year 2013 with a Laugh

www.chongonation.com

by the homeless science writer,

Chongo

(Historical note: The first real rebellion in this country occurred prior to the adoption of the Constitution, in the form of an attempt by the then victorious Continental Army to make the Colonies a kingdom, appointing George Washington a king, apparently unbeknownst to him. It was Mr. Washington himself who, upon learning all this, single-handedly ended the effort using reason alone, and as a consequence of the logical sense of reason itself, this country was “born,” but that was well over two centuries ago, and we seem to have changed since then, apparently forgetting, in the process, lessons learned though incredibly rare fortune that is unlikely to happen twice.)

The following is the opening to an Associated Press article released October 16, 2013:

“OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Billionaire Warren Buffett said Wednesday it would be idiocy for the nation’s leaders to allow the United States to default on its bills... Buffett said he thinks it would be absurd for American politicians to do anything to damage the country’s reputation for paying its bills that has been established over the past 237 years.

“ ‘I don’t think it will happen, but if it does happen, it’s a pure act of idiocy,’ Buffett said about the possibility of default.”

So began the opening lines of an article on the Internet that asked an extremely successful businessman his opinion regarding the recent government shutdown this past month of October. Interestingly, it wholly agreed with what seems to be the opinion of many these days with respect to the attempted “coup” by house conservatives determined to have their way. Luckily for everyone

in the entire world, including they themselves, it failed miserably – that is, this time. But as one of their leaders, Senator Ted Cruz, made clear, the battle is not over. Cruz said, “What I intend to do is continue ... to work to stop the [Affordable Care Act].” When asked about all of the public ridicule he and his group have received from congress as well as his own party, he said that he was unconcerned, focusing his concerns strictly on his Texas constituents. These attitudes and thinking also seem to agree with the terminology that Mr. Buffet chose, as Texas is the state with the most people proportionally lacking health insurance, making it the state that most needs affordable care. Contrast that to Senator Cruz’s home country, Canada, where everyone has it.

According to Mr. Buffet’s choice of terms, this article would have been most accurately titled “Year Ends in Idiot’s Rebellion,” but this would, despite its otherwise impeccable accuracy, be a politically incorrect wording, irrespective of accuracy, especially in light of the obvious fact that so many equally fitting synonyms, like, for example, the very one chosen in the final title that was used above, abound in overwhelming abundance.

I believe that it was P. T. Barnum who said, “A sucker is born every minute.” If you do the math, that’s millions. To clarify, a sucker, as the term is used here, is someone thinking him or her self too astute and informed to be fooled by cognitive manipulation, and, most significantly, is proud of his or her certainty, in so thinking. (While one may never achieve being too astute and informed to be capable of being fooled, and hence remain always susceptible to cognitive manipulation, an absolutely certain step toward reducing that susceptibility, is recognizing that one should never believe one’s self NOT being wholly susceptible to sophisticated cognitive illusion. Recognizing that susceptibility is inescapable inhibits its effects.)

Like their leaders, Senator Cruz, for example, the rebels surely must have health care themselves, making it easy for them to sacrifice the health care of any others besides themselves who don’t, in order for the wealthiest people in the country to continue enjoying the hearty Bush tax cuts that created the enormous deficit in the first place, and that those not wealthy must now be denied health care in order to shoulder the burden.

In actual fact, this “rebellion” that threatens to ultimately topple government services altogether if it does not get its way, may, in the end, prove itself instead “liberating” to its adversaries (at least for the moment) by virtue of its flat-out senselessness and genuine threat of damage to the very institution – namely, American solvency – that it claims to be so passionately trying to defend, presently by means of hobbling its most essential machinery, namely, the federal government.

After all, where an immalleable unwillingness to consider the possibility is very real that someone knowingly foolish is making the decisions, only an idiot would ever underestimate the “magnitude” of action perhaps yet to be imagined but nonetheless certain to someday actually unfold, regardless of how utterly senseless that action might be.

