

street views

A Los Angeles street-based publication made
with, by, and for
unhoused communities
and organizers.

ABOUT STREET VIEWS NEWS

Street Views is an autonomous newspaper published by unhoused community members, mutual-aid organizers, and activist allies in Los Angeles. Conceived as a collaboration between UCLA Urban planning students and unhoused community organizers, Street Views is dedicated to building power by recognizing and uplifting community design, planning and communal forms of governance led by the unhoused, for the unhoused. We aim to amplify the voices of those on the streets by creating new lines of communication between encampments and community organizers across the city. Street Views is a platform for communities to plan, design, and build together through dialogue and action.

If you are interested in being involved in Street Views or submitting content for our next edition please contact us at @aetnastreetssolidarity on Instagram or email us at streetviewsnews@gmail.com.

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Death Dealers Lock Arms on the Westside

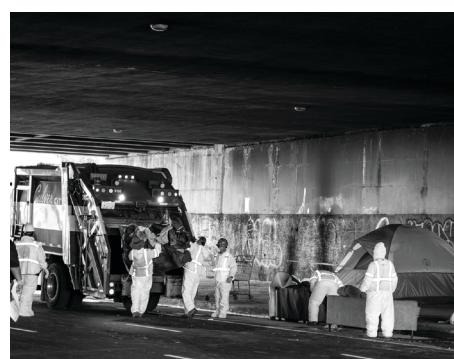
Jasmine Ave Sweep

In May, residents of Jasmine Avenue, part of a long-standing community that had lived together for two years, found out there was a plan in place to sweep their encampment of about 20 residents. Though no permanent housing was offered to these residents, the City planned to force them to leave their community, and once again move to a new location. Jasmine Avenue residents decided to resist the sweep by writing an open letter to Council District 5 (see pg. 6). In this letter, residents explained that they were told not to move because City service providers said they would lose their spots on housing lists if they could not locate residents on the day that housing was ready for them. People also shared the grief they were experiencing, having to defend their community from being displaced, all while mourning the loss of their friend and neighbor, Jesse. Despite their advocacy, CD5 moved forward with sweeps of the Jasmine Avenue encampment. Many residents were displaced to motel stays in South LA, taking them away from the few reliable connections they had.

As of this publication date, every resident of Jasmine Avenue, originally (dis)placed to a South LA motel, has been evicted from that motel, with the largest eviction occurring on December 29th. The few who were promised placement in Culver City's PHK were removed from the list (after waiting more than 2 years) for "leaving the area", through the forced displacement by CD5 in May of 2023. Most residents have returned to Palms, just a few blocks away from their original encampment, where the city continues to displace them, steal their property, vehicles, and RVs, and isolate them through criminalization. Residents have been targeted by the police with harassment, repeated 41.18 citations, and arrests.

Venice and Globe Sweep

In October, we found out that Los Angeles and Culver City were planning a secret, permanent sweep of the Venice and Globe encampment, without providing adequate notice to the community, and intended to erect a fence to prevent people from living there in the future. Close to the date of the operation, we learned that there were not enough shelter beds for the number of people at the encampment on the Westside, and this community—who has been together for years—would have no choice but to accept offers of shelter that would split them up. The operation, part of Mayor Karen Bass's Inside Safe program,



required that people give up their tents on camera to receive shelter in one of three motels in South LA, without any idea where they were going before the day of the operation. Because the sweep took place while some residents were at their jobs, we later learned that some people had their belongings destroyed by the city AND did not receive any shelter alternatives.

Since entering the Inside Safe program, residents have been subjected to surveillance and carceral conditions, with security guards monitoring their every move, and preventing them from having visitors or even visiting each other. Yet despite the presence of these guards, we have also heard about incidents of residents experiencing violence without any intervention, making it clear that the guards are not there for the purpose of keeping residents safe. People have told us that they feel a deep isolation from their communities, due to rules they were not made aware of when they agreed to join the program. Food and water provision has been unreliable or inadequate, yet residents are also prohibited from cooking in their rooms. They also have not received any resources, such as job training, physical and mental health services, or a plan for them to transition to permanent housing. These conditions make one thing clear: Inside Safe is not a housing program—it is yet another tool to infantilize unhoused people and reduce their agency over their futures.

The biggest lie: "We provided housing" By Food for Comrades

In Council District 11, Traci Park has been busy sweeping poor people out of sight then bragging about housing them in her newsletters to constituents. Unhoused folks are losing their RVs and tents, displaced

from one place to the next as fences or planters are installed in their place after almost every sweep. People have gone into hiding, going deeper into the wetlands or anywhere where they can be out of reach of State sanctioned harassment. When the homeless count was happening, folks in hiding asked us if they were to be counted, could the state find them and sweep them? How useless is our government if the poorest among us know it is better to hide from them than use their "services"?

At Culver and 90, three people lost their RVs due to a sweep, forcing them into street homelessness. Barricades went up in their parking spaces, and the sidewalk under the overpass was taped off. Folks were pushed into a precarious spot close to the freeway entrance, where they could have easily been hit by a car and were more susceptible to hypothermia without the added benefit of the overpass covering them while it rained. According to Park, all of them were housed. Yet still unsatisfied with their existence exposing her lie, she swept them again and taped off the entire sidewalk this time. With nowhere to go, people decided to hide in the wetlands across the street. Weeks later they were swept again by an unknown agency. We can't find our friends now, and the latest area they made their home was razed to the ground. Seriously, they mowed the lawn.

In April, another hidden encampment in CD11 was targeted by LA County. Ahead of the sweep, we surveyed everyone living there to see if the County would lie as boldly to our faces as Traci Park does. 11 out of 12 people said no housing had been offered to them ahead of the sweep. A few of the folks had lost their RVs at other encampments, and almost all of them moved to this location because their last encampment was swept. When we reached out to Supervisor Holly Mitchell's office to ask them to cancel the sweep and sent them our survey results, her office dismissed our data and said they would be moving forward with the sweep. They went on to suggest, "Given your rapport with the people, there could be an opportunity to engage together for a yes to the services being offered." We followed up to see what services were being offered and are still waiting for a response. But we have to ask, if you're offering anything of value to people, why would you need help getting them to take it? Folks were swept two days in a row, many losing all of their belongings. Nobody was offered housing or any services according to our post-sweep survey.

Find us online in color
www.streetviewsla.com



Smiling Faces Tell Lies

If you are being offered housing or services, ask for details. Where are these services located? What are the rules associated with these services?

Ask for business cards or a paper with their agency name, phone number, and employee names. Have them write down any services they are offering you now on the back of the business card or paper with their name on it.

Keep a journal of your interactions with social services or outreach members. Write down the date, who you spoke with, and anything you can remember about your conversation after it happens.

If something doesn't feel right about an interaction you had with an outreach worker, or with the housing or services that you are receiving, email palmshousedmutualaid@gmail.com or fill out the form at <http://tinyurl.com/PUMA-incident-report> to get in touch with us.

Document Everything

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Revealed: 300% surge in deaths of unhoused people in LA amid fentanyl and housing crises

By Sam Levin and Will Craft

Published in The Guardian | 2.12.2024

More than 2,000 unhoused people died in Los Angeles in 2023, meaning an average of nearly six deaths a day of people living on the street or in shelters in the nation's most populous county.

The numbers reveal an escalating humanitarian emergency as the housing crisis and drug addiction epidemic collide. Deaths have consistently increased every year. In 2023, 2,033 people died, a staggering 291% increase from the 519 cases recorded in 2014 and an 8% increase from the 1,883 fatalities in 2022.

The data is an undercount as the medical examiner only has jurisdiction over deaths considered violent, sudden or unusual, or where the deceased has not recently seen a doctor, meaning the scale of the crisis is greater than what's captured in the data.

"Every single death takes a toll on you," said Rebecca Chavez, 41, who is part of a community of unhoused people that suffered two recent losses in the San Fernando Valley region of LA. Both victims had lived in encampments with her over the years and she considered them family, she said. One died of an overdose while she was nearby, and she said she was haunted by the memory of being unable to revive him: "I don't know how I'll ever recover."

In Van Nuys, just north of Los Angeles, a group of unhoused residents mourned the death of Anjileen Swan last month. Swan, 54, had long struggled with homelessness and had repeatedly been hospitalized last year for congestive heart failure and other problems, her friends said.

Harrell said that Swan was known for bringing clothes and food to others on the street before she became sick, but the crackdown on encampments had dispersed their community: "With the displacement and sweeps, we can't catch a break. They are isolating and killing more people."

Chavez said Swan would watch her dog when she had appointments and looked out for her over the years. She called her "Mama Green Eyes".

Chavez added that she had grown accustomed to trying to revive people who have become unconscious: "It's become normal to me, but nobody should ever have to be used to this."

In a video filmed by community organizer Carla Orendorff in October, Swan is in her tent as Los Angeles police department and city workers prepare to sweep her area, which was being subjected to a targeted enforcement effort. Swan says that she has just gotten out of the hospital from open-heart surgery and can't move her stuff in the 15-minute timeframe they have cited. "I'm still trying to work with the people who housed me to begin with and see why they can't put me back inside. They want me to start all over," she says.

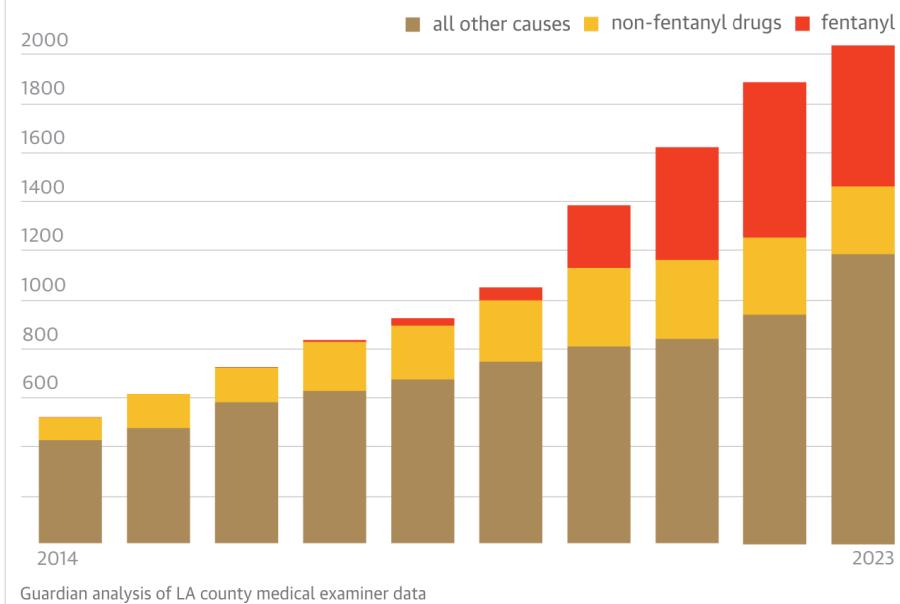
On 11 January, another organizer records Swan's conversation with an outreach worker, in which she says she'd been struggling in the frigid weather: "I thought I was gonna die. I was crying, like I can't do this."

Five days later, on 16 January, she died on a nearby street. The medical examiner has not yet released her cause of death.

"She was dealing with an

Deaths of unhoused Angelenos increased nearly 300% in 10 years

Drugs have become more common as the primary cause of death in the last decade. Fentanyl was among the primary causes of death for a third of all deaths in 2023.



Aetna Community in the Wake of "Inside Safe"

On Friday October 13th, former Aetna Street residents, local activists and community members gathered at the Aetna Street encampment in Van Nuys for a press conference. The event shed light on the lived experiences of unhoused folks displaced across Los Angeles by Mayor Karen Bass's "Inside Safe" program. The program has been in effect for almost a year, having begun in December 2022. Nearly a month after the devastation wrought by the program and its accompanying sweeps, we clustered together at the entrance of the encampment to listen to the stories of those impacted. Several banners and signs were strung along a chain link fence, poles, and a canopy; spooky season decorations adorned concrete block seating; a police officer's likeness was superimposed atop a skeleton with a backdrop of caution tape. Several tables offered free supplies: narcan, wipes, masks, and flyers for events and resources.

Despite the circumstances, the Aetna community is very much alive, actively archiving their resistance, bolstered by community and mutual aid. Commencing the Aetna Street Press Conference, Carla Orendorff, Aetna Street activist, recounted what had occurred just a month prior. "LAPD did a full sweep ...over 20 people lost all of their belongings, including IDs, medication, library issued laptops, pets. That day, people lost everything."

Former residents, Paisley, Jelly, LaDonna and Rebecca were invited to give testimonies next.

Jelly, an Aetna resident for about a year or so, left the encampment after it was targeted by the city and LAPD, opting

out of "Inside Safe." "I don't feel like they should be in worse conditions.. right now than when they were living up on the streets."

LaDonna spoke next, she had been living at Aetna for nearly four years and accepted housing at the Palm Tree Inn in North Hills during the latest sweep. She recalls her frustration at not being given more information on where she would be taken. When she eventually relented she was greeted with a bed bug infested room. "My dog has over a 100 bug bites on him. I'm so glad I didn't sit in that bed. Because if I had I would have been tore up like him." LaDonna describes the carceral conditions her and many other unhoused people face in programs like Project Roomkey and Inside Safe and the City's failure to provide a path toward permanent housing. "I can't get a caseworker at 8 o'clock. I can't get a caseworker at 12 o'clock, I can't get a caseworker at 6 o'clock."

