



A Voice for the Sacramento Area Homeless Community Since 1997

# HOMeward

## Street Journal

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## Breaking Down Rent Control Plans

*The rent is so damned high, there's action on rent control at every level of government. We break it down and explain the various plans to stop runaway rent increases.*

By Eliot Stevenson,  
Sacramento Tenants Union

You've probably seen it splashed across your Facebook timeline, or on the nightly local news, those ever contentious words: RENT CONTROL. Here in the Golden State, fewer and fewer can afford to keep a roof over their head, and the problem is only getting worse.

The YIMBY contingent will talk

themselves blue in the face telling you — the rent burdened tenant — that the answer is to build more housing. Never mind that experts now believe the state may not hit its 2025 housing goals until at least 2050. In the meantime, homelessness will continue to skyrocket and already rent burdened tenants — especially tenants of color — will continue to be chased from their homes by the ever rising tide of rent. It all seems fairly hopeless, but there is a fix.

Let us state this clearly for the Austrian economists in the back:

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"Some chill dudes in 1950s New York thought the rent was already hella high. From the International Ladies Garment Workers Union Photographs collection."

## It's No Vacation

*The motel cycle is easy to fall into but hard to leave.. When shelters are full, cheap motels act as a quick alternative. But it is far from affordable.*

By Nathan Poppe

Delaine sits on a motel bed.

Near her hangs a black and white photograph of a fountain surrounded by a cityscape. It's everything this motel isn't. The picture feels serene and inviting — with enough room for a huge crowd. Delaine says she feels stuck in this Oklahoma City motel. Her two teenage kids sit quietly on an adjacent bed. They aren't saying it aloud, but their eyes communicate the same feeling.

"This is definitely not a vacation," Delaine said. "This is not a life I would want anyone to live."

The Curbside Chronicle vendor is caught in the motel cycle. Her family is one of many in Oklahoma who only make enough money during the day to afford securing a room one night at a time. It's simple to subscribe to this daily routine, especially for families. When shelters are full, cheap motels act as a quick alternative. But it is far

from affordable.

What started as a temporary solution — meant to last a few days — has stretched into months. Delaine and her kids have been around the same motels since March. However, their struggles began long before this spring.

In 2014, Delaine began battling breast cancer. The stateside Army veteran combated the disease for four years, finally entering remission in December. Even with health insurance, Delaine's out-of-pocket expenses totaled nearly \$900 a month and devastated her bank account. Delaine and her kids were evicted, losing a house and two cars. She tried to get a bank loan to help cover these costs, but her credit score is shot.

The biggest hurdle for Delaine remains getting ahead financially. Motel management understands Delaine's situation. They adjusted her rate into a makeshift rent. Delaine owes exactly \$34.24 a day, which adds up to roughly \$240 a week. By the end of the month, she'll spend close to \$1,000 on a single motel room. That sum could easily afford a decent apartment and cover



Delaine visits her motel neighbors who offer her a truck to sleep in if she can't cover rent at the motel. Both families are relying on a motel room for shelter. Photo by Nathan Poppe

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# Rent Control Plans

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rent control is not a development scheme, it is an effective policy meant to curb the displacement of rent burdened tenants. If you judge rent control by how many units of housing it produces, you will conclude it is a failure. But this is like judging speed limits by how many roads they produce, it is completely nonsensical.

Judge rent control on its merits as an anti-displacement measure, and it suddenly becomes a vital tool in the fight to build stable communities. So vital, in fact, that right now there are no less than 4 rent control efforts underway that could impact us Sacramentans. But beware: not all rent control is made equal. Below we break down the good, the bad, and the ugly in the fight for this essential tenant right.

### 2020 Sacramento Community Stabilization and Fair Rent Charter Amendment: The Gold Standard

This is by far the strongest and most foolproof rent control measure available to the denizens of the City of Trees. If passed, this Charter Amendment would cap rent increases at the Consumer Price Index (CPI) —with a minimum increase of 2% and a cap set at 5%. If you are paying \$1200 for a 1 bedroom in midtown, in the worst case you rent would go up \$60 per month (or \$720 per year).

In addition, it would provide tenants with just cause eviction. What is just cause, you ask? Well, it would limit the reasons for which your landlord could boot you into the street, meaning more people would

remain housed. As it is now, your landlord can kick you out of your apartment for virtually any reason and at any time — leaving tenants with essentially no legal recourse. Under this Charter Amendment, tenants would stay in their homes unless they did something for which a landlord had the explicit legal right to evict. In some cases, if a landlord evicted you for renovations or so that they or a relative could occupy your unit, the landlord would be required to compensate you 1 month’s rent as relocation assistance. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Charter Amendment would establish a democratically elected rent board. A rent board would be made up of citizens just like you, and would be tasked with mediating tenant/landlord disputes, setting the yearly rent increase rate, and judging landlord appeals for excess rental rate increases. The rent board would act as a crucial buffer between landlords and their allies in City Hall, and the tenants who otherwise could not afford to defend themselves against landlord abuse.

Oh, and all of this would go into effect on DAY 1! Barring any shenanigans by Darrell Steinberg, Steve Hansen, and the California Apartment Association, you will be seeing this Charter Amendment on the March 2020 ballot, and we strongly encourage you to vote for it!