Under the guise of “rescuing” the country from a deficit that is too high, these conservative rebels propose that we continue remaining one of the few countries denying universal health care to its citizens, rather than simply increase taxes slightly on the wealthiest Americans, taxes which were reduced under the conservative watch – wholly and exclusively their watch and that of no others, under which also and most significantly, the bulk of this deficit was created, again, wholly and exclusively, their watch. Now, in order to protect the wealthiest Americans from having to enrich themselves at a slightly less vigorous rate, uninsured American must sacrifice their health, some

with their very lives, by remaining uninsured.

I know of no other developed country aside from the United States that does not have universal health care for all of its citizens. Senator Cruz’s country of birth to the north sensibly has it. To the south, I am proud to say that over the period of about a decade (during the eighties) this author found himself far more often in the country of Mexico, than here in this. Whenever I was there, I enjoyed the benefits of their national public health care system, which kept me healthy, and most notably, did so in a very efficient manner, I believe in large part because there was so little paper work in a system lacking the need for it, because in countries with universal health care, the care of the patient cannot help but supercede any concerns for who pays, there being no insurance billing whatsoever involved. (Medical billing is a huge industry unto itself in this country, yet effectively nonexistent in others.)

But how could one know of the advantages of such a system having never lived in any other country, as anyone opposing such a fundamental civility certainly cannot have ever actually lived in one, or else they would surely not oppose such an essential fundamental human need as that of health care, that is, with the notable exception of Senator Cruz.

As we enter the new year, rebels will again have another chance to freeze the government, only this time, having alienated a good deal of the rest of the country from their senseless logic, they will have little to lose and even less little motivation keeping them from alienating yet more voters than they already have. Let us hope that these voters that they alienate actually do vote, and vote as they sensibly should, in light of this recent uprising by dying, right wing confederates.

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HAPPY

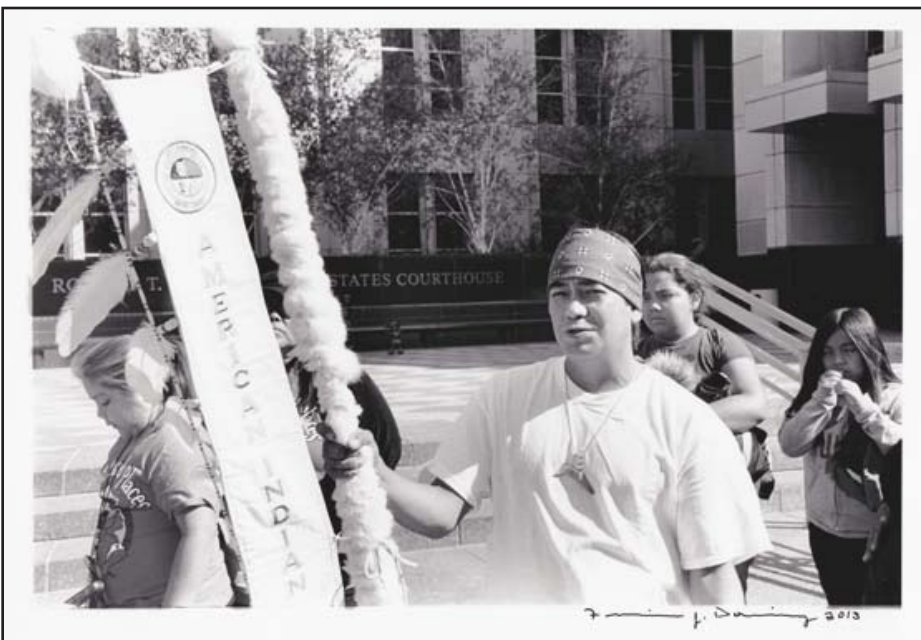


HOLIDAYS

PIT RIVER TRIBE PROTESTS FRACKING ON MEDICINE LAKE

By Francisco J. Dominguez

On October 9, 2013 members of the Pit River Tribe of Northern California along with the Mt. Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center protested at the Robert Matsui Federal Court House in Sacramento.