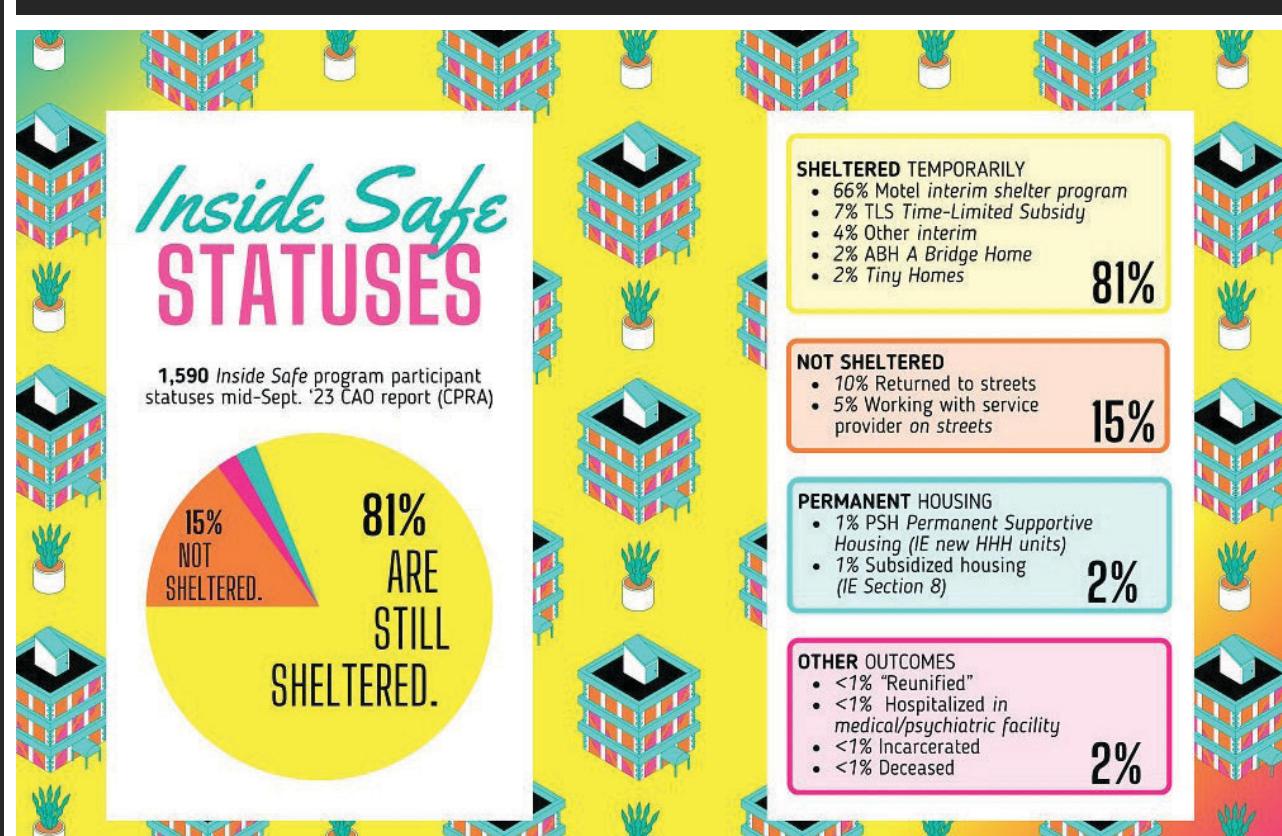
Rebecca took the microphone next, she had been living on Aetna Street for seven to eight years, and was able to secure an apartment after being placed in Project Roomkey during 2020. Keeping her apartment however was a struggle, "I got kicked out of the apartment due to... non-communication from LA family housing... who gets kicked out for non-communication?" During this time Rebecca returned to Aetna Street, somewhere she's "...always had a place." When the city barreled in once again to take

people to hotels she accepted a room, yet when she arrived it was the same old story. "People are leaving the hotels. That's why none of their programs stick because they don't comply with what they say they're going to do."

As the speakers come to a close, Carla announces a monthly State of the Street address, "right now, we're drowned out by what the mayor is saying, what the city is saying. And we've got to build up what the actual story is." Several studies have concluded that Inside Safe's has failed to keep people housed or transition them into permanent housing, with only 3,263 of the 18,792 participants obtaining permanent housing. Despite this gap, Karen Bass is presenting the program as a success, obfuscating the harsh truth presented by the data and people's lived experiences. As the year comes to a close, temperatures are dropping, and "Inside Safe" has managed to accomplish nothing but banishment, continued criminalization, and bed bug bites.

Carla invites one last speaker – an elderly woman known as "Green Eyes," on a mobility scooter she spotted in the crowd. After being hospitalized for six months she was evicted from her apartment and lost her home. "I have a pacemaker and defibrillator, and I can't sleep on the sidewalk. It will cause my death and they just really don't care. They don't care. And it's sad."

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ter" that would house people in "a jail cell with steel doors." Other officials urged banning food distribution ("If you stop feeding them, then they will stop coming") and posting "zero tolerance" signs at all entrances to the city. Grants Pass redesigned its municipal code to incorporate these ideas. "The point," one councilman said, was "to make it uncomfortable enough for them in our city so they will want to move on down the road."

Blake won her case. As Ed Johnson, Blake's lawyer at the Oregon Law Center, told me, Grants Pass had managed to design a "set of ordinances that made it illegal to survive on every inch of public land 24 hours a day." In 2020, the Oregon District Court ruled that the imposed fees were excessive, that exclusion orders violated due process, and that blanket criminalization constituted cruel and unusual punishment against those "engaging in the unavoidable, biological, life-sustaining acts of sleeping and resting." Blake passed away before she could see the results: an injunction that allows homeless people to rest in Grants Pass parks for 24 hours at a time, as long as there is nowhere else for them

to go. Her friend said it felt as if unhoused people "didn't have to hide anymore."

But the city appealed—all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Gripped by a right-wing supermajority, that court has already restricted abortion, undermined the Environmental Protection Agency, curtailed affirmative action, and voided pandemic eviction moratoriums. Last fall, a flood of official briefs urged the court to take up the case. Their authors included business improvement and sheriffs' associations, archconservative think tanks like the Goldwater Institute, the liberal cities of San Francisco and Los Angeles, and California Governor Gavin Newsom, a Democrat.

Now a town of fewer than 40,000 people may get to rewrite the scripts of homelessness policy for the entire United States. When the court rules, likely in late June, unhoused people could lose the Eighth Amendment as a bulwark against widespread criminalization and encampment sweeps. But Grants Pass's current practices, even under the injunction, suggest cruelty is rarely unusual. The embattled Oregon town is a microcosm of the drama now playing out

among politicians, their constituents, and the fast-growing number of people who live in public space. In this bipartisan production, homelessness is portrayed as something police can deter and rehabilitation can cure. Homelessness policies that fail drive electoral success, and politicians can claim an empty sidewalk—and an unsolved crisis—as a political victory.

Grants Pass's mayor, Sara Bristol, often wears an expression of amused exasperation. The day we met, she'd tried to dispel a Facebook rumor that nonprofit warming shelters would house undocumented immigrants. She often finds herself disputing the claim that homeless people in town are outsiders. Born in Grants Pass, not registered with either party, Bristol was elected just as the injunction settled into place, turning new clusters of tents—on green spaces abutting the Rogue River, on muddy dirt by the ball fields, on the grass strip of a road median—into Bristolvilles. In fall 2023, a group of residents campaigned for her recall, gathering signatures under signs that read TAKE BACK OUR PARKS. Bristol maintained her mandate.

As Fentanyl Overdoses Soar, LA City Crews Toss State-Funded Narcan from Encampments

By Jack Ross | Published in *In These Times* | 2.24.2024



Virginia Reilly is tricycling through Skid Row, in Los Angeles, wearing a shirt that says "NEVER USE ALONE," nailing boxes of Narcan to trees with a staple gun.

Her dog, Ruby Reversal—as in "overdose reversal"—rides behind her in a wire basket; behind the dog, Reilly tows a wagon full of clean socks, cottons, sterilized needles, medicinal cannabis gummies and boxes and boxes of naloxone (Narcan is a brand of naloxone), a medicine that reverses nine out of 10 opioid overdoses.

"Hey sugar!" Reilly exclaims when her former neighbors emerge from their tents. She's on Wall Street in Skid Row, a 4-square-mile area of downtown Los Angeles where about 2,700 people are estimated to live on the street.

More than 2,200 unhoused people died in Los Angeles County in 2021, and overdoses were responsible for more than a third of the deaths. In Skid Row, fatal overdoses have increased by more than 1,000% since 2017—with fentanyl involved in more than 70% of those deaths.

"My friend was laying there on the asphalt with plastic over his face," Reilly says when asked why she started nailing Narcan to trees. "We didn't know where to get any Narcan. So we made a little memorial altar for him. And I made a little pink bag of Narcan and nailed it to [a nearby tree]."

"I thought that's what I ought to do," Reilly says, "make little bags and nail 'em someplace people can get to it."

Reilly and other staff and volunteers with a harm-reduction nonprofit called The Sidewalk Project have since nailed naloxone to trees every week in Skid Row. They call the program the Tree of Life. Executive director Soma Snakeoil says the practice helps ensure the lifesaving drug gets distributed well and is easily accessible to those who need it.

But there's another crucial reason they say they nail naloxone to trees: It increases the chances that the medicine will not be destroyed or taken when crews clear (or sweep) encampments. Something that, according to interviews with unhoused residents and harm-reduction groups in Los Angeles, is apparently happening with alarming frequency.

"After sweeps, late at night when there's no providers here, when there's no one to give the Narcan to people, people are running up and down the street screaming, begging for Narcan," Snakeoil says.

Amanda Cowan, executive director of the Los Angeles Community Health Project (CHPLA), says unhoused people complain to her staff that they lose naloxone in sweeps "every day, every day."

Dozens of encampments are swept every weekday in Los Angeles. Cowan says her staff reports that about 70% of the naloxone her group distributes is "trashed" in the relentless sweeps.

This underscores a profound contradiction in California's response to its opioid and overdose crises. If the state is spending millions and millions of dollars to provide naloxone to residents who need it the most, then why is naloxone being pulled from those communities?

This year, the U.S. Supreme Court will rule on the constitutionality of encampment sweeps for the first time. The Justices will review 9th Circuit Court of Appeals decisions that found sweeping encampments is cruel and unusual punishment if there is no shelter to take people to.

Unhoused residents and advocates in California say that the problem with sweeps is that they kill people, often by destroying property needed to survive. They point to the destruction of naloxone in the clean-ups as an urgent example. "Advocates on the ground have been asking [why elected officials don't end the sweeps] for many, many years," Snakeoil says, "because we know that sweeps kill people."

Between April 2020 and November 2022, health behavior researcher Jesse Goldshear and a team of academics surveyed 395 unhoused drug users in LA and Denver, 157 of whom (about 40%) said their encampments had both been swept in the prior three months and that they had property "taken or discarded by city, state, or county employees such as police or sanitation workers."

Of the 157 people who endured sweeps in the prior three months and reported losing property, 95 people (or 60%) said they lost naloxone, meaning that about a quarter of all of the unhoused drug users surveyed by Goldshear and the researchers had lost the life-saving medicine.

He says he personally witnessed city and state crews taking naloxone from encampments. This is "directly contributing to potential deaths," he says, adding that the practice is taking "away [unhoused people's] only real defense against a fatal overdose." Paul Gomez, a spokesperson for LA's Department of Public Works, says unopened and unattended naloxone is not thrown away during sweeps, but rather pulled and "bagged, tagged and stored" in another location where residents can retrieve it during specific hours.

"That's bull," says Ronald Hams, a resident of the Aetna Street encampment in the San Fernando Valley until its clearance in September 2023.

"That is not true," Hams says. He reports that he watched city workers destroy some 100 units of Narcan in a surprise sweep of his encampment.

The boxes were stored in a bin that Hams had labeled "NARCAN" in red sharpie, and that he and his neighbors kept on a rolling cart in a central area. They called it "The Medicine Cabinet."

"I don't understand how we can pick up our stuff when we've seen it go inside of a [garbage compactor] and be crushed," says La Donna Harrell, another former resident of the Aetna Street encampment who witnessed city workers destroying Narcan.

Signs posted prominently at the sites of many sweeps throughout Los Angeles say that "Items collected by the city may be retrieved from or by contacting the following location: The BIN" on Towne Avenue in Skid Row, a warehouse preceded by a tall black gate with razor wire.

But an employee working at the front desk of The BIN said he had "never" seen Narcan delivered or stored there.

"That kind of stuff, they wouldn't bring here—they would just discard it." The employee later reported that he had searched for records regarding several encampment sweeps where residents told harm-reduction volunteers that they had lost naloxone—and could not find any "paperwork on that whatsoever."

The naloxone found in encampments has typically been purchased with state funds, Snakeoil says. The state's Naloxone Distribution Project (NDP) has received approximately \$325 million since 2018, according to the California Department of Health Care Services, and distributed nearly 3.7 million kits of naloxone. The state has also spent an additional \$45 million providing funds for harm-reduction clinics since 2020.

"This is kind of like a snake eating itself because these supplies are funded by the state of California," Snakeoil says. "Then local jurisdictions are just sweeping through thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars that our taxpayer money has gone to."

"We distribute the stuff, and they confiscate the stuff. It's very strange," she says. "It's counterproductive."

Los Angeles has swept encampments of unhoused populations for more than a century, even rounding up unhoused men into chain gangs

that graded and paved roads in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Today, encampment sweeps in LA are run under its Comprehensive Cleaning and Rapid Engagement (CARE) program, which was launched in 2019. Then-city council president Nury Martinez, in characterizing the program, said the city had "to restore order in our streets."