### City of Sacramento Anti-Rent Gouging Ordinance: The “Compromise”

On August 13, the City Council, with the support of

some labor unions and local nonprofits, passed what it is calling the Tenant Protection and Relief Act (the Act), which it says is meant “to address rent gouging.” In order to do this, the Act sets the annual rental rate increase at CPI plus 6%, with a cap of 10%, meaning Sacramento renters would pay 6% more than they would under the Charter Amendment. For our hypothetical \$1200 1 bedroom that would mean an extra \$120 per month (or \$1440 per year) donated to your landlord for the same exact unit. It’s worth noting that according to RENT Cafe, rent in Sacramento increased an average of 5.8% in 2018. During that year, homelessness increased by 19%, demonstrating that even modest rental price increases can have a devastating impact.

The Act also provides for similar just cause eviction protections, and for those who are already in a lease, congratulations! You’re already covered, meaning your landlord can no longer toss you in the gutter because they don’t like the smell of your cooking. However, if you sign a new lease, just cause would not kick in for a year, meaning landlords would have up to 364 days to evict you with no justification. We fear this will actually incentivize landlords to evict people more often than they otherwise would, which will only exacerbate the displacement and homelessness crisis in our city. And if you are evicted, you receive \$0 in relocation assistance.

Finally, the Act will eventually establish an office within City Hall, staffed by city employees, who will mediate tenant/landlord disputes, set rental rate increases, and administer

the Act. The only problem: City Hall is drenched with anti-tenant money, and there is no reason to think that the bureaucrats tasked with mediating between powerful landlords and their rent burdened tenants will not be similarly corrupted in such a landlord friendly environment.

All of this would last for 5 years, at which point the city would need to extend the Act or pass another one. Better than nothing, we suppose.

### Assembly Bill 1482: A Modest Proposal

AB 1482 (the Bill) is essentially a watered-down version of the Act. Firstly, the Bill makes clear that it is superseded by more stringent local rent control ordinances. Therefore, Sacramento tenants need not worry about AB 1482 for the time being. For other cities without rent control, though, rental rate increases would be limited to CPI + 7%, also with a cap of 10%. Under the Bill, an imaginary renter in Fresno paying \$1000 for a 1 bedroom would pour an extra \$100 down the landlord drain every month (or \$1200 per year).

Secondly, the Bill would exempt from rent control all housing built within the last 10 years (to cover developers in the unlikely event Costa-Hawkins is repealed), some affordable housing, and some dorms (student housing is exorbitantly expensive in California).

Like with the Act, just cause would kick in after 12 months, leaving tenants vulnerable to eviction for 364 days. Also, no rent board would be formed, nor would an office of bureaucrats be hired to mediate tenant/landlord disputes, making the Bill even weaker than the Act. On the other hand, the Bill would require landlords to compensate tenants for moving expenses if they were evicted for some of the specified “just causes.”

Sadly, though, all of this would come to an end after only 3 years, after which tenants could yet again be out in the cold.

|  | 2020 Sacramento Community Stabilization and Fair Rent Charter Admendment | City of Sacramento Anti-Rent Gouging Ordinance    | AB 1482 Tenancy: Rent Caps  |
|--|--|---|---|
| Annual allowable increase for rent controlled units      | CPI (minimum of 2%) Capped at 5%   | 6%+CPI (7.8% as of July 2019) Capped at 10%       | 7%+CPI (8.8% as of July 2019) Capped at 10%   |
| Not covered by rent control                              | Apartments built after 1995* single family homes*                        | Apartments built after 1995* single family homes* | Housing built within the last 10 years, some affordable housing, some dorms, apartments built after 1995*, single family homes* |
| Just cause protections go into effect?                   | Immediately for all tenants  | After 12 months of tenancy                        | After 12 months of tenancy  |
| Relocation assistance for no-fault just-cause evictions? | Yes  | No  | Yes   |
| Elected rent board to mediate disputes?                  | Yes  | No  | No  |
| Duration   | Indefinite   | 5 years   | 3 years   |

\*These exemptions are due to the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act, which makes enacting rent control for any housing built after 1995 and all single family homes illegal.



# The Financialization of Housing And Homelessness

By Cathleen Williams

There was once a man who built an imaginary house under a freeway in L.A. He spoke no English. He slept in a bed as white and pure as a cloud -- one time we drove past and saw his surprisingly large feet sticking out from beneath the airy comforter. A table with two chairs, a red bucket and a bureau, made a make-believe kitchen; when he opened a drawer to show me, I could see that useful things were stored in the bureau, like a coiled rope, a tool, a stray fork.

Was he sane? All I can say is that he had mastered the art of being unhoused: But maybe not. The floods of winter washed him and his residence away, and he was never seen again.

Recently, I was walking the American River Bike Trail and met a woman with a broom outside her tent. We spoke. "I'm a veteran. I might get some housing in the fall, they told me to come to the *Stand Down* and stay all day. You never know," she said wistfully. Meanwhile she tended the wash hanging from a line between two trees, and swept the spotless earth.

Against this tapestry of relentless and resourceful humanity, California's Governor Newsom recently announced that the 2019-20 state budget would include a grant to cities and counties of \$650 million for emergency shelters and "navigation centers" to "guide homeless people to services."

There was the usual chorus of enthusiastic Democrats supporting this move. But what does this investment in emergency shelters really mean for the hundreds of thousands -- perhaps millions -- who are without secure housing in our state? The PIT (Point In Time) count this past January revealed that 45,000 people were living outdoors in L.A. on the day of the count -- 75% of the almost 60,000 counted. This number is *in addition* to the 20,000 unhoused people the City claims were placed in "some form" of housing last year.