Francisco J Dominguez 2013 Copyright

Mickey Gillam of the Pit River Tribe speaks at the Federal Courthouse in Sacramento on October 9, 2013

The people were protesting to stop the proposed Geothermal Fracking at the Medicine Lake, a pristine volcanic area 30 miles east of Mount Shasta. Medicine Lake is a sacred area for the Pit River and all Indigenous tribes of the Americas. The proposed geothermal fracking would devastate public land as well as contaminate a pristine aquifer that ultimately ends up as drinking water in the Sacramento River.

Fracking is process of high-pressure shale oil drilling 8,000 feet deep into the earth in which sand, chemicals and on average 2 to 8 million gallons of water per oil well is injected into the earth to extract natural gas from rocks. After a well is fracked 10 times or more, it is left as a contamination site that is hazardous to human and animal life because the site pollutes the air, water and land of the area.

Calpine Corporation, a Fortune 500 power company, has proposed 5 more geothermal power plants to go along with 2 existing Bureau of Land Management leases. This past July 30, the U.S. District Court sided with the BLM and Calpine Corp. in finding environmentalist and Indigenous peoples did not have standing to challenge Calpine Corp.'s lease renewals.

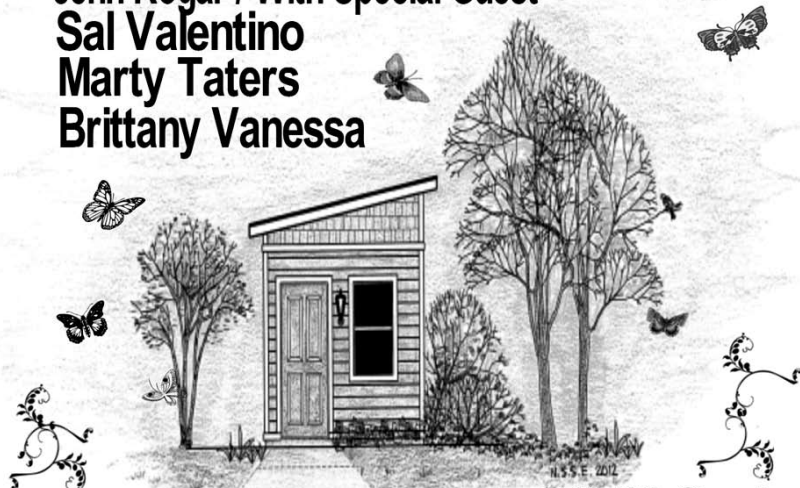
The issue of protecting our Sacred Mother Earth and Medicine Lake is not specific to Indigenous peoples; geothermal fracking affects all living things as all of life is biologically connected.

For more information, see: www.mountshataecology.org

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HOMELESS RESOURCES**Night Shelters**

Salvation Army: 12th and North B St. 30 days per year: Dormitory living, C&S: Dinner, breakfast clothing for residents: Men/ Women: Sign-up SA patio weekdays at 1PM. 442-0331

St. Johnis Shelter: Women and Children. 4410 Power Inn Rd. Call between 10am & 3pm for space availability. 453-1482

Union Gospel Mission: 400 Bannon St. Beds for Men Only, sign up 6:30pm at mission, Newcomers/Referrals have priority. 7:30pm Chapel Service with meal afterwards, 6am breakfast for residents. Showers / shaves 9-11am & 1-2:45pm. open to all homeless men: 447-3268

Next Move (formerly SAEHC) 24 hr Family Shelter; Families, single adults with children who have no other resource: Women's Refuge; single women, no children: Call for screening/space availability 455-2160

Day Shelters

Friendship Park: 12th St. & North C: Weekdays 7am - 2:30pm: open to anyone: Many services

Meals

Union Gospel Mission: 400 Bannon St.: 7 days, Evening meal, Men/Women: Church service 7:00pm required, dinner following 8:30-9:15pm. Sunday 11am service, lunch at noon. 447-3268

Loaves & Fishes: 1321 No. C St.: Lunch every day 11:30am-1pm. Tickets available 7 am- 12:30 pm at Friendship Park weekdays: at 8 am on Saturday and 10am on Sundays .