When sanitation crews repeatedly swept Aetna Street in September 2023, organizers and residents say they didn't just destroy the Narcan in the community "Medicine Cabinet"; they also destroyed the Narcan that had been included in a memorial to Terry Mason Kendrick, a resident who had died just weeks earlier of a stroke and subsequent heart attack. Kendrick was passionate about distributing Narcan, says Aetna Street Solidarity organizer Carla Orendorff.

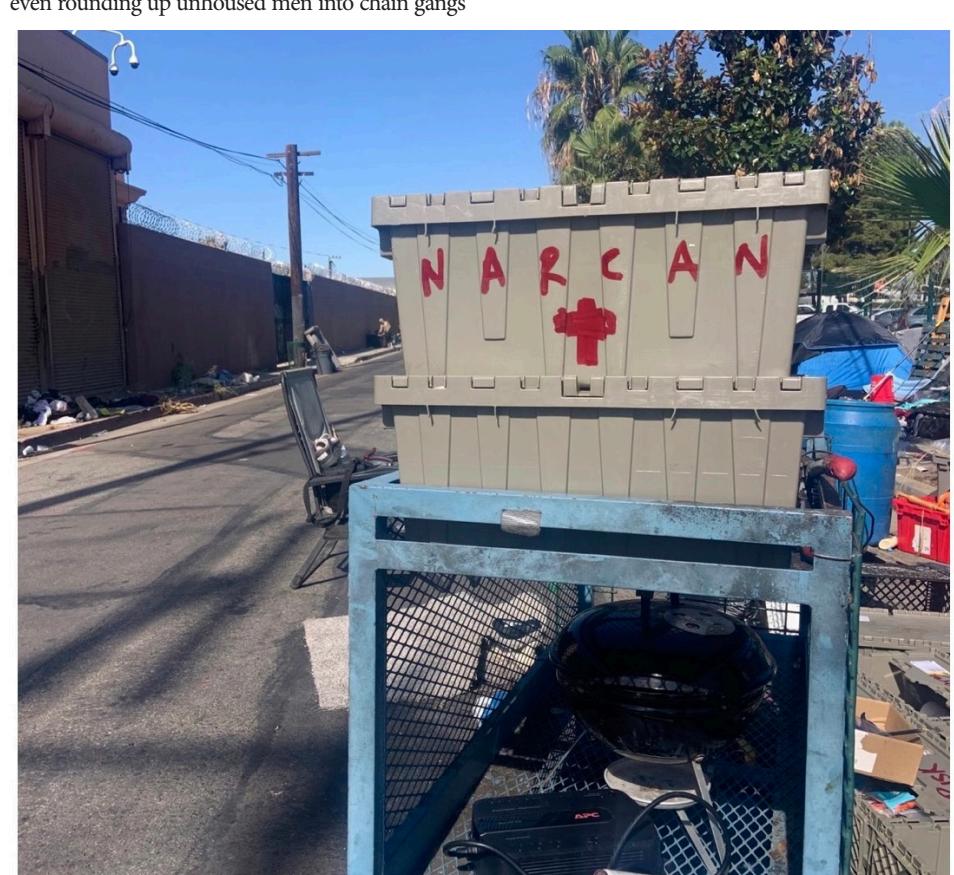
"We will never forget you, or forgive you for dying," someone had written as part of the memorial beneath a photograph of Kendrick flipping off the camera. "Rest in peace, you son of a bitch."

Video taken by another organizer, Paisley Mares, shows the memorial—along with the Narcan—dumped in a garbage truck during a sweep on September 21, 2023.

Publicly funded sweeps trashing publicly funded naloxone may sound contradictory—if not foolish. But for decades in Los Angeles, lawmakers have answered the demand from unhoused advocates for "services not sweeps" with services and sweeps, insisting the contrasting approaches can be reasonably paired. Organizers say the result is a ridiculous—and deadly—cocktail of violent policing and sporadic, often unproductive attempts to provide aid.

As lawmakers wrestle with the fentanyl crisis, Cowan of the CHPLA says that harm reduction and policing "fundamentally contradict each other."

The point of harm reduction, Snakeoil argues, should be to place supplies in the hands of drug users because they are best positioned to save the lives of other drug users. Sweeps and policing, however, separate unhoused people from service providers as well as unhoused people from each other.



"The Medicine Cabinet" where Aetna Street residents say they kept about 100 units of naloxone. Some residents say the Narcan was destroyed in front of them during a sweep.

The Hotel Cecil: LA's Cultural Monument to Human Degradation

By Will Sens

The Hotel Cecil has been a host to unthinkable pain and degradation since it was built way back in 1924. The hotel was originally constructed to serve traveling businessmen and tourists. Before long, the economy collapsed and the hotel was forced to house low-income clientele just to keep its doors open in the Depression Era. The dwelling sank into conditions notorious for violence, oppression, and tragedy. It sustained countless tragic deaths and murders over nearly a century, most unreported or conveniently overlooked.

In 2017, instead of imploding the structure and using a part of the billions of dollars the city has had access to to build a proper living space for Los Angeles unhoused to live in, LA City Council decided to dub the building a "Historic-Cultural Monument", and the Cecil was "closed for renovations."

The Hotel Cecil sat unoccupied until 2021, when LA City Council allowed for the hotel to be open to any unhoused people who held a government subsidized voucher. At the time the city seemed to have the support of Angelenos. People genuinely thought that this would be a good way to get folks off of the street and out of the cold. 'This could be a first step into a new life – offer of a new direction in life, a safe place to rest, a place to wash yourself.' This is the rhetoric used to convince a person surviving on the street to give up their personal shelter, in a gesture of trust and the hope for a safer life - a cleaner, warmer existence. A person has to make a decision. One person who had to make the decision to stay at the Cecil Hotel was a man named Carl Ferguson.

Carl, a 37 year old black man, has lived in Los Angeles most of his life. He wanted to speak out about the conditions at the Cecil, so we decided to do an interview in his room on the 14th floor. As we walked through the lobby to the elevator there were several people angrily yelling. Carl nodded in the direction of the arguers, "It's like this all of the time. You'll see it's like this all over the building." When we got into the elevator, he told me that it was the only elevator, that it frequently goes out, and that when it does, it can be broken for one or

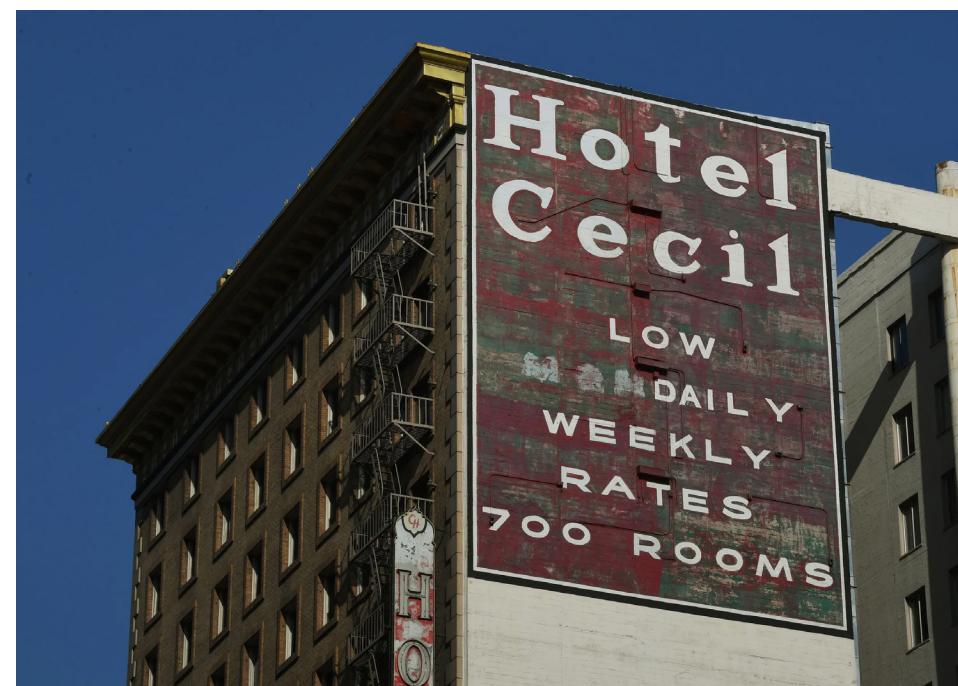
two weeks at a time. Since there's absolutely no thought put into the floor placement of a client, many elderly and infirm people are forced to walk up, as many as 15 flights of stairs to get to their rooms without assistance. I saw no discernable evidence of the supposed renovations the city claimed were happening.

I asked Carl how he ended up in this place. He told me that he had to stay at the Cecil because his case manager failed to tell him that he had a voucher until a week before it expired. His case manager suggested he just go to the Cecil since it was a sure thing that he would get in. Carl didn't know anything about the shady history of the Cecil or else he said he wouldn't have agreed to stay there. Soon after his girlfriend, who is pregnant with their child, accepted a room beside his. He said it's the most horrible place on earth. The bathrooms and showers rarely work. His girlfriend has to walk up 14 flights of stairs to use the bathroom when the elevator doesn't work, which is quite often. Since there's only one maintenance man for all 15 floors, you can imagine how long it takes to get anything fixed.

Hotel management saves money by unofficially hiring residents to do custodial work in the common areas. The pay rate is supposedly \$20 a day for fifteen floors, but what does that matter when they don't actually pay? Carl said that he tried cleaning the halls for two weeks and they gave him the run around about payment until he finally gave up trying. There's no oversight whatsoever.

Because of incidents and general mismanagement by hotel administrators, there is a severe turn-over rate in the security staff. The halls are never patrolled. "If security sees something going on like a fight or someone having a mental breakdown...security will just laugh at it if anything," Carl shook his head. He told me that whatever criminal activity that's going on in the hotel, security is in on it. Otherwise they don't care to see anything that goes on in there. They stay behind the front desk.

There was a lady on the seventh floor who'd been in a distraught state of mind and her worried friends were running around the hotel looking for her. They fi-



nally found her in her room hanging by her neck from her bed sheet. She was blue and gasping for air when Carl pulled her up by the skin of her hips. He saved her life that day. A while later, residents noticed a horrible smell in the hall. Everyone on the floor could smell it but couldn't locate the source. The manager kept shrugging it off. He ignored the people's complaints until finally Carl put his foot down and insisted that the manager come upstairs and investigate this smell. By this time, it had been more than a week and they had pretty well figured out where the stench was coming from. Manager finally opened the door and Carl recognized the elderly lady right away. She was lying face down in a mass of her own dried blood, her dark skin turned ashen white. The manager looked horrified.

The conditions of neglect and disrepair at the Hotel Cecil are no secret to the public. A quick Google search will reveal a list of common complaints from the tenants of this building. Speaking with a resident named Mary Jane Olsen helped confirm how little anyone from the city or hotel administration cares about the welfare of its residents. Mary Jane had a two and a half foot round hole in her ceiling that continuously leaked water onto her toilet forcing her to have to use her shower as a toilet which literally took them 6 months to fix. Now she has exacerbated breathing issues due to the mold that has developed. Also the hotel's roach infestation has become extraordinarily bad for her. For all this, plus harassment from a neighbor and victim shaming and harassment from Cecil management, she's still expected to pay \$400 for her rent monthly. She's recently decided to stop paying, as many have in this hotel.

When I inquired about follow up services of any kind, or the so-called "wrap-around" services that the Bass administration keeps referring to, Carl had this to say:

"Honestly it seems like ever since I got here, everything started falling apart. All the case management, all the organizations, they fell [off.] Like the systems just disappeared. I started off with Pacific Clinics and they handed me off to the Salvation Army. Salvation Army put me with these other people and they just stopped calling for some reason. I presumed they was going to stay on me and like continue to assist me, being that I did need the assistance and what not. I still do need the assistance greatly. They got me off the streets, they put me in "housing", but...it's like a set-up. Honestly everything in here is a set-up for me to fall...if not fall, for me to pass away. It's a safety hazard for people to be up in here, period, because you know security don't do shit."

It seems like they put you in here and all the assistance falls away from you. 'We don't want you on the streets so we'll put you in old hotels. Because that's where they're putting all of us at. They're not putting nobody in no permanent housing or no apartments like regular people are getting. No they're putting us in all the old ran down hotels that are in Los Angeles, to where all of us are either perishing or going back on the streets because we're not getting assistance while we're back up in there. Nobody coming to check on us to see what our well-being is or none of that. It's 'Okay we put you up. Now figure this shit out.'

Everybody needs assistance depending on what you done been through in life. Ain't no telling what you done been through, what state of mindset they're in or like what kind of mental health state of mindset they're in. So you can't just put a person up in here and say 'Well you're in a house now. You're good.' I mean honestly a lot of the individuals that stay in the Cecil, they don't go nowhere. They all be in their rooms. They go out for their basic needs and come back because they don't have no guidance. Then you put them up around everybody that was on the streets and like, pretty much we're all on the streets still because everybody's doing the same shit and there's no positive influence or direction within where you put us at. If they put people who are actually doing well in a real apartment, I think those people would actually get a grip. Like, 'Let me get living. Let me get back to daily functioning.' When you keep putting us in places where there's nothing but arguments and violence, that's all you're gonna get.

Mayor Bass should be evaluating the organizations that are receiving all of this money. A lot of these organizations were invented during covid just for the money and then eventually just shut down. They should have put us into suitable housing, apartments instead of old buildings that you know people have perished from, have problems with. You have a Netflix documentary talking about how horrible this is and yet still want to open it up after covid, talking about how you want to help the homeless. They should have done an investigation because this place should've never reopened. In actuality half the people who were living out on the streets were living comfortably on the streets. You guys placed them in these hotels where they're dying now. They're not on the streets no more. They're not breathing. They're not here no more. And that's a problem because if these people were in they're environments, in they're tents, where they were comfortable, they'd still probably be breathing."