These numbers -- mind-blowing as they are -- represent an undercount. According to "*Don't Count On It: How the HUD Point In Time Count Underestimates the Homeless Crisis In America*" at nichp.org (2017), "the annual number of homeless individuals is 2.5 to 10.2 times greater than can be obtained using a point in time count. Moreover, according to the report, "the definition of homelessness that HUD uses is narrow and does not measure the real crisis." For example, it doesn't count people on the edge of homelessness, those who are doubled up -- living on couches or in garages -- and it doesn't count jail (or prison) inmates. Houston, Texas conducted an "expanded" PIT count, which included jails, and found that the number of homeless increased by 57%.

What are the forces that are driving homelessness? What does it mean to prioritize funding of "emergency" shelter in light of this man made disaster? In L.A., more than 700,000 people live one paycheck away from homelessness, according to LACAN, the militant organization of unhoused people based in L.A.'s Skid Row. "Gentrification" and "unaffordable" rents, like tremors shaking our neighborhoods, are only the most visible signs of a deeper shift that is evicting our vulnerable multi-ethnic populations, appropriating our neighborhoods, and buying up our homes to rent to the highest bidder. Like an avalanche plunging down the mountainside, obliterating all in its path, this disaster is descending on millions of people, here in California and across the globe.

It's called the "financialization" of housing.

"Around the world, more and more money is being invested in real estate, the business of building, buying, and renting land and property... Global real estate is now worth \$217 trillion... it makes up 60 percent of the world's wealth, and the vast majority of that wealth

-- roughly 75 per cent -- is in housing." Stein, Samuel, *Capital City: Gentrification and the Real Estate State*, Verso (2019) [E-book] p. 8

This trend is accompanied by the decline of investment in manufacturing and production. The epochal economic revolution of the computer age -- including automation and the global search for ever cheaper labor -- has reduced the profit rate (or return) on investment in the "once dynamic" manufacturing sectors of the economy, even as these changes have also lowered wages and eliminated jobs. (*Capital City*, p. 8.) Instead of being invested in production, the vast wealth held by the "one percent" is flowing into real estate:

"...Homes are changing hands at a rapid rate, but homeownership is at a fifty year low. In 2016, a record 37 percent of home sales were made to absentee investors... most of them were banks, hedge funds, and private equity firms like Blackstone -- now the world's largest landlord.

"As renting rises, so do rents... Around the country, rent burdens [especially] in Black neighborhoods average 44 per cent; in Latino neighborhoods it's 48 percent. In New York City, almost *two million* people pass most of their income to landlords.

"The force behind these trends is the growing centrality of urban real estate to capital's global growth strategy. Through this process, the price of land becomes a central economic determinant and a dominant political issue. The clunky term "gentrification" becomes a household word and displacement an everyday fact of life. Housing becomes a globally traded financial asset... Government, particularly at the municipal level becomes increasingly obsessed with raising property values and distributing wealth upward through land and rents. Real estate developer Donald Trump becomes first a celebrity and ultimately a president." *Capital*

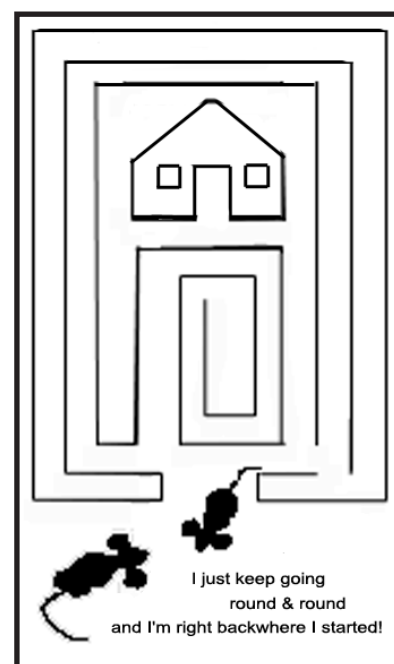
*City*, p.10.

The \$650 million Newsom put in the California budget for "emergency shelters" and "navigation" looks very different against this background of global, epochal capital flows into real estate. The "beds" and "services" envisioned by Newsom will not lessen the tides of homelessness sweeping over our cities; indeed, it will divert funds from low income housing construction. The real purpose of the money, as critics have charged, is to *hide* the people who are believed to be lowering property values because they display their suffering and destitution on the doorstep of new tech plazas and luxury condos. ("California Is Desperately Trying to Hide Homeless People, Critics Say," *VICE* 7/31/19.)

Perhaps the most grotesque piece of Newsom's plan to prioritize emergency shelters is Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg's suggestion that people without housing should be *compelled* to live in them. The newly created taskforce created at the state level, which is headed by Mayor Steinberg and L.A. County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, has proposed to "legally obligate" homeless people to accept a shelter bed if offered.

"Asked about the concerns raised by civil rights groups,

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It's No Vacation continued from page 1

bills. But without the ability to save money for a deposit or build rental history, she remains stuck.

Delaine isn't alone. There is no real count as to how many people in OKC are stuck in this same cycle, but from our experience and contacts, there are easily hundreds of people just like Delaine and her family.