Women's Civic Improvement Center: Seniors Only: 3555 3rd Ave. 11:30-12:30 lunch M-F 452-2866

Helping Hands: 3526 5th Ave. Sundays, 8-11 breakfast, sack lunch, clothing

Food-not-Bombs: serves free food in Cesar Chavez Plaza, 9th & J St., every Sunday 1:30 pm. All Welcome.

Foundation of Faith Ministries 2721 Dawes St. Rancho Cordova. Every 4th Sat. 3-5 pm All Welcome.

Glory Bound Street Ministry 4527 Parker Ave. Sundays; breakfast 11:30 am after 10 am church service; dinner 6:30 pm after 5 pm church service: Fridays; dinner 7 pm after 6 pm church service. Must attend services. 452-7078

Women & Children

Maryhouse: 1321 No. C St. suite 32: Breakfast for Women and children 8am-9am. Day shelter 8am-3pm weekdays for women and families.

Wellspring 3414 4th St.: T&Th full breakfast: M-W-F continental breakfast for women and children. 454-9688

see Wind in Youth Services for young adults

Free Clothing

Sacramento Food Bank: 3333 3rd Ave. (at Broadway) 10am-2pm Mon - Fri. 456-1980

Union Gospel Mission: 400 Bannon St. Men: M-Sat 9-11am or 1-2:45pm: Women and Children: Wed. only. Call for appointment to go in at 11am, 1 or 1:30pm, or attend Bible study at 9:15am and get clothing at 10am 447-3268

Glory Bound Street Ministry 4527 Parker Ave. Clothes Closet, Sundays 11:30 am all welcome. 452-7078

Medical

Mercy Clinic: For homeless adults, children: Nurse's office in Friendship park 7:30am & 12:30pm. 446-3345

Sacramento Dental Clinic: 4600 Broadway (Primary Care Bldg) Walk-ins 8 am - 12:30 pm 874-8300

Mental Health

Guest House, 1400 N. A St.: Homeless Mental Health Clinic, M,W,Th,Fri., 8-11:30am Tues 8-11:30am only. Mental Health evaluation, medication if needed. Housing referrals for mentally ill, GA refs, SSI aps, refs to A & D counseling: 443-6972

TLCS Intake Offices: 1400 N. A St. Bldg. A; Adults 18 yrs & up; Referrals to transitional living programs, independent living, mental health support services; SSI/SSDI application assistance; Walk-ins 8-11am M-F 440-1500

Genesis: Professional Counseling for life problems. Referrals. 401 12th St. (DeLaney Center). 699-1536

Youth Services

Diogenes: youth 16-21 yrs old. Hot Line call 1-800-339-7177

Wind Youth Center: 701 Dixianne Ave. Serves youth ages 12-20. Breakfast and Lunch; Clothing; Laundry and Showers; Case Management. Drop-in Hours: M-F from 8:00am to 4:30pm and Sat 10am to 2pm. 443-8333

Crisis Intervention

WEAVE: Services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children. Referrals to court mandated battery intervention programs, Safe house, 24 hr. crisis line: 920-2952

AIDS / HIV

AIDS Housing Alliance provides residential care, transitional housing & permanent housing services to homeless persons living with aids. 329-1093 weekdays.

CARES (Center for AIDS Research, Education and Service): 1500 21st ST. Serves people with HIV and AIDS. Medical care, mental health, case mgmt, health ed and regional prevention/ed classes. 443-3299

Breaking Barriers: Homeless Outreach Program provides direct services to people living with AIDS and HIV. Transportation to social services, medical appointments, job interviews, and housing assistance. 447-2437

Harm Reduction Services: 40001 12 Ave.; High risk outreach; HIV, Hep-C testing; case management for HIV; free medical clinic, needle exchange. 456-4849

Alternative Test Site: Free anonymous testing, Wed /Thurs. Call for appt. 874-7720.