American Adult, Involuntary Interruption, Therapeutic Trauma

By Roofless

My experience being involuntarily committed was basically like the scary scene in E.T. when the government is after him.

I'm wearing a luxurious champagne-colored silk wrap dress as a bathrobe on a weekday morning in Spring 2018.

The air in Los Angeles is crisp and the breeze gently teases my drapes. It's the first quiet day after a particularly draining week and I'm finally enjoying some needed peace and self-care.

I start my day by washing my face and painting my toenails in front of my large, framed Pottery Barn mirror. I spray conditioner in my tangled hair and put it up in a scrunchie.

I pull a bottle of argan oil from Trader Joe's from my medicine cabinet and collect a few drops on the palm of my left hand when I hear a commotion coming from next door.

I pull back my black-and-white zigzagged MISSIONI for IKEA curtains to see what looks almost exactly like a full LAPD SWAT team gathering in front of my home. I blink as their walkie-talkies beep and buzz.

I coolly ask them how I can help them and they say they are looking for me.

ME?

One of the cops (a SMART Mental Evaluation Unit officer, which is not a SWAT officer, mainly because he wears khaki pants and his vest says SMART. SMART is apparently not a typo for SWAT) is holding a loaded syringe in a nitrile-blue gloved hand.

I search for eyes that might reveal a soul behind shiny wraparound sunglasses but I only meet the twin reflections of my own terrified face.

I keep my eyes on the mystery injection and tell them as seriously as I can: please don't drug me.

They are here to hospitalize me, they say. But I'm not sick, and since when would it be police business if I were? I ask if I can go to a hospital myself and if I am being accused of a crime right now.

Nope. You're coming with us.

The weight of what is happening hits me like a brick wall when the social worker introduces herself. She says she's worried about me because of some things that people said to her over the phone. I ask if any of those people are here right now. They are not. I ask her if they are in another state. They are. I ask if she's hearing herself right now. She blinks.

I tell her I don't like what is happening, and I don't like her, and that I am fairly certain that what is happening to me is not constitutional.

The social worker says my family is worried and I tell her to stop talking about me behind my back. LAPD SMART shackles my hands...behind my back. I tell her it's the first time I've been handcuffed and ask her what sick kind of "worry" is assuaged by terrorizing a family member with ambush and arrest?

They say I absconded from my housing and I tell them I was threatened with eviction. I tell them all that they are unnecessarily giving me trauma right now. I ask anyone how in the world I can make this stop. No one responds.

My rose gold wrap dress opens, exposing my naked chest, covered in goosebumps in the spring breeze as metal cuffs squeeze my tiny trembling wrists tightly together behind me, unable to cover myself. Tears stream down my face and my damp hair sticks to my snotty nose. I try to illustrate the point that my forced nudity is probably a crime like indecent exposure. No one ever asks who let the bulls in china shop in the first place or if they were authorized to deliver delicate mental

healthcare on unsuspecting targets. I realize now why they need big guns, because springing bad-faith, short-sighted interventions on fragile humans is dangerous business.

In a matter of minutes, I've gone from Lady Liberty to Lady Godiva, from a whole elder millennial human into E.T. when the people from the government come.

The cops think it's funny that they can see my breasts and I'm squirming and everyone's struggling to remain composed, but I am the one failing fastest, as intended.

I come to the unfortunate realization that I am the only one who is not "just doing my job" here. I am not getting paid to hurt anyone. I figure they must get paid a lot if they manage to sleep at night after a day of depriving people of their civil rights.

After accepting that I have no rights or authority over anyone in this scenario, I know that I must submit completely, or I'll make it harder on myself. I could get sedated or injure myself against the restraints or worse. It's a serious struggle because total submission is a betrayal of my finely-tuned survival instincts. I wonder what these people know about survival. They probably think you can order it in a catalog.

This unexpected, forced physical domination and the mental trauma of having my birthrights revoked indefinitely under unclear terms by County workers and LAPD, on top of my already precarious (but until now, stable and relatively healthy) living situation—broke me, purposefully.

I beg them for the "privilege" of being "allowed" to wear my own blue jeans to walk out of my "home", where I am strapped onto a waiting gurney and driven somewhere I've never been before.

Why me? Why now? What for? How long? How?

I should clarify that I am a homeless "unhoused" person, but I was not quite roofless at the time this happened in 2018.

My home was in an upscale suburb of the City of Los Angeles. It was under a freeway, next to a river, and nestled behind a private school, a temple, and a sports bar.

I lived there for almost a year before Caltrans eventually removed me, including immediately after this violent extraction/brief interruption by LAPD SMART and DMH. It ultimately resulted in my being discharged right back to my "bridge home" several hours later, but carrying all-new heavy traumas that I am obviously still unpacking.

Under the "bridge", I had a 3-walled "room" in the very back, in which a large bed had been installed cleverly so that it was "floating" over a dirt floor. On the floor, repurposed rolls of discarded carpets had been laid down with channels dug underneath so that occasional rainwater could find the way down to the hillside after running off the highway and down the back wall of my room like a waterfall. Everyone used to come over from the other spots to escape from the rain. I still miss that spot whenever it rains.

Perched up on a DIY platform on the steel catwalk of the bridge was my private room. I had a bookshelf with my favorite sci-fi titles. I had several diaries, a sketchbook where I drew portraits of people in ballpoint (not my preferred media, but available, and I was getting quite good at it) and colored pencils which I constantly sharpened on both ends. I had a jewelry box with my birth records in it and IKEA storage units where I kept my

A federal judge has found that L.A. city officials doctored records in a case over homeless camp cleanups

By Doug Smith | Published in the *LA Times* | 4.16.2024

A federal judge has found that Los Angeles city officials altered evidence to support the city's defense against allegations that it illegally seized and destroyed homeless people's property. Warning that the city will likely face sanctions following a forensic examination, U.S. District Judge Dale S. Fischer wrote in an order that the city had not only "altered, modified, and created documents relevant to Plaintiff's claims" but had also failed to produce legitimately requested documents.

"Suffice it to say that the City's credibility has been damaged significantly," she wrote.

According to court filings, records documenting what was taken during cleanups and the legal authorization for the seizure were altered or created up to two years after the cleanup occurred and in some instances just days before they were turned over to the plaintiffs. In some records, the word "bulky items" was replaced by "health hazards" or "contaminated," after Fischer had ruled the city's law prohibiting bulky items unconstitutional.

In a court filing, Shayla R. Myers, an attorney with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles who is representing the eight plaintiffs, described the changes as so significant "they rise to the level of fraud on the court."

"In our view this isn't just about altering or creating evidence, it's about misleading the court and the public about the existence of safeguards to ensure the city isn't illegally throwing away unhoused people's belongings," Myers said in an interview.

"They argue that they have processes in place to ensure they aren't violating unhoused people's rights. ... And those are the very documents that the court found to be altered or fabricated."

The plaintiffs, seven homeless people and the group Ktown for All, allege that the city violated their rights by destroying their belongings in camp cleanups in 2018 and 2019. Among the items taken, they allege, were tents, chairs, work supplies, a laptop computer, a chest containing clothes and hygiene goods, a dog kennel, medications and personal identification. The five-year-old lawsuit alleges that the city's practice of seizing and disposing of property violates the 4th Amendment's protection against illegal search and

seizure and the 14th Amendment's guarantee of due process.

The plaintiffs seek compensation for the destroyed property and pain and suffering as well as a declaration that the city's policies and practices violate the California and U.S. constitutions.

Early in the case, Fischer issued a preliminary injunction barring the city from enforcing the municipal code that prohibits bulky items. Fischer subsequently held the city in contempt after the plaintiff's attorney introduced evidence that city workers continued to post signs in some locations prohibiting bulky items.

After Myers presented evidence of altered documents in a 2022 hearing, Fischer took the unusual step of appointing a neutral third-party forensic examiner to determine if the city had "spoliated" records, a legal term meaning intentionally or negligently altering or destroying.

The examiner's preliminary report said he obtained some of the original documents but was unable to obtain others. Manually comparing originals with the PDFs, Myers' team found more than 100 revisions in some documents. Among them, bulky was changed to "ADA violation," a reference to the Americans With Disabilities Act, and "Property left behind by encampment" was changed to "Contaminated Items Surrendered or Left Behind by Resident."

In February, Fischer issued a finding that the city had altered records and sharply rebuked the city's arguments that the revisions were insignificant.

"The City's contention that material changes to documents such as the reason for seizing and destroying personal property — sometimes to match the City's litigation position — are 'administrative' is also untenable," she wrote.

"The City's conduct cannot be excused as 'imperfect document management'; ... its 'explanation' for its admitted spoliation is unconvincing to say the least."

A trial, stayed for the forensic examination, has still not been set.

"This case would have been resolved years ago but for the need for the court to investigate the city's conduct, delaying a public reckoning about the legality of these sweeps," Myers said.

'A good start, five months later:' Historic Filipinotown residents push for Inside Safe promises to be kept

Juanita encampment residents felt pressured into leaving their program. They've launched a campaign to push back.

By Elizabeth Chou

Published in *LA Public Press* | 3.26.2024

Last October, a community of unhoused residents in Historic Filipinotown were pressured into leaving their encampment on Juanita Avenue, as part of LA Mayor Karen Bass's Inside Safe program — with the city promising them housing and services at a motel.

Now those unhoused Angelenos, many of whom are Filipino, say they face harassment from service provider staff, arbitrary rules, and limited services. In response, they have applied their own steady pressure on those in power to draw attention to the challenges they face at the motel.

Those efforts have so far yielded a sit-down meeting. Last Tuesday, March 19, several residents talked with high-level staff at PATH, the service provider contracted for the Inside Safe motel — but they say their work is not done.

"It's a good start, five months later," said one of the Inside Safe program's participants, LJ. He and others at the motel have banded together to demand better conditions at the motel.

LJ said initially the staff had wanted to "single us out," by having them meet one at a time. But he successfully urged the staff to let him have other residents in the meeting with him. Other unhoused participants are his "support system," LJ said.

At the meeting, some basic information about the services were provided, including the steps that need to be taken to obtain housing. LJ noted that much of this information should have been provided to them when they first came into the program months ago.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 >>

<< "Historic Filipinotown", CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

In the meeting, LJ and others were given information about the process for applying for housing, classes that were available to them, and healthcare resources at a nearby clinic. They also discussed setting up a community room at the site, which could potentially allow residents to have visitors. Right now the rules at the site do not allow people to have visitors.

LJ said he and others will continue to hold the staff and elected officials like LA Mayor Karen Bass accountable, "up until we're out of there and they have it (the motel) functioning and self-sustaining, and this homelessness issue has been taken care of."

"But as far as the present moment ... it's hard to be easily satisfied," LJ said. "If you are (easily satisfied), you'll fall for anything. Not to say they're trying to pull a fast one in front of us, [but we've] been there, done that."

Their efforts are being supported by the LA chapter of GABRIELA, a group that typically organizes Filipino women, as well as Anakbayan LA, SIKLAB Media, Malaya Movement, and LA Kalusugan Collective. In videos released as part of the campaign, unhoused residents describe mistreatment and dismissive attitudes by staff toward the challenges they face.

Mutual aid group LA Street Care is also supporting the Inside Safe motel residents.

Some of the support they have been getting as part of the campaign, called Housing for Juanita, include "phone barrages" to elected officials and PATH, and a support letter, written in English and Tagalog, that they are urging members of the public to send to LA Mayor Karen Bass to have "reliable, proactive, consistent and accessible case managers." That letter also points to the need for "proper facilities for residents," including access to medical professionals.

The campaign's efforts have also led to a meeting with their City Council member, Hugo Soto-Martinez, who oversees the 13th



Unhoused Inside Safe participants, including LJ who is pictured on the left, meet at a nearby park to discuss improving conditions at the motel they were put into, after their encampment on Juanita Avenue was cleared last October by LA Mayor Karen Bass's office. Credit: SIKLAB Media

District where the Inside Safe encampment clearing operation took place in October.

In a written statement last Thursday, responding to the unhoused residents' concerns, Bass's spokesperson, Zach Seidl, said their office appointed a deputy mayor of homelessness and community health, Etsemaye P. Agonafer.

Seidl said that the appointment was meant "to improve and expand health services and care to help grow our comprehensive approach," he said, and they "continue to provide new services and implement new strategies."

Representatives of the Housing for Juanita campaign said that the motel residents have faced non-consensual room checks and their belongings thrown out without their consent. They say security at the motel has been antagonistic toward residents, and staff have mocked them. In one of the incidents representatives described, someone on staff mockingly offered meth to one of the motel residents. There are no "de-

tox and treatment services," one resident told organizers.

LJ said last Tuesday that another issue they brought up during the meeting was the harassment from staff that residents often faced while living at the motel. He said they were able to obtain an apology from staff.

"All they can do is apologize," he said. "We could use a little more compassion, respect, and dignity. I'm not going to hold them to make sure it's fixed every single day. But it's a good start though. We weren't asking for much."

In a statement addressing the harassment being reported by residents, Tyler Renner, a spokesperson for PATH, said that "due to confidentiality and privacy rules, we cannot share specifics about our participants."

"Finally, we have grievance forms available to all participants should they have any concerns or issues with our staff or programming," he said.

In the last week, residents also faced an abrupt effort by staffers to move people into

rooms together. LJ said that they were informed of this on Tuesday night. While staff have now told them this is a voluntary move, LJ said that when they were first informed of it, they felt rushed.