Most mornings, Delaine buys a dozen issues of Curbside, which she aims to sell to cover another night in the room. If she's a couple of bucks short, the motel manager might let it slide. A few times, Delaine has reluctantly called her father in Tulsa to ask for money. Their relationship is tense because of a falling out. These small graces — as well meaning as they seem — only pull her deeper into the cycle. She often worries she might lose her reduced rate if other guests find out about it.

There's an uneasy balance to staying somewhere not meant for long-term living. Rooms feel cramped even when they're empty. Three people to a room feels crowded and five feels like a congregation. Without much privacy, it makes brushing your teeth or doing homework a communal experience.

Even simple pleasures are more difficult in the motel, and Delaine's children are limited on options for fun. Her son will often kick a soccer ball throughout the parking lot until the asphalt turns it black. Delaine isn't comfortable with him being out of sight.

"We're human, so suffering is inevitable," Delaine said. "But misery is optional. We don't have to be miserable in

life. I'm happy. I really am."

Still, this is a struggle.

"My daughter just turned 15, and my son is 13. They need their own space," she said. "They need their own privacy. One thing that tore me up real bad is her birthday was in May, and I still haven't been able to get her anything."

Delaine worries about the area's safety and having to keep her kids cooped up in the motel. Both are home-schooled through Epic Charter Schools. They're not allowed to open the door for anyone unless Delaine's around. Patrol cars make frequent rounds in the motel parking lot, but that's not a confidence booster. It's a reminder that there has to be a better option, something more secure.

Delaine desperately wants a house again so everyone can have their own bedroom. No bugs. No dogs barking through the night. Quiet neighbors. But first, she just wants to move forward.

"I have to push through this until God's ready for us to take the next step," Delaine said.

Sadly, that doesn't always lead down a straightforward path. In June, Delaine and her family met more challenges when their motel rate nearly doubled. Several nights, Delaine had to decide between feeding her children or covering rent.

A neighbor named Daneille — who lives in a nearby motel — offered up her vehicle as a temporary shelter. Delaine continued working and her family was soon back in the

same motel room they'd just left.

The cycle, unbroken.

**EDITOR NOTE:** Since this interview, The Curbside Chronicle has connected Delaine and her family to a case manager who's working with them to secure stable housing. It's a tough cycle to beat, but with help, it can be broken.

Courtesy of The Curbside Chronicle / INSP.ngo



Delaine and her son sit inside their motel room. The carpet throughout much of the room is in disrepair. For a time, Delaine received a reduced rate for her room but it was revoked. Photo by Nathan Poppe

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Rental Affordability Act: Waiting in the Wings

This one did not make our comparison chart because it is still in the signature collection phase, though canvassers did recently surpass 25% of the signatures needed to qualify the act for a statewide ballot.

The Rental Affordability Act (RAA) addresses a slightly different problem. In cities where rent control exists, the amount a landlord can charge each month is restricted. However, once a tenant leaves a unit, the rental price can "float" to the market rate, essentially turning an affordable unit into an unaffordable one, displacing already rent burdened tenants and those on a fixed income.

The RAA would limit the amount a landlord can increase the rent on a unit after a tenant moves out to 15% over the course of 3 years, plus whatever the local rent control rates allow. This will help keep units vacated by tenants more affordable, and will reduce the incentive for landlords to harass or otherwise target tenants in an effort to get them to "self-evict." This rent increase limitation would, however, only apply to units built at least 15 years ago.

Being a statewide measure, the RAA — like the Bill above — does not create a rent board to protect tenants from landlords and their well-paid attorneys, nor does it afford tenants any just cause or relocation assistance benefits.

Of course, there are risks associated with running a statewide rent control initiative. If you thought winning tenant rights was difficult at the city level, imagine how well-funded the opposition is at the state level. Who can forget the abysmal defeat of Prop 10 after opponents spent nearly \$75 million on a statewide smear campaign? All hope is not lost, though. Recent polling suggests that the RAA is highly popular among likely voters, so perhaps things are looking up for tenant rights in California.

The Sacramento Tenants Union, in coalition with ACCE, Sacramento DSA SEIU 1021, and Tenants Together, will be campaigning for the Sacramento Community Stabilization and Fair Rent Charter Amendment through the March 2020 Primary Election, and we cannot stress enough how powerful a tool it will be in the fight for real, lasting tenant rights in the Capital City. We encourage you to join the fight for tenant rights by talking with your neighbors, organizing meetings to discuss issues with property management, speaking to your landlord with one voice, and join your local tenants union!

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As soon as the land of any country has all become private property, the landlords, like all other men, love to reap where they never sowed, and demand a rent even for its natural produce.  
—Adam Smith

A Special Thanks to Our Homeward Underwriters:

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Safe Ground Sacramento  
Mercy Pedalers



# — The Financialization of Housing

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Steinberg's spokesperson said a federal court settlement in Orange County shows local governments have the right to enforce anti-camping laws. The deal, which was reached last week, creates standards of care for county-funded shelters and service programs. It also gives the Orange County Sheriff's Department a mechanism to enforce anti-camping and anti-loitering laws, according to The Orange County Register. ("Can California Force Homeless People Into Shelters? Civil Rights Groups Call Plan Legally Questionable" Capital Public Radio (7/30/19))

In other words, if you can criminalize and arrest people for living outside, why can't you then incarcerate them in a shelter? Of course, the idea that the state can threaten confinement or force compliance in this way violates every guarantee of personal liberty in the Constitution. As Abre Conner, staff attorney at the ACLU Foundation of Northern California, stated, "... further criminalizing unhoused people who often find shelters inaccessible, dangerous, discriminatory, or worse is not the answer."