Legal Aid

Disability Rights, CA: Free legal services for people with disabilities. Call for appt. toll free: TTY:(800)776-5746

Tommy Clinkenbeard Legal Clinic: 401 12th St. (DeLaney Center) Free legal assistance and advocacy for problems related to homelessness. 446-0368

Legal Services of Northern California, Inc: 515 12th St. (at E ST.) M-F 8:30am-12pm, 1pm-5pm. Problems with public benefits, landlord / tenant, divorce clinic. Call for appt. 551-2150

Welfare Rights: 1901 Alhambra Blvd. (2nd floor) M-F 9am-5pm: AFDC, Food Stamps, Workfare and Medical rep at hearings. 736-0616

Social Security Disability / SSI Lawyer Free Consultation (916) 658-1880

**About SHA**

The Sacramento Housing Alliance is a network of concerned citizens who promote decent affordable housing for low income households and homeless people through advocacy and participation in public discourse.

For more info, or if you would like to participate, please call:

(916) 455-4900

<http://sachousingalliance.org>

1800 21st Street Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95811

*The SHA does not itself
provide or manage housing.*

Veterans

VA Outreach: 1-800-827-1000

Homeless VA Coordinator:(916) 364-6547

Mather VA Social Works: help getting DD-214, any vet. (916) 843-7064

Miscellaneous

Francis House Center: 1422 C St. 9:00-noon walk-in - direct services resource counseling, vouchers for IDs, Dvr Licenses, Birth Certs, Transp Assistance; noon-3:00 - appts for in-depth resource counseling; by appt: Senior/Disability/Verteranis advocacy, notary service. Job Development Center open 9am-3pm MTU-W-F and noon-3pm Th. Motel vouchers for qualified families. 443-2646

Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services: 3333 3rd Ave. (south of Broadway) Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 10am-1:30pm, and Wed 4pm-7pm. 456-1980.

Social Services: 28th & R ST. M-F 7:30am-5pm. Call for asst. 874-2072

Employment Development Department (EDD): 2901 50th St. (at Broadway) M-F 8am-5pm. Unemployment, job services. 227-0300

Medi-Cal: 1-800-773-6467, 1-888-747-1222. Or see DHA eligibility workers 1725 28th St. 916-874-2256

Social Security Office: 8581 Folsom Blvd (East of College Greens Lite-rail stop) M-F 9am-4:30pm 381-9410: Natl line 1-800-772-1213

211 Sacramento

Dial 211
for tele-info & referral service

Califorina Youth Crisis Line:
1-800-843-5200

Health Rights Hotline:
551-2100

Welcome to Homeward:

Please help us make a difference!



Homeward Street Journal has been publishing since 1997 as a non-profit project of the Sacramento Homeless Organizing

Committee, which is a member of the Sacramento Housing Alliance. The paper's mission is to alleviate miscommunication between communities by educating the public about housing and poverty issues, and by giving homeless people a voice in the public forum. Homeward also informs homeless persons of shelter and occupational assistance, and acts as a creative self-help opportunity for those individuals who wish to participate.

The opinions expressed in Homeward are those of the authors, and not necessarily the Sacramento Housing Alliance or SHOC or Homeward.

Submissions and Editorial Policy

We welcome any participation or contributions: Articles, poems and other writing can be submitted at our office in Friendship Park, or mailed to the address below.

All writing submitted for publication will be edited as necessary, with due respect for the author's intent. The editors will attempt to consult with an author if changes are necessary, however, the paper will go to print with the story as edited if the author is unavailable.

All Letters to the Editor must be signed to be published. If the writer wishes to remain anonymous s/he should so state, but the letter must still be signed.

Poetry and graphics will not be edited, either the paper will publish the submission or not.

In submitting articles to the paper, authors give their permission to print their submissions in accordance with the above stipulations, as well as possible reprinting in NASNA member papers, with due byline. Any requests for stories outside the above three will be referred to the author.

Subscriptions are available with a \$20 contribution. Make checks out to SHOC (Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee).

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