And some felt pressured to room with others because they were worried their status in the Inside Safe program would be threatened if they didn't agree to do it, the campaign said. One resident, Jayson, told other campaign organizers that he refused several times, but was still asked multiple times if he could room with others. He added that "they tell each of us something different to manipulate us into [rooming together]."

LJ said that the way "they approached events, they kind of rushed them, pushed them. It was late (in the day) ... We were outside for a minute talking to them."

He said that the approach — "the pressure, the promise" — was similar to how they felt rushed from their encampment on Juanita Avenue into Inside Safe.

Excerpts from the Open Letters to Mayor Karen Bass

Across Los Angeles, encampment communities have been demanding transparency and justice in the face of "Inside Safe Operations." More of these letters can be read at <https://www.insidestarving.com/demands> at <https://lapublicpress.org> and tinyurl.com/EmergencySheltersNow

From the Aetna Street Community March 20, 2023

Dear Mayor Karen Bass,

We are a community of residents living on Aetna Street in Van Nuys. Yes, we are unhoused. We are also fighting for the right to housing — because it is permanent housing, dignity, and a sense of community and belonging that we all need.

Politicians promised housing with programs like Project Roomkey and A Bridge Home Shelter and EHV and Section 8. We have seen council presidents come and go with racist and classist policies intended to punish the poor for the crime of being unhoused. These politicians come and go, and yet we remain. We remain unhoused, we continue to be harassed by the LAPD, and we continue to live with the failure of this city to address the real needs of people living outside. We are often not safe because of your failures, because we were not listened to, we weren't believed. We are not service-resistant. We are service-experienced and our experiences have not led to housing. Many of us are forced to cycle through trauma as a result.

It does not have to be this way.

We are the ones who can determine whether this is Inside Safe. We must be able to determine our own path and make decisions that are best for our lives. We invite your help, but we reject any lies, tricks, or BS. We are not political pawns, we are human beings deserving and worthy of care, dignity, and respect.

We know what we need. Listen to us. Talk to us. Learn from us. Nothing About Us Without Us.

Our Demands:

1. Inside Safe must be a completely voluntary program with no BS, lies, tricks, or promises that can't be met. People must be allowed the choice, and to be able to choose Inside Safe because it would be the best option for them. Period.
2. No 41.18 enforcement for those that choose to remain on Aetna Street. Enforcement of 41.18 and 56.11 would undermine the goals of any program designed to house people. We want Housekeys, not Handcuffs.
3. We demand shelter that is nearby; within 3 miles of where we were previously living. Many of us have jobs, appointments, community, and family that we want to remain close to.
4. Offers must be made clear and in writing so we can hold service providers and the mayor's office accountable to what they are promising us. We need to know where we will be going, how long we will be allowed to stay, and what we can bring. This is the absolute bare minimum in terms of how we should be approached if we are to have a genuine relationship. If there is no clear path to housing, what are we doing here?
5. We demand more than two bags. A two-bag rule is ridiculous. We are real people that deserve to be treated fairly and humanely.



J-Town Action Solidarity's weekly Power Up To The People Housing For Juanita and Aetna Street Solidarity

6. We demand a copy of the rules for the shelter hotels we will be sent to before we are sent there. We cannot make informed decisions about where we will live without knowing the rules.
7. No family separation. People who wish to stay together and stay with their pets must be allowed to do so.
8. Stop forcing people to give up their tents in exchange for a motel room. That is creepy and weird.
9. We demand decent food that meets our dietary needs.
10. We demand full medical teams and wraparound services at every hotel. This includes counseling, housing, and signing people up for IDs and benefits that will better our lives.
11. We demand dual enrollment at a local community college so we can take classes. This should be an incentivized program!
12. We demand harm reduction be made available and readily accessible on every floor and that staff be trained to prevent overdoses.
13. We align ourselves with the demands set forth by UTACH (Unhoused Tenants Against Carceral Housing) and others who are fighting for better living conditions inside shelters and programs like Inside Safe.
14. We demand a meeting with Mayor Karen Bass and her team to ensure our needs are met.
15. No Curfews.

From the Jasmine Ave. Community

May 10, 2023

Dear Council District 5,

We are the Jasmine Community, a group of residents living on Jasmine Ave. in Los Angeles. Yes, we are unhoused; and many of us have been waiting on unfulfilled promises of permanent housing for years.

We have been told by service providers with the city to stay in this location or risk losing access to these housing opportunities, however, on May 18th CD5 threatened to forcibly displace us without meeting any of our basic needs. This displacement will harm us, especially since nobody has anything to offer us.

We're all on lists, but none of our options are open. We were planning to have a home to celebrate Thanksgiving, then Christmas, then Spring, and yet Sunburst and Safe Parking still are not open, so why are you making us move?

We have even been told that the LAPD will build warrants to be able to arrest us and run our serial numbers on our vehicles. They do this because when you criminalize us with 56.11 (which displaced us from our original spot by Smart and Final) and 41.18, the police have even more power to harass, intimidate, and threaten us, catch and release us, and hold guns to our heads.

On Saturday, May 6th, our friend Jesse lost his life waiting for this housing. These failed programs kill, and displacement will hurt us even more. We want house keys, not handcuffs.

Nothing is being offered besides more pain, stress, and suffering for our community. Moving our RVs will lead to a rat race of having to move every day. During the hours of 2 a.m to 6 a.m., where are we supposed to go? We can't get up early and find a new place every day. This is not possible for us, financially or physically. Even those of us whose RVs run would go broke having to move every 72 hours.

Give us funding to move to a location where we can be, don't tow us to a junkyard and a demolition site. Until there is somewhere for us to be, and until you can help us move in a humane manner, we should not be moved. If we can't afford housing here, where many of us have grown up, at least we have carved out a life and a community for ourselves.

The Jasmine Community's proposed solutions:

- Do not force us to move without our housing options being open. We want to move to housing, not to another site that is even more dangerous to us.
- Do not tow our vehicles. This would harm us more than you know.
- Help us work to store our items, but don't do it all in one day. We need time just like anyone else who has to move.
- We want written agreements. We have been lied to and tricked and ignored for so long. If you say you're going to do something, it has to show.
- Do not continue to displace us and make LAPD's harassment of us even more dangerous.
- Give us time and treat us like human beings.

We don't need anymore studies, we need housing. Please work with us, not against us.

- Jasmine Ave. Community

From the Housing for Juanita Residents

Mayor Karen Bass and PATH director, Jennifer Hark Dietz

In 2022, your campaign for Mayor promised to genuinely and equitably address the housing crisis in LA. Since becoming Mayor, your signature program, Inside Safe has displaced residents of encampments city-wide into motels, without providing them genuine paths to stable housing and employment. Rather than addressing the root causes that lead to housing insecurity, Inside Safe only addresses the housing crisis by hiding people in motels, away from the public eye. With your reelection campaign approaching, you've been falsely representing Inside Safe as an effective solution to the housing crisis, despite how it fails to provide reliable caseworkers or adequate facilities for its participants.

All over Los Angeles, encampments grow because even with jobs, workers struggle to keep up with the unchecked rise in the cost of rent by greedy landlords year after year. This is especially true now, as key Covid-era protections are discontinued by the city government. As these protections end, evictions increase—and, with no social safety nets, more and more Angelenos are forced to live on the streets.

Inside Safe program participants shared serious concerns: they do not have case managers readily available to support them, they experience harassment, are poorly treated by the on-site staff, and lack adequate facilities. The residents have 2 main demands to improve the quality of the program and fulfill the Mayor's overdue promises.

The demands are:

1. Ensure the residents have reliable, proactive, consistent, and accessible case managers. The case managers should be available to provide resources and meet weekly with the residents. The meetings would ensure a path to permanent housing, facilitate mental health services, and support the residents in preparing for work interviews. The case managers should advocate to allow family members to visit residents inside their rooms, or create common areas where they can visit with each other. This is critical for the residents' recovery and well-being.
2. Provide proper facilities for the residents. Proper facilities should include on-site laundry, on-site medical professionals, reliable wifi, an on-site computer for applying to job listings and accessing social services, proper sanitation and handling of garbage, and materials for pets/service animals.



Edited Excerpts from:

My People Shall Live: The Autobiography of a Revolutionary

By Leila Khaled | 1973

13. Joined your sisters to protest against the Zionist occupation of Palestine." I agreed that the demonstration was desirable, but insisted that school work was more important. Mother was surprised by my treasonous talk, and lectured me on the three historic days of betrayal that every Palestinian should remember: the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917; the partition of Palestine, November 29, 1947; and the proclamation of the state of Israel, May 15, 1948. Ever since, these dates have become a vital and integral part of my life.

1952 was a turning-point in my life. I was only eight years old but the onrush of events and the background of my world of exile forced me to be politically aware. My brother first drew me into politics. I recall the first political debate between brother Mohammad and my father. Mohammad, who was 17, was enthusiastically relating to the family how a group of young Egyptian army officers overthrew the corrupt King Farouk of Egypt. Father was opposed to the revolt and insisted that the officers were a group of military upstarts, who knew nothing about politics and overthrew a king who had fought for the defence of Palestine in 1948. Mohammad was furious. He reminded father that the King was a British political stooge who lost the war in Palestine and did nothing for four years to help recover Palestine. Moreover, Mohammad continued, "The King and his retinue were decadent to the bones and they squandered the wealth of Egypt on themselves rather than on the people." The family was cheering for Mohammad as he proved that he was better informed than father. Mohammad had collected the documentary evidence from Rose El-Yousef- an Egyptian journal - and pasted it on the wall of the boys' room. He read it all to father, who acquiesced and proudly congratulated his eldest son on being so well informed and committed to the revolution. Mohammad became our political commentator and all of us, especially the girls, learned enormously from him. Furthermore, being at the American University of Beirut on a scholarship added to his prestige and put him in close association with the fledgling Arab Youth Movement, which provided him with a wealth of information and organisational skill.

In the autumn of 1952, I enrolled at the

same "exclusive" Palestinian school set up by the churches. This was the year of discovery and commitment. In the next three or four years my political and social ideas were formed, and my political ties were made. A series of unrelated incidents set the stage for my politicisation: a violent storm; a harsh cold; a collection for a refugee girl.

The pleasant summer of 1952 turned into a violent winter in early December. A storm struck and blew over our school tent which held over seventy children. A few were injured; the rest of us had the daylights scared out of us. In the midst of pouring icy rain, tears and mud, I stood silently crying as the children screamed and ran for cover. It was a symbol of our ruined Arab homeland. Local protests and heartrending stories followed, but do no avail. Western Christian charity had its limits. The tent was re-erected; there was no alternative.

At this point, the tent had little or no meaning to me. It was not long after this incident that it began to dawn on me that tens of thousands of people permanently lived in tents, not just for games or schooling. In early 1953, a bitter cold spell set in in Sour; beautiful white snow covered the mountains of Lebanon, and the mountains of Galilee. Slush and ice covered the whole town. I caught a bad cold but we had no medicine and I had to keep on going to school in my worn-out sandals. One windy February day I struggled home through nearly two feet of snow. I was freezing to death. I entered the house crying pitifully.

I shouted: "I can't take any more! I need a pair of socks and a pair of shoes. Sandals without socks are for the summer, not for the winters of Lebanon." Mother looked at me sadly, "Darling, don't you think I know that?" "If you did," I screamed, "you'd buy me a pair of shoes and socks." Angrily she answered: "You should be thankful you have a pair of sandals to wear and a house to come to. Other children have neither sandals nor homes. They don't even have enough to eat. Do you understand Leila? Do you?" "No, I don't," I replied angrily. But I enquired further. "Why don't they have sandals, homes and bread? Why don't they have them?" Mother replied quietly: "They have no

14. money because their parents are like us,

they lost their homes in Palestine and there is no work available in Lebanon. You see, Leila, those Palestinians who had no relatives elsewhere in the Arab world had no place to go but the open desert or the slums of Arab towns and somehow survive until UNRWA was organised. Imagine where we might have landed had we not had relatives in Sour and I had not had a few bracelets from the old days which I could sell to buy you food for the first few months. Where would we have gone, where would we be now? I wonder if you would have survived to this day. What might have happened to you and your sisters and brothers had I been killed or taken away by the Zionists when we were on our way from Haifa to Sour? Don't you know that the Zionists slaughtered our people, and those who escaped them died of thirst or starvation? I could tell you a million tales of woe, but, I want you to know only this: you are an alien here in Lebanon, and your homeland is under foreign occupation. We fought and fought valiantly to save the land; we lost and were driven out. You Leila, and your brothers and sisters, must never forget Palestine and you must do your utmost to recover her."

I imagined I was listening to a sad story that had happened somewhere else to someone else. I was affected deeply but I didn't feel that I was part of the story. The truth finally hit me in the spring of 1953, when I was nine. I was competitive and regarded myself as the brightest child of not only my family but of my class. My self-assurance was undermined by Samirah, a little girl from the camps- the scum of the earth, so I thought. I was terribly upset when I learned that she stood first in the class, way ahead of me. I despised her, my jealousy overwhelmed me. I think I even hit her, and I certainly insulted her. Once we even fought in the classroom. When the teacher discovered us locked in a hair-pulling match she promptly separated us, surprised to see her two smartest pupils fighting. Outside, the fighting resumed, I was the aggressor once again. The teacher took me inside for a little talk; it was a talk I shall never forget. She explained to me that poor peasant children were just as bright as my family and friends. "Besides," she added, "they are the true children of Palestine because they live on the land, and cultivate and harvest it. Virtue is a part of the people of the land,

and the simple folk are the backbone of all societies. Those peasants," she continued, "did not leave Palestine willingly like the rich people who now live in villas in Cairo and Beirut. They were forced out to make room for the Zionist intruders. Leila, those are the people of Palestine. You must learn to love them, be part of them, serve them." The lesson taught, she called Samirah back into the room and told her to shake hands with me and to take me to her tent-home to show me how she lived and her parents and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians lived. Samirah did.