Of course, unhoused people *do* have answers, as a matter of fact, to the social destruction and unspeakable hardship brought on by the financialization of housing. They are the experts, and yet not one representative of a homeless organization — and there are many — serves on the statewide task force. For an example of these solutions, see the proposals of Oakland's Green Team,

published here. (See Box)

In sum, Newsom's splashy announcement of multi-million dollar "emergency" shelters — ironically hailed as a moral imperative by Darrell Steinberg at the very time he proposed forcing houseless people into such shelters — shows with brutal frankness, that government has abandoned even the promise of ending homelessness. According to the L.A. Times report on L.A.'s PIT count, "L.A. city and county officials have backed off their one-time mantra of 'ending homelessness'..." (6/4/19.)

The "real estate state" is caught up in its global growth strategy. This state has little patience or concern for the people who are being driven out of the neighborhoods where they used to live. After all, California has more prisons and jails than any place of comparable size or population in the world, and the state spends more than 10% of its budget -- \$12 billion a year — on prisons. Building jails — called shelters — for the stubborn multitudes who continue to survive on the street must seem like a logical step to the real estate state. It's one we must fight as we call for the only real solution — housing as a human and legal right for all.

The interest of the landlord is always opposed to the interests of every other class in the community.

—David Ricardo — 1817 *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation.*

## OAKLAND GREEN TEAM'S POLICY PROPOSALS TO HOUSE THE HOMELESS TOMORROW

- Recognize the homeless camps as a contributing part of the Oakland community. Local government should support, protect and fund these camps, just as they fund other community resources across the city.
- The City should use Eminent Domain to seize chronically tax delinquent and vacant properties, those that have been abandoned or avoiding taxes for years, and make them available for the homeless. By some official estimates Oakland has 5,000 or more such properties.
- The City should employ the homeless to fix such properties, and employ this population in creating stable housing and stable communities. In addition, the City is responsible to build housing for the homeless.
- Establish a moratorium on homeless programs run by non-profits. These should be reconfigured and audited with total transparency. These programs should be led and run by the homeless themselves. All too often non-profits use the bulk of funding for salaries and management with little left over to help the homeless. Providing a health kit and a bag lunch is simply not acceptable. Use all this money for the homeless!
- End programs that are designed simply to "manage the poor" and segregate and criminalize the homeless.
- Local Government should prioritize programs that allow groups of homeless people to earn enough collectively for first and last month rents.

From People's Tribune, October 2018.

**This charitable event will support a very important cause and bring together some fabulous authors for a special night of readings. Featured authors are Joey Garcia, Dr. Angelo A. Williams, and Renée Moffett Thompson. Hosted by Frank Dixon Graham and Leonard Germinara!**

**Located at 1719 25th Street in the 25th & R Arts Complex.**

## A Reading for the Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee

Joey Garcia



Dr. Angelo A. Williams



Renée Moffett Thompson



**at the Sacramento Poetry Center at 7:30 pm on Monday, September 30**

# LIFE ON THE STREETS: PRONE TO LOSS

*People in extreme poverty are experts on loss, whether it be their belongings, their privacy, their dignity or anything else.*

**By Helen Hill**

*“My barn burned, now I can see the moon.” — Mizuta Masahide*

There are many levels of loss for people on the streets. There is the annoyance of sleeping bags, food and clothing ruined by rain. There is the frustration of stolen shoes, cigarettes and coats. Then there is the debilitating loss of identification, bus tickets and money. A deeper, more insidious sense of loss may take root over time; loss of dignity, family, community, health, privacy and sanity.

As with anyone, on or off the streets, loss can feel devastating and empowering, deforming and cleansing. It can feel like the last straw or a chance to begin again, an opportunity for deeper spiritual wisdom or a slap in the face.

The *Street Roots* vendor community had a lot to say about loss. With far fewer material possessions than most, and a life stripped to bare essentials, people living in extreme poverty and on the streets are, in many ways, experts on the subject of loss, and masters of resilience and courage in the face of repeated losses.

Vendor Mark Rodriguez believes homeless people know more about loss than others. He advocates letting things go gracefully, when possible.

“About loss, having things taken, I would say, let it go. Don’t hang on. Let it go,” he said.

“I kept things that meant something to me in a little heart-shaped box: stamps, keepsakes, things that were precious to me that people gave me, things nobody would consider of any value. I had to let it go. It was hard,” Mark said. “I was begging the universe, please, let me keep this, it’s mine, it’s little, I can carry it. But I had to let go of it. I just couldn’t carry it anymore. It got crunched in the trash.

“It was supposed to be freeing, but it wasn’t,” he said. “I felt I had no advocate on my side that was taking care of me. It made me feel that what was special to me wasn’t special. There’s that Zen proverb, if you love something, let it go! If it comes back, it’s yours; if it doesn’t, it wasn’t meant to be! Amen. Hallelujah!”

Mark cautions people to hang on to their ID — practical wisdom, he calls it.

“I’ve lost that twice. I was sleeping and they cut it right off my shoulder strap. Twice. I’m going today to try to get it back,” Mark said. “It’s a long process.”

Chris Drake spoke of the loss of what can be replaced versus the irreplaceable.