After a tour of the camp, I realised that I was living in luxury. I knew how fortunate I was and how despicable and arrogant the rich people must be. I suddenly became aware of class differences in that upsetting spring for me. As I grew older, I acquired the necessary intellectual and moral ideology to understand what I had felt in that camp, why class society must be abolished and socialism established in its place. But, Samirah, my classmate and class sister and Amira, my teacher and working-class advocate, taught me that first lesson of true freedom and true humanity. They taught me more in a few hours than a thousand books could have done in a hundred years. In that camp, I saw misery, hunger, and humiliation. I saw the maimed, the diseased, the broken-hearted. I saw bare-footed children with swollen stomachs, fathers with heads bowed, pale mothers with sickly babies, grandparents in despair. I saw the meaning of poverty and hunger, and felt the despair of deprivation to my bones. I did not shy at the sight of filthy tents and I was not deterred by the sight of death. I toured the whole camp and tried to feel how the people felt. I returned home intoxicated by the wine of reality. I was crucified and redeemed at the same time. Ever since, I have loved the poor and marched with them to overthrow our mutual oppressors. Over 700,000 Palestinians still live in these refugee camps. Some of them do menial work in nearby towns, most of them rot in idleness. They live on meagre UN doles and have no hope of salvation without an Arab-Palestinian revolution.

My faith in myself and my fellow students was greatly strengthened in the spring of 1953.

AETNA STREET INSIDE SAFE TIMELINE

This timeline focuses on the experiences and resistance of the Van Nuys Aetna Street community surrounding the September 2023 Inside Safe sweeps.

2023



Aetna residents publish open letter to Karen Bass detailing their demands concerning Inside Safe.

03.20



Aetnapalooza Street Festival

04.22



Aetna Street Community Healing Night. An Aetna resident is arrested.

05.09

Aetna Street June birthday and pride celebration, karaoke. LAPD arrives.

06.27



Aetna Street receives a notice for a sweep on Tuesday, August 15.

08.13

More than 100 people show up for community defense blockade and solidarity, including medical students and tenants; sanitation agrees to a spot clean.

08.15



Weekly sweeps commence. 4 arrests of Aetna residents that day. 20+ people lost everything they own.

09.14



First round of fencing installed, north side of Aetna street is fenced off to Aetna residents. Aetna activist is arrested.

09.15



UCLA Institute for Inequality and Democracy submits an open letter to Mayor Karen Bass regarding Inside Safe.

10.02

Aetna activist arrested for requesting more time and accommodation during a sweep.

10.05



"41.18, Fences, Arrests: Aetna Street Community Speak Out on Violence from the City of LA Against the Unhoused" Aetna Street press conference at Orange Line Station.

10.13



2024

Green Eyes passes away

01.16

During a week of storms that sweep, LAPD remaining Aetna and erected

02.09

Timeline of Displacement and Resistance

ember 2023 Inside Safe Operation, compiled from accounts by @aetnastreetssolidarity, @rvtvshow, and LA public press.

Community
Aetna
ed.

Aetna Street Bridge home residents receive letters threatening them with eviction if they share food and laundry services with anyone living outside of the shelter

05.15



Aetna Street Community Visioning Night

05.16

Street Views Issue 1 published



Aetna Street Community Powered Vision was put up on walls along the street. LAPD targeted community night meeting for the first time, arresting one community member

06.20



08.23

Terry Mason Kendrick, a resident of Aetna street, passes away.

09.08

Inside Safe Operation announced to residents of Aetna Street

Inside Safe Mass Displacement Operation (Aetna Street, Van Nuys). These are 12 hour days where every agency known to LA (LAPD, LA SAN, Mayor's Office) shows up to stage a mass displacement of unhoused people living on Aetna Street.

09.12 - 09.14



09.21

Another sweep of Aetna

09.28

Round of fencing and on Aetna Street



Metro conducts sweep on remaining Aetna residents and throws away most of Aetna residents' belongings. 2 unhoused women are detained. An elder with a pacemaker is forced to move. While people are recovering from the morning sweep over lunch, LAPD arrives and draws guns.

09.29



A resident is arrested and his car is towed.

10.19

Aetna activist's car gets towed in retaliation for supporting Aetna residents during a sweep.

11.02

Michael Flores passes away at Palm Tree Inn, an Inside Safe hotel.



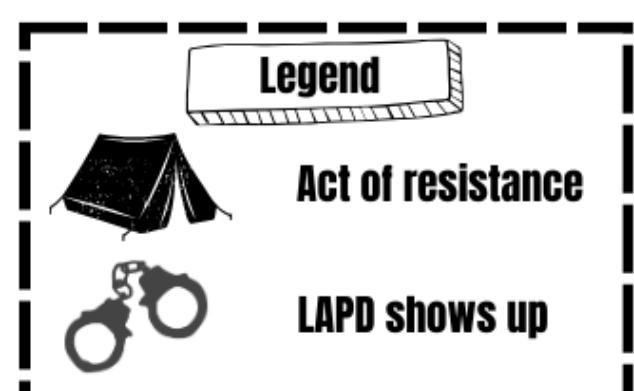
11.28

Week of historic suspended 0 displaced Aetna residents more fences.



"Without Community There is No Life: Honoring Our Ancestors Who Lived on Aetna Street" Community Memorial and Living Room

03.16



Legend



Act of resistance



LAPD shows up

From the tiny tombs to the InsideNOTSafe jail-like rooms

From LA to Oakland to Frisco “solutions” created by politricksters are killing houseless

By Tiny, formerly houseless daughter of Dee, mama of Tiburcio aka @povertyskola

*Tiny tombs, I mean tiny homes
Not a place to call our own
Tiny tombs better describes the triggerr of those
jail-like rooms*

*The InsideNOTsafe is a public relations game by
politricksters to get us houseless peoples out the way
From Huchiun to LA*

*System Set up from the Get up so that we can
fall deeper into our wounds
Inside our minds
which are struggling in a broken state
All the time*

*The Anti-social workers say
No visitors, no locked doors, no cooking, no animals
and no talking here-but never fear us houseless
people aren't actually real- these are low-key jails
cuz us houseless humans aren't supported to get
well*

*Holding on by shards of pain
lost to deadly assumptions of what we could have
been -we coulda made*

*but never fear an anti social worker is here -
we have a number -we can wait- we allegedly
have all the time to waste -we are on 1,200 housing
waitlists from the feds, the county and the state*

*This poemCast from a povertyskola goes out to all
my fellow povertyskolaz who know the struggle
inside our minds - of the isolation and the wait-
times - of the inability to get basics even if we stand
in all of their lines-*

Occupied Tongva (LA)

The death of Anjileen “Green Eyes” Swan who passed away last week in her tent, is a stunning example of the cruelty and failure of LA’s housing system. Because she had been hospitalized she lost her room and was sent back to the streets gravely ill with a pacemaker. She died within a week. Mayor Bass’ InsideSafe and Imelda Padilla’s offices were well aware of her grave health condition, “Aetna Street Solidarity.

From violent sweeps of our houseless bodies as though we are trash and vicious towing of our homes (aka cars/RV’s) which happens incessantly across occupied Turtle Island from SF to NYC under Mayoral administrations from London Breed (SF), to Jesse Areguin (Berkeley), to Erik Adams (NYC), to Karen Bass (LA), to Sheng Tao (Oakland), using money for “homeless services” to pay the exorbitant costs of sweeps, to Tiny Home villages, navigation centers, scarce and temporary shelter beds and jail -transformed motel rooms, which, like in Green Eyes case, evict each person after three days out of their rooms even if they are in the hospital, and/or forced housing referrals/forced treatment like Newsom passed into law, are not solutions because they are not informed by the people impacted by them, aka us, the houseless people or as we call ourselves at POOR Magazine; “povertykolaz”.

These “solutions” to homelessness created “about us without us” aka without the guidance, direction or leadership of us poor and houseless people or what we call Poverty Scholarship informed, are not only bound to fail, but bound to harm, often leading to our death.

The tiny tombs (Tiny Home) villages such as the ones in Oakland and Bellingham and projects like LA’s InsideSafe, which i re-named InsideNOTsafe are actually the opposite of safe or a village and in fact are dangerous for houseless people.

These projects and solutions aren’t guided by spirit, love, healing, elders or poverty scholarship like Homefulness. Instead they are rooted in numbers, budgets and scarcity models without any regard for our mental or spiritual health but simply working on a quota and numbers system about “how many houseless people they can “serve” rather than listen to what we actually need. They breed calculated, institutional words and codes like “service resistant” and “non-compliant” which are “anti-social worker code for those of us who can’t abide by carceral non-solutions like these

Occupied Nooksak (Bellingham, Washington)

“They told me I can’t cook, can’t have friends over, can’t stand outside my room, can’t smoke and can’t store my belongings, this is worse than jail,” Bobbi, an indigenous povertyskola from Pacific Northwest Turtle Island layed out the hell of trying to survive in the politrickster created tiny home village in occupied Lummi Nooksak territory aka Bellingham, Washington that she was “lucky” enough to get a referral to move to when she was on the street, suffering increased criminalization and endless violent sweeps in the middle of a freezing winter.

My Roofless Radio conversation with Bobbi was in 2021 and for the last 2 years i have been *WeSearching war (ON the poor) stories like Bobbi’s from all across Turtle Island who have struggled with these non-solutions to our poverty and homelessness.
(*Wesearch is a word I created to describe poor people led research)

The framework of Poverty Scholarship is a theory developed and coined by me and my Mama Dee when we struggled with homelessness, poverty, evictions and housing insecurity for most of my childhood and young adulthood in tandem and collaboration with fellow houseless povertyskola co-founders of POOR Magazine and became a textbook in 2019 entitled: Poverty Scholarship Theory, Art, Words and Tears Across Mama Earth

*Anti-Social worker is a word I created to describe the often harmful, not helpful aspects of the so-called “helpers” or care-takers who are mostly acting as agents of removal and the participants in the carceral state system for poor people.

Occupied Huchiun (West Oakland)

“Who are you?” the security guard asked us thru three layers of chain link fencing material separating Oakland’s “cabin community” that was the only referral given to about 50 of the hundreds of victims of the violent Wood Street Evictions earlier this year. “No visitors are allowed” and then he proceeded to re-lock up the third fence between us.

After some wrangling by the head Anti-Social Worker in charge, the security guard reluctantly unlocked the gates. While a grueling process of ID checks and calls to supervisors ensued I asked the member of Wood street Commons who we had walked over there with what they thought of the “Cabin Community” set up by the politrickster class of Oakland.

“I don’t like it and probably won’t last here very long with the insane rules but that’s all they are offering me and I have nowhere else to go,” the sisterwarrior who asked to remain anonymous shook her head from side to side and fell quiet.

“The only reason this place is a little less evil is because of all the meetings we had with them and the ideas we homeless people gave them, which they sort of listened to,” said John Janosko, houseless founding member of Wood Street Commons about the tiny home cabins, “But they are still not welcoming or liveable for a lot of our folks.”

The euphemistically named “cabins” installed by the City of Oakland politricksters and anti-social workers enlist an admixture of fear, claustrophobia and impending incarceration for every resident, a dangerous situation that has since led to the cycle of homelessness continuing for the Wood Street Commons eviction refugees.

These carceral communities specifically created for houseless residents are rife with violence, which makes sense as they are all rooted in historical hateful acts of legislative brutality, like the Ugly Laws, *Pauper Laws, *Settlement houses and Pauper prisons, sundown towns and Jim Crow to name a few. Multiple ways that being poor, houseless or disabled in public, inability to afford food or rent would be just cause for arrest or incarceration. These “laws” or lies as i call them enabled the profiting off of poverty and roots of the non-profitieer and carceral system we still deal with today .

One terrifying example was under previous Oakland mayor Libby Shaaf we had the



life-threatening insanity of the “tuff-shed” a poison leaking, flammable particle board box that literally was dangerous to sit in, much-less sleep in, and the fact that these could even be created and taken seriously, is an example of the way that our bodies are seen when we are not paying ground rent in a krapitalist system. These violent “solutions” created about us without us poor people, are flawed on purpose because our houseless bodies are not seen as human.

“I am hiding out just so I can get my wallet and important belongings,” another Sister, warrior, povertyskola resident leader with Wood Street Commons Freeway texted to me while she was getting evicted from the cabin she and her partner were placed in after the violent Wood Street Commons evictions. “They have no understanding or accommodations for people like me and my partner, we tried to be here, and now we are being evicted back to the street, again.” Freeway concluded breathless as she ran.

Occupied Yelamu (SF)

“Luis Temaj would still be here but this society thinks it’s ok to sweep humans like we are trash, like my mama always says,” said Youth Skola Tiburcio Garcia. They are sweeping people right now down the street while we are mourning Luis,” he concluded. Tiburcio spoke from a powerful ceremony POOR Magazine held last week for Luis Temaj, a humble loving houseless Mayan Sun, Brother, and friend, who was set on fire while sleeping on the streets of San Francisco on Oct 8th of 2021. To this day his family has received no justice.

Occupied Huchiun (Berkeley)

“Your friend can’t come in,”
“This is my mama,”
“I don’t care if she is G-O-D herself, she’s not coming in, we have a no visitors in room policy. Period.”