“Everything I own has been lost over time — clothing, furniture, everything — but it’s all replaceable,” Chris said. “The only thing I managed to keep was my dog’s collar. She died when I was 6. I kept her collar. I used to carry it on me everywhere so it was safe. Then my other dog died. I kept her collar, too. The partner I was with didn’t care about them, and they got ruined with mold.



Photo by Katy Anne on Unsplash

I had to throw them out. Those are the things that can’t be replaced. And then there’s the people that can’t be replaced, like my beautiful wife. I never want to lose her.”

David Northcutt is philosophical about loss.

“I’ve lost money, my wallet, clothes, backpacks, coats, shoes, a place to live,” he said. “It hurts really bad to lose everything. I had a bicycle I got for my birthday last year. It had a flat tire and I had it locked up; I was coming back to fix it and somebody stole it. They couldn’t have gotten much money for it.

“But I always get back double,” David said. “Whoever was trying to hurt me, they can’t hurt me anymore because I get it back double, because I treat everybody the same way, with respect. Money comes and goes; things come and go. It’s not about the things; it’s about the relationships and the spiritual relationship you have with your higher power. It’s about being there for your family and friends.

“It’s really not important to lose the things you have because you gain wisdom, knowledge and experience. Sometimes you needed to lose that thing to have what you are gaining,” he said.

Tony PrinceDeno has been on a roller coaster of loss and hope lately.

“Friday morning, some guy from Central City Concern tells me I will have an apartment by Monday,” he said. “Nothing could ruin that day for me. I was so happy. But at the end of the day, I’d lost my wallet. Not only that, I woke up and my bags were gone. When I found them, the rats had got into my bag — there were tortillas in it. And then the guy from CCC never called me on Monday. Then I had to get all my IDs

for Kay.

“They kept giving me tickets for living on the street, and then I had a hard time getting a job with all those tickets and no driver’s license,” Kay said. “They told me to go to a shelter, and I tried, but they said I wasn’t a resident, I needed a driver’s license. I went back and told the police officer I wasn’t allowed to stay in the shelter, and he said, ‘You have to move on then; you can’t stay here.’ The tickets turned into trespassing charges. I have a criminal record now. I’ve never broken the law in my life. All of a sudden I was a criminal because I was homeless.

“They won’t give me my driver’s license back until I pay all those fines,” she said. “Why should I pay fines for being homeless?”

Karen Fleming said she deeply feels the impending loss of SAFES, the Salvation Army Female Emergency Shelter on Second Avenue in downtown Portland. They recently lost their public funding.

“I am losing some friends because the Salvation Army women’s shelter is closing down,” she said. “I have a couple of friends who are in there, and they don’t know where they are moving to. They have no idea where to go.”

E. J. Lilly is a young woman who has been living in a shelter for many months. Like Karen, she is feeling the loss of SAFES.

back, Social Security card, driver’s license, birth certificate. The bank stuff is impossible until you get the rest of your IDs back. It’s been hard.”

Sometimes people lose physical parts of themselves.

“Bob, the man I’m with, he lost his fingers,” Gail Marcotte said. “He got in trouble. He was homeless. I didn’t like to see him out in the cold and hungry. I brought him in for a hot bath, gave him some food. He was doing dumpster diving, and his fingers got infected. I didn’t think the infection was that bad, but he had to go to the hospital. When I got there, I wasn’t allowed to see him. They cut off his two index fingers.”

Johnny Belknap has a practical, survival-based approach to loss.

“When someone takes your stuff, you have to change locations because that someone knows where you are and they got away with it once. Why not try it again?” he said. “Especially if it’s someone who doesn’t have anything and they have nothing to lose. You have to move locations; you have to be on guard.”

Kay Semple lost her driver’s license in Florida. Not having a driver’s license has led to a chain reaction of difficulties

“SAFES houses lots of women,” E.J. said. “There are going to be more women on the streets. Safety is not a priority obviously. Just coming here today I saw probably four women that are *aaaagh!* There were three or four women just brutalized. I don’t understand a culture and a city that doesn’t take care of women, single women. It’s scary. I love Portland and the Northwest, but I constantly think about moving to another country that cares for every life.”

E.J. continued her reflections on loss: “I lost my mother, Jupiter the dog, my kid. The man I married. My husband: he left; he did not die. A broken finger, which is my livelihood, my hands. I had to quit my job. An ejection by my father from the home where I took care of my mother until she went into hospice. That home was my shelter. I didn’t deal with homelessness until my mother passed away. As long as my mother was alive, I always had shelter.

“Loss, out of order,” she said. “Death and near death. My health and breath. Photos. Music. Space. Sleep. Safety. Innocence. Voice. Dreams.”

*Courtesy of Street Roots / INSP.ngo*



# Unsheltered, Unwell, and Unheard

*How Sacramento's Homeless Sweeps are devastating the unhoused, and what can be done to stop them.*

**By Sacramento Tenants Union**

Across the state of California, cities and counties are declaring that people without roofs have no right to rest within their jurisdictions, and are mobilizing their law enforcement resources to carry out anti-homeless agendas. City officials argue that strict policing forces homeless people off the streets and into healthier environments. Contrary to these claims, Sacramento does not have nearly enough beds to house the thousands of long-term and newly homeless living on our streets. Displacement without adequate shelter has serious public health consequences and is a cruel and ineffective way to address homelessness in a supposedly “world class” city.

Prior to local law enforcement's brutal displacement of more than 65 unhoused individuals from 5700 Stockton Boulevard on May 1, 2019, more than 125 people had been living on the publicly-owned property, which was once home to The San Juan Motel and Mobile Home Park. On November 4, 2008 the Sacramento Housing Redevelopment Agency (SHRA), requested authorization from the City to acquire the property due to blight, code violations, and due to its alignment with Stockton Blvd five year project plan. Some of the unhoused residents of the Stockton Encampment were former tenants of the Motel and Mobile Home Park, including a woman whose arm was broken by a Sheriff Deputy during their violent eviction.

Before the demolition of the San Juan property, Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) hired a third party relocation agent responsible for determining if all occupants were eligible for relocation payment. Years later, however, several of the property's former tenants remain unhoused on publicly-owned vacant land, including the resident who had her arm broken by a sheriff deputy. All this despite the fact that the SHRA currently oversees 3,144 public housing units according to an audit of SHRA.

Despite what some in the community believe, the encampment at 5700 Stockton Blvd offered safe refuge for people with no stable housing alternative. In Los Angeles, Public Health officials are now looking at homeless encampments as critical access points for an expansion of typhus prevention outreach since this population of people face increasing challenges to access hygiene facilities. Many of the encampment residents suffer from severe health

issues that were being treated by doctors making weekly visits to the site. In the three long, hot days following Sheriff and SacPD's displacement of residents, local housing advocates observed a deceased puppy, an elderly female suffering from a seizure, another resident passing out from heat stroke,



**“Sacramento County Sheriff's officers poised to evict the former residents of 5700 Stockton Blvd.”**

and a resident who disclosed she was raped.

Clearly, the policies being created and implemented by our officials are not improving quality of life. The cruelty of these move-along sweeps is plainly visible to the naked eye. And not only are these sweeps immoral, they are also illegal.

If we are to trace this crisis back in time, Sacramento's governing bodies have played a critical role in what has become a homelessness and public health crisis. In 2004, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors passed the city's first Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) ordinance, which mandated 15 percent of all new developments be affordable housing to maintain income diversity and prevent evictions and homelessness. In lieu of units, a fee could have also been collected by the city to produce these units under the direction of SHRA.

A healthy IZ ordinance has relatively few critics, and is cited as an effective way to ensure income diversity when markets are strong and rents rise. San Francisco and Los Angeles both have active IZ requirements. Smaller cities like Davis, which has the most prolific IZ standards in the state, depend on it as a tool to stabilize low income communities without tax-dollar expenditures.

However, after the financial crisis, IZ requirements were seen by some as barriers to new construction and were revoked. Naturally, the economy recovered and so did market-rate development, but Sacramento remains in an affordable housing crisis which would have likely been avoided had IZ

requirements been kept in place. The market continued to recover, and under the leadership of Mayor Kevin Johnson, the city directed millions of precious public funds into arena subsidies. These subsidies aided in downtown's transformation and increased real estate speculation, but also hurt SHRA and below market rate developers by reducing development feasibility on increasingly expensive land.

As new development increased and affordable safety nets were dismantled, homelessness began to rise at unprecedented rates. Under both the Johnson and Steinberg administrations, anti-homeless camping citations have been used to displace the unhoused as a means of appealing to callous property owners angered at having to look at people with nowhere else to go.

Indeed, to see how city leadership views homelessness, you need look no further than Sacramento's own homeless outreach “IMPACT” team, whose website is hosted on the Sacramento Police's page. And despite the ruling of *Martin v The City of Boise* — which among other things makes it unconstitutional to criminalize the unhoused for inhabiting public places unless local governments have offered adequate and accessible indoor accommodations — law enforcement agencies have continued to perform illegal sweeps and arrests at homeless

encampments like the one at 5700 Stockton Blvd.

Law enforcement, however, is neither equipped nor trained to address homelessness in an ethical or compassionate way. The tragic death of Joseph Mann at the hands of the Sacramento Police Department illustrates just how inappropriate it is for law enforcement agencies to act as the primary liaison between unhoused people and desperately needed social services. Sadly, these violent confrontations between law enforcement and the unhoused are all too common and entirely avoidable. Indeed, other cities have in place systems and protocols to ensure the homeless do not die at the hands of the police.

San Francisco's Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing is a meaningful example of how a city can step away from addressing unhoused people as criminals. Establishing a department dedicated to homelessness services and outreach offers a more effective and humane pathway to permanent housing, keeping cops out of the equation. Sacramento has some Measure U funds coming its way which would be perfectly suited to pilot such a program.

Ultimately, though, a department dedicated to serving our homeless population will not solve this crisis, and while a robust IZ requirement for all new housing construction will help, what we need to bridge the housing gap is publicly-funded social housing to provide a desperately needed product the housing market is unable to produce.

This crisis demands compassion, but more than ever, it demands action on the part of our elected leaders and community members. Every day that our newly appointed homelessness czar, City Council, and Board of Supervisors continue to use law enforcement as the nexus to address homelessness, we are sure to witness continued violence against our unhoused neighbors. Additionally, for every day we fail to implement a meaningful alternative to the boondoggle that is the “housing market,” our future as a state crippled by homelessness looks all the more grim.