In one of the many iterations of me and mama’s homelessness we “lived” in several, cockroach and bedbug infested, box-size SRO’s (Single Room Occupancy Hotels), in other words, poor people housing. I place quotation marks around “lived” because I’m not sure if living itself can be achieved in the jail-like conditions of most of these SRO’s we were “placed” in to get us off the street.

If it wasn’t the insane litany of “rules” we had to live under, it was the ongoing poLicing we were subject to just being there.

“Who is in there?”
“My mama and me, like always.”
“Well we need to come in to inspect,” The

knocks and accusations were once or twice a week and eventually the management decided we weren’t a “good fit” because of my mama’s trauma fueled tendency to collect too many things, aka hoarding/cluttering (which i call having/keeping) and evicted us back to the street. This was just one of the many eviction wars we survived and one of the many murders of the soul that led us to dream/vision Homefulness.

Homefulness, unlike these other projects, is a homeless peoples, self-determined, rent-free, healing, forever housing solution to homelessness, created with spiritual guidance and permission from 1st Nations peoples of these occupied lands and which has been built and is thriving in Deep East Oakland which just welcomed in its 16th resident a houseless, single mama, on December 1st.

We also are clear that any poor and houseless peoples-led land liberation movement must have spiritual guidance and permission of the 1st Nations relatives of that occupied land. Homefulness would not have happened without the spiritual guidance, prayer, and permission of the Ohlone/Lisjan leaders of this part of Turtle Island and rooted in LandBack and Black Land Return frameworks and actions. This is the work myself and Land protector and Ohlone/Lisjan co-founder of Sogorea Te Land Trust, Corrina Gould, we call Decolonizing Homelessness.

Our funding sources are different as well, we povertyskolaz teach housed folks with race, class, and formal education privilege about the concept of Radical Redistribution and ComeUnity reparations in a poor people-led skool we call PeopleSkool. This is a solidarity economy in action. Self-determination means you are liberating your mind, actions and consciousness away from harmful extractive krapitalism.

Other beautiful examples of solutions are Camp Resolution in Sacramento, a beautiful poor, houseless, disabled resident run space, Nicklesville, which is a poor and houseless revolutionaries run Tiny Home village in Seattle, Camp Integrity, which is a newly launched safe camping site in Marin county and Wood Street Commons before the City of Oakland dismantled, destroyed, and evicted everyone from it.

Occupied Tongva (LA)

“We lost one of our members, Mike Flo aka Michael Flores,” Carla, a warrior shero, povertyskola and co-founder of Aetna Street Solidarity in occupied Tongva, explained to me about the forced isolation of no visitor’s policy, no community convening demanded of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11 >

SOLIDARITY

<< CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

houseless povertyskolaz placed in motel rooms in the InsideSafe project under so-called progressive mayor Karen Bass. "These aren't places for healing, we are losing folks, so many folks," Carla continued.

"Inside Safe is a citywide, voluntary, proactive housing-led strategy to bring people inside from tents and encampments, and to prevent encampments from returning. It is one feature in a comprehensive strategy to confront the homelessness crisis." Quote from LA city Gov website.

"The sweeps are constant and violent, I can't even stand in the places I used to hide without police coming to get me, and then if I don't take their referral I get arrested, they call me "service resistant" said Johnny D, one of our Roofless Radio-Tongva (LA) reporters spoke to the subliminal, not so subliminal threats stated in the LA gov website description of InsideNOTsafe, specifically the line; prevent encampments from returning, which is code for the implementation of metal barricades blocking off entire streets to anyone and/or violent architecture as we at povertyskolaz at POOR Magazine call it, i.e. weirdly large planters like San Francisco has placed everywhere houseless communities used to reside, or spikes, or removal of benches, making cities inaccessible to peoples with disabilities and elders, many of whom are also houseless, to sit, stand or live anywhere.

Homefulness residents are all people called "service resistant" and non-compliant. We are people who have struggled with having/collecting, we are revolutionaries, we are, like all people outside.

All of us co-founders of Homefulness struggle with the multiple traumas from lives spent living outside, and lives spent living inside in a hurting krapitalist system. We know the violence of incarceration, racism, ableism, eviction, addiction. And the violence of isolation and the struggles of recovery.

We hold each other in accountability and it's hard. We are constantly having to convene our internal restorative justice circles we call family elders, elephant councils and our HEALZ groups to work toward healing and repair with ourselves and each other. We teach multi-media workshops and support micro-business enterprises and the communities we are in with whatever we are able to give and distribute, to name a few of our many projects. But most of all we all know, equally importantly, that Homefulness doesn't just mean a room or a roof. It means interdependence, love and support.

This povertyskola is currently working with fellow houseless povertyskola leaders and Dean Preston's office from Yelamu (San Francisco) and Aetna Street Solidarity with support from students and comeUnity at the Luskin center at UCLA to mamafest a Homefulness, in Tongva (LA) and Yelamu (SF) as well as Revolutionary lawyers from Sustainable Economies Law Center (SELC) - stay tuned for more info.

People's Park

"On the night of January 3, 2024, the University of California, Berkeley followed through on its plans to secure and enclose People's Park after decades of conflict between the University and students and community members"



"The closure of the park took place before midnight, with hundreds of University of California Police Department, California Highway Patrol, Berkeley Police Department, and other contracted police officers from across the state in full riot gear"



"The acquisition of the park has resulted in over 160 shipping containers equipped with security cameras and illegal razor-wire forming a dystopian-looking 17-foot wall around the park's perimeter, along with ongoing and consistent police and 24/7 contracted security guard presence and surveillance, raising concerns about the cost of the entire operation to close the park and the long term impacts on students' safety, mental health, access to public space and streets, and feelings of community"



"The displacement of existing community members and support systems based in People's Park has obstructed organizers' ability to provide harm reduction services to residents of the park, resulting in the death of five now-former residents since January 3rd, including Shoty Grateful, Cornelius Pickett, James Schott, David, and Catalina"



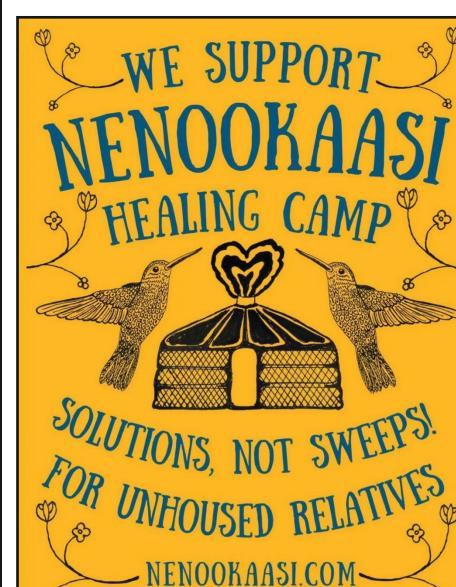
"People present during the night of January 3rd and the early morning of January 4th recount that park residents, neighbors, students, alumni and other community members, predominantly transgender people and women, were brutalized and arrested for nonviolent protest, had police weapons pointed at them, were prohibited from accessing their residences and/or forced to not leave their residences due to challenges returning, suffered surprise flood lights and construction sounds in the middle of the night"



"Students' tuition dollars were used to fund the establishment of a police state in Southside with checkpoints for students to access existing student housing, student and other community members cars being towed without prior notice, the removal of existing bike lanes and street lights, and the physical and mental impacts of a heavily armed police force occupying the park and surrounding streets in the middle of the night, brutalizing and traumatizing numerous community members, students, and alumni"



"Student leadership fundamentally disagrees with the extreme and highly punitive approach to acquiring People's Park and are disappointed in university leadership's unwillingness to address the impact of the acquisition on students and community members"



Camp Nenookaasi Brings Minneapolis' Policies Against its Unhoused Residents to the Forefront

By Ellie Zimmerman and Sadie Luetmer, Contributors • February 7, 2024

Your Source For Independent Media - No Ads or Paywalls - Viewer Supported
Minneapolis, MN — The city of Minneapolis evicted Camp Nenookaasi, the city's largest encampment of unhoused people, three times over the past month in an attempt to prevent encampments of this size and level of infrastructure from forming. After each eviction, Nenookaasi pops up again in a different spot. It gets smaller each time, but it has not disbanded.

Want more news like Street Views? Check out:



Ruth Roofless
Survival, Belonging &
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[@Roofless](https://roofless.substack.com/) <https://roofless.substack.com/>



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POOR MAGAZINE

POOR Magazine is a poor people-led/Indigenous people-led, grassroots, non-profit arts organization dedicated to providing revolutionary media access, art, education, and advocacy to silenced youth, adults, and elders in poverty across Mama Earth.
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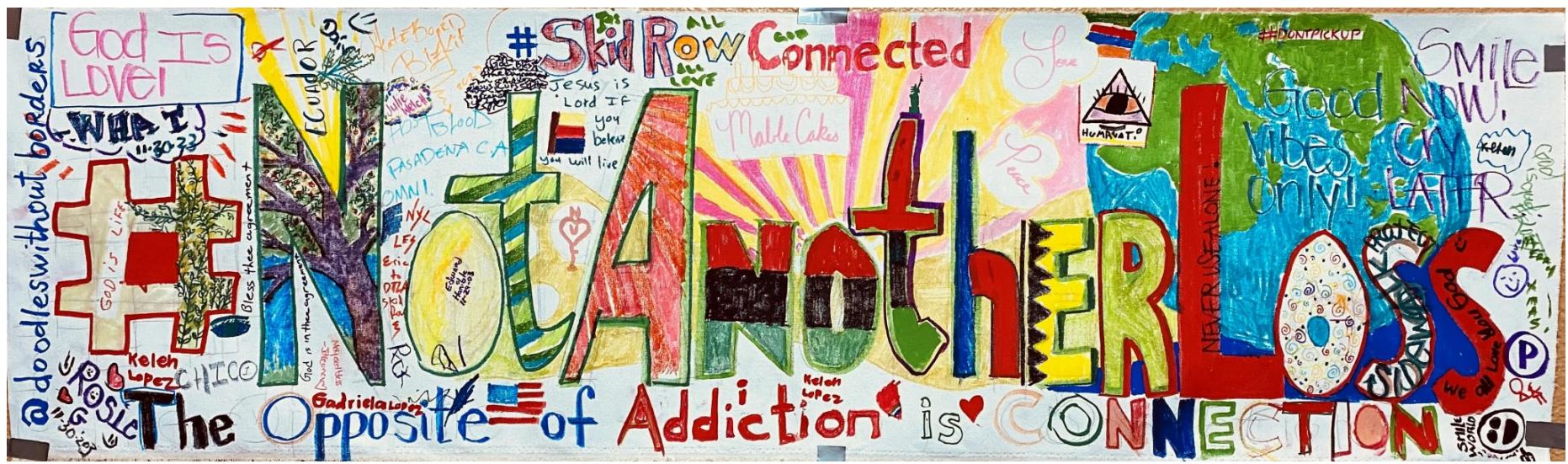
Los Angeles Public Press

LA Public Press is an independent, non-profit newsroom advocating for a better Los Angeles
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[https://lapublicpress.org/](https://lapublicpress.org)



We the Unhoused creates news and media for the unhoused by the unhoused. We foster a safe space for the unhoused community and our allies to access accurate information, education, support, camaraderie and resources to build a better tomorrow. By debunking the harmful, racist and stigmatizing myths that motivate carceral policy decisions, we hope to show people a better way, where we can all meet in the light of understanding.

@wetheunhoused
<https://www.wetheunhoused.com/>



None of us are Free until all of us are Free: Skid Row-Palestine (October 2023)

General Jeff Park (December 2023)



Skid Row Celebrates the Heritage of the Black Diaspora (February 2023)



Artwork By Doodles without Borders

Mysterious Happiness Artwork By Dwight Singleton



Please Council Hear Our Voices

By Eva Hermosa

Sit upon a hill, easy enough to do
Opposed to homelessness, leaving me blue
To walk these streets at night
Early on striving with all my might

Clothing stuck to flesh, nowhere left to change
No running water, my schedule to rearrange
Searching here, maybe there, a church may help today
But I look upon the hill, and only want to say

Must I walk these streets, bathed in scummy dirt
Hoping to find a shower, and maybe a brand new shirt
Lend me 15 minutes, rush and move aside
Hurled to the curb, dashing all my pride

Humanity is left, humbled to the ground
24 hours passed and gone, no kindness have I found
Please, my dearest friend, when the council meets again
A portable shower, a converted church, a shower for me please send.

Houseless Not Homeless

By Emptea

I'm not
A temporarily embarrassed millionaire
Who just needs your pity
I'm here to end millionaires
I'm not a victim
A charitable drop-off site
Perennially on the precipice
Of falling off the Earth
I'm a warrior
A fighter
To the ground
On the frontlines
Of ending the entire concept
Of private property
That you participate
In reproducing every day
I've been preparing for
And living in
The emergency you are still
creating
Since ages ago
I haven't been shafted out
Of my slice of this rancid pie
I'm baking a new one
I'm not a fire to be put out
I am the fire
That lights your way
I'm not homeless
I
Live
Houselessly

Querubin / Mohawk Street

By Lupita Limón

Before Memo gets laid off
he works for decades in a factory
making cherubs. Birthday after birthday,
he gifts cherubs. They hang golden
on the walls of the apartment.

I meet Memo fighting
his eviction. His daughter says
“Look, ma,” and shows her mother
my tattoos, cherubs chasing
one another across my arm.

The morning of the march
Lulu prays and it's God who lights
the concrete path where she blocks
traffic. Like it was God
who taught her to flip tables.