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the best hamburger.  
—Mark Twain**

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# Resources List

**Night Shelters****Salvation Army:** 12th and North B St. Shelter spaces are limited, call for availability. 916-442-0331**St. John's Shelter:** Women and Children. 4410 Power Inn Rd. Call between 10am & 3pm for space availability. 916-453-1482**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: 916-447-3268**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. 916-455-2160**Volunteers of America Family Shelter:** Adults w/children only. Apply Tues.-Thurs. 1-3 pm 1490 Blding B, N. "A" St. 916-443-4688**Day Shelters****Friendship Park:** Between 12th St. & Ahern on 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. 916-447-3268**Loaves & Fishes:** 1321 N. '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 916-452-2866**Food-not-Bombs:** serves free food in Cesear 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. 916-452-7078**Safe Haven Calvary Christian Center:** 1300 North C St. 8 am Sun, Coffee, Women's clothing, Service 9am: Wed. 6 pm bible study.**Women & Children****Maryhouse:** 1321 N. '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. 916-454-9688**Youth Services****Wind Youth Services:** Drop-In Center for youth (ages 12-24) experiencing homelessness: 1722 J Street, M-F 9am-6pm, S-S 10am-2pm: Emergency shelter for ages 12-17, call **1-800-339-7177**: Emergency shelter for ages 18-24, call **916-561-4900**. Services also include: street outreach, case management, mental health**Free Clothing****Sacramento Food Bank:** 3333 3rd Ave. (at Broadway) 10am-2pm Mon - Fri. 916-456-1980**Union Gospel Mission:** 400 Bannon St. Men: M-Sat 9-11am or 1-2:45pm: Women and Children: Thurs. 9 am signup, 9:30-10am bible study, 10 am - 12 pm shop. 916-447-3268**Glory Bound Street Ministry** 4527 Parker Ave. Clothes Closet, Sundays 11:30 am all welcome. 916-452-7078**Medical****Mercy Clinic:** For homeless adults, children: 1300 block of N. 'C' Street next to fire station. 916-446-3345**Sacramento Dental Clinic:** 4600 Broadway (Primary Care Blding) Walk-ins 8 am - 12:30 pm 916-874-8300**Mental Health****Guest House, 600 Bercut Drive.:** Homeless Mental Health Clinic. Mental Health evaluation, medication if needed. Housing referrals for mentally ill, GA refs, SSI aps, refs to A & D counseling: 916-440-1500**Hope Co-operative (formerly TLCS):** 1400 N.'A' St. Blding. A; Adults 18 yrs & up; Referrals to transitional living programs, independant living, mental health support services; SSI/SSDI application assistance; Walk-ins 8-11am M-F 916-440-1500**Genesis:** Professional Counseling for life problems. Referrals. 401 12th St. (DeLaney Center). 916-699-1536**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: 916-920-2952**AIDS / HIV****AIDS Housing Alliance** provides residential care, transitional housing & permanent housing services to homeless persons living with aids. 916-329-1093 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. 916-443-3299**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. 916-447-2437**Harm Reduction Services:** 40001 12 Ave.; High risk outreach; HIV, Hep-C testing; case management for HIV; free medical clinic, needle exchange. 916-456-4849**Alternative Test Site:** Free anonymous HIV testing. Wed /Thurs. Call for appt. 916-874-7720.**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. 916-446-0368**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. 916-551-2150**Welfare Rights:** 1901 Alhambra Blvd. (2nd floor) M-F 9am-5pm: AFDC, Food Stamps, Workfare and Medical rep at hearings. 916-736-0616**Social Security Disability / SSI Lawyer Free Consultation** (916) 658-1880**Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee*****https://sacshoc.org***  
***(916) 442-2156*****SHOC holds open meetings on Tuesdays at 10 am in the Delany Center Conference Room, at the Loaves & Fishes Complex near Ahern and 12th Street, to discuss current issues and activities that concern homeless persons.****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**Sacramento Veterans Resource Center** 7270 East Southgate Dr. 916-393-8387**Miscellaneous****Francis House Center 1422 C St.** Must get a lottery number 9am. M,Tu,Th,F for Direct Services: ID vouchers, transp. assistance; In depth resource coaching by apt.; Veteran's advocate; Notary services Thurs. call for apt.; Job Development Center M,Tu,Th,F 9:30am - 1pm. Family Rescue motel vouchers for qualified families Mon. 1pm. **(916) 443-2646****Women's Empowerment:** 1590 North A Street; classes, counseling & training to help homeless women escape poverty. 916-669-2307**Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services:** 3333 3rd Ave. (south of Broadway) Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 10am-1:30pm, and Wed 4pm-7pm. 916-456-1980.**Social Services:** 28th & R ST. M-F 7:30am-5pm. Call for asst. 916-874-2072**Employment Development Department (EDD):** 2901 50th St. (at Broadway) M-F 8am-5pm. Unemployment, job services. 916-227-0300**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, past the flea market) M-F 9am-4:30pm 916-381-9410: Natl line 1-800-772-1213**211 Sacramento Dial 211**

for tele-info &amp; referral service

**Califorina Youth Crisis Line:**  
**1-800-843-5200****Health Rights Hotline:**  
**551-2100****Narcotics Anonymous Hotline**  
**1-877-NA-6363**

## 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.

The paper's mission is to lessen misunderstandings between communities by educating the public about housing and poverty issues, and by giving homeless people a voice in the public forum. Homeward also provides a financial self-help opportunity for those individuals who wish to participate by being a Homeward Distributor.

**The opinions expressed in Homeward are those of the authors, and not necessarily of 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 INSP member papers, with due byline. Any requests for stories outside the above three will be referred to the author.

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