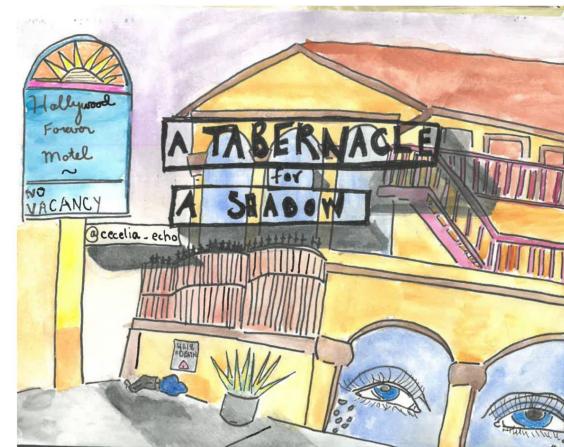
She knocks doors at home
and she knocks doors for Saint Teresa
at the church next to her home.
“¿A quien le tememos miedo,
si hay solo un juez?”

What appears lucky or foolish
is perhaps an answered prayer.
We pray to love the angels more
than we fear the devil. Then
we see the angels everywhere.

Memo, Lourdes, and their neighbors are fighting for their homes of over 30 years in Echo Park. Follow @1512mohawktentants on Instagram to learn more.

A Tabernacle for a Shadow

By Cecelia Echo



Title page: A Tabernacle for a Shadow. The exterior of the Hollywood Forever Motel. A sign with a rising sun says "No Vacancy." A figure sleeps between the wall of the building, below a sign that says "41.18 = Death". A mural with a pair of crying eyes decorates the outside of the motel.



Panel two: Interior of a motel room. Salvy Chic is washing her face in the mirror. She is a full-figured woman with brown skin and black hair. Her pet rooster is in the motel bathroom with her. The rooster has a blue green body and green feathers in his tail. Loud knocking disrupts Salvy's hygiene routine.



Panel three: Salvy Chic opens the door to her motel room. The hotel manager, a blonde man with tribal tattoos, shoulders his way into the room. He says, "Final notice! No fowl!" The hotel walls are cracked and poorly maintained.

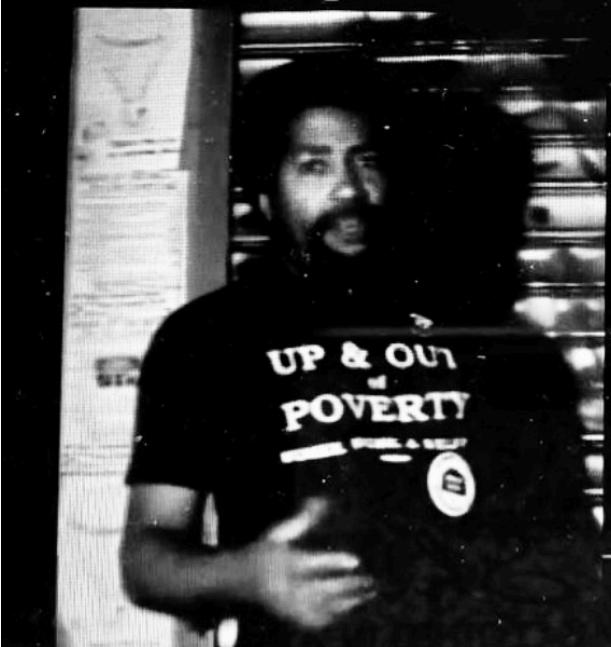


Panel four: Salvy Chic points her finger in the hotel manager's face. Her shadow grows big on the wall behind her, and the hotel manager puts up his hand, appearing to be afraid of her powers. Salvy Chic says, "You sayin' I gotta give up my cock or go?"



Panel five: "Then I must leave!" Salvy Chic arrives at Echo Park Lake with her rooster on her shoulder. She is wearing a pink top with her name on it and a pink hat, and her black hair is blowing in the wind. The statue of a faceless man and some trees are behind her. There are long shadows on the sidewalk and grass.

An Illegal Housing Takeover Movement

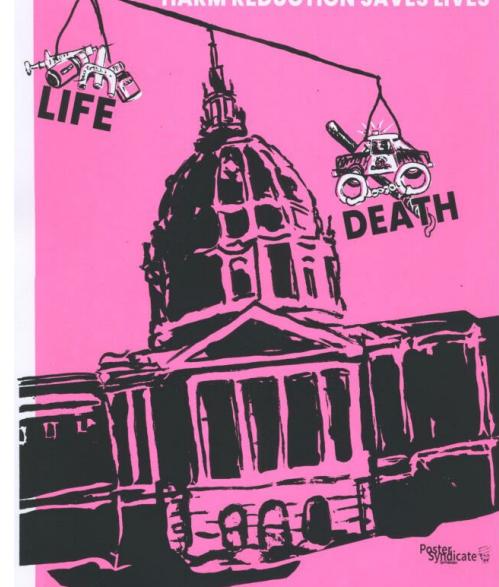


"It can be done. If people take the initiative of breaking into these houses. Forget about it being against law. I don't care. Hell, I'm dying in streets. That should be against the law."

- Ron Casanova, May Day 1990

END OVERDOSE NOW

FUND OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITES
HARM REDUCTION SAVES LIVES



Surthrival Tip #1

By Emptea

The most important Surthrival Tip i have to offer after doing this for ten years is that we, as people living houselessly, need to maintain consistent consciousness around the understanding that we are in a minute-by-minute battle for autonomy over space and the legitimacy to take it up - and we are in this particular battle, unlike housed people, precisely because we do not conform to the hegemonically prescribed method of taking up space. - We are not living inside an air-conditioned box designated as private property that we are paying for, as is the expectation and aspiration in a settler-colonial state.

When i say space, i mean more than physical, which is obvious: we are considered an odious pest by most normies for taking up physical space in their line of sight. We have to contend with that disdain by

developing our own righteous narratives about ourselves - and insisting on them - despite the rest of the world - and this can of course be quite difficult when a good portion of the rest of the world has access to guns and the power - the cultural and institutional legitimacy - to have them deployed.

But there are other spaces we are forced to defend in a conscious way that housed normies are not: psychological, social, emotional, spiritual, mental. Living houselessly presents a kind of social death in this society, against which we have to fight for the legitimacy to exist, and the trauma of that affects us in all of these spaces - and we do not have privacy when that trauma manifests.

It is a very precarious position to have all of these spaces contested all of the time. For my own part, I've had to develop quite a bit of skill in legitimizing myself in order to surthrive, and mirthful devilish joy in sweet, sweet resistance has had to replace box wine as my bestest buddy - and that replacement would have only been possible through my concurrent cultivation of community. With whom to join in the mirth of this resistance we have no choice but to wage. Ironically, having to define and legitimize myself on my own terms, against these odds, has been the most galvanizing thing I've ever been through. It

forced me to more consciously choose to live inside this body on this planet, outside the aspirations of the state identity i was conditioned to inhabit, in a way i never would have if I'd remained housed.

Material practices and tools which, aside from self-storytelling and meaning-making, and community cultivation, have helped me surthrive:

Movement: high-intensity interval dance (what i call Dance Punk), running, stairs, resistance training, Sun Salutations; singing and developing the voice as an instrument of the body capable of making art; caring for dogs and being a good pack member; coffee; cooking and eating food with lots of vegetables, particularly root vegetables and weeds like nettle and dandelion; fermenting vegetables and sprouting legumes and grains to remind myself that i am in a reciprocal relationship with the planet that feeds me (my motto is, "i lentil, therefore i am!"); listening to music and podcasts to define my own soundscape when that of the world is too much to bear; building fires to heat drink and food over my woodstove; building trusting relationships and practicing mutual aid and resistance with those with whom I'm in certain and loving Solidarity.

Free high-tech drug testing in Hollywood and East Los Angeles!

By GenericFullyGrownPerson

UCLA is running a multi-year harm reduction study called Drug Checking Los Angeles. The goal of the study is to determine if people are using the drugs they think they are using. Via an anonymous ten minute process, study organizers analyze tiny samples of your drugs using an advanced machine called a spectrometer. The spectrometer does not destroy your drugs and they give it back after the analysis. A spectrometer looks at a substance on a molecular level to identify what substances are in the sample. This includes uncut drugs, mixtures of drugs, and non-drug components. They also use test strips for some substances.

The study does not ask for your name. The staff do ask some demographic questions, what you think the drug is and your general source (as in off the street or from a friend or a pharmacy). This information and the test results will be used to obtain funding for further public services such as harm reduction supplies, treatment, and recovery. If you don't want to answer their questions, they will still test your drugs.

Oftentimes, the drugs that we purchase are not what we think they are. Dealers, suppliers, and manufacturers commonly adulterate, or add substances to their drugs. Sometimes they utilize non-drug ingredients called "fillers" which don't necessarily get you high or hurt you. This can include baking soda, sugar, talcum powder. Fillers add volume and weight to the drug letting the seller charge more for less. Sometimes, substances aren't even drugs- they are all filler. Sometimes, other drugs are mixed in deliberately. For instance, caffeine and a numbing chemical called lidocaine can be added to cocaine to enhance the energy boost and simulate the numbing effect. Ketamine can be mixed with fentanyl to increase the sedative effect. Occasionally, dealers sell mixtures that don't even contain the drug they say it does at all.

One of the greatest risks drug users face today is the unexpected presence of fentanyl. Fentanyl is extremely strong and even tiny amounts pose a risk of overdose. Dealers will often mix in fentanyl to boost the effects or simulate other drugs, but fentanyl can also accidentally contaminate other drugs the dealer prepares or bags up. This means it's possible to overdose on fentanyl even if you think your drugs don't contain it. Even with testing, it is always safest to use a small amount first, use with others, and have and know how to use naxolone/Narcan.

This journalist went to the Hollywood test location to test a substance and had a good experience. I covered my face to prevent the spread of Covid and to protect my identity. The program does not work with law enforcement but there's no need to trust their word when I can easily put on a mask. There were two staff members at a table with a machine. I gave them a substance and they took a super small amount (the size of a pinhead) out of the bag and put it on the spectrometer.

While it was processed, they asked me the demographic survey questions. They did not ask my name and there were no cameras at the table. The machine finished and then they used test strips to specifically test for fentanyl, meth, and benzos. Strips are used for those substances because they're even more sensitive than the machine. They then put the sample back in the bag. They told me what was in my substance. I was pleased. It was what I bought and it wasn't cut with anything. The staff were very nice and patiently answered my questions. As a bonus, across the lot there was a harm reduction table with pipes, needles, tourniquets, bandages, and other supplies.

I will be regularly testing my substances with this free service to see if I'm getting what I'm paying for. I want to know what to expect when I use them. This kind of testing is usually \$150 a test and mail order. I'm glad it will be free and quick for our community for several years.

Drug checking services are currently available in Hollywood and East LA. Email checkingLA@proton.me for specifics. Learn more at drugcheckinla.com

Living in a Hotel/Motel Shelter? Know Your Rights!

Over the past few years, LA has started providing shelter for unhoused folks in hotels and motels—first as part of Project Roomkey and now, as part of Inside Safe. Many participants in the programs have gotten kicked out, without any understanding of why or what rights they have if that happens.

A new law in California that went into effect last year makes it clear that people staying in hotels as part of programs like Inside Safe and Project Roomkey have rights! The new law doesn't answer all the questions we have about what rights they have, but it does make it very clear that people can't just be kicked out of these programs for no reason. Below are some of the most important protections. Important to know: as of now, this law is only in effect from now until January 1, 2025.

Does the program have to file an Unlawful Detainer (eviction) to kick me out?

Probably not. The new law makes it pretty clear that programs that are running shelters for the City in hotels or motels (like Inside Safe or Project Room Key) don't have to go to court or follow UD procedures to kick someone out--as long as they meet specific requirements like providing participants with a written termination procedure and written termination notices.

What rights do I have as a shelter participant if they want to kick me out?

The law is explicit that you have a right to:

- Receive a written termination policy that spells out the reasons you can be terminated from the program and the procedure they will use to terminate participants;
- Get thirty days notice of termination, in writing, except if the removal is because of a "direct threat" to another person or to destroy the property;
- The notice has to spell out, in easy to understand language, the reason for the termination and your right to a reasonable accommodation if you have a disability;
- Challenge the decision to terminate you by appealing through a grievance process.

When can I use the grievance process if I get kicked out?

You can use the grievance process any time after you get a notice of termination, or if you get kicked out because of a "direct threat," any time.

If they do decide to kick me out, can I get placed in another shelter?

The program has to make a good faith effort to find another placement if you're terminated, and they have to document the steps they took, in writing.

While you're in the hotel, you have some other rights under the new law too:

Hotel/motel operators can't:

- Impose restrictions on the use of facilities or amenities at the hotel;
- Restrict the ability of program participants to freely enter or exit the property;
- Charge residents of the hotel for things like room key replacements that don't apply to hotel "guests"

What's Really Happening Inside The Mayor's "Inside Safe"

By Kris Rehl

When Mayor Karen Bass took office in December 2022, she declared a state of emergency on homelessness in the City of Los Angeles, granting herself more power and removing guardrails meant to ensure transparency and accountability. The Mayor made lofty promises about what Inside Safe would deliver: permanent housing and wraparound services, including mental health.

Funding granted to Bass for her signature "re-housing" program still required regular reports to City Council, detailing expenses and results—like how many people were housed each week. But Bass refused to release these reports for several months even as residents shared countless stories of inhumane conditions at the program's motels, detailing starvation, roaches, bed bugs, harassment from staff, increasingly carceral conditions, and more.

Karen Bass admitted she was treating the program like she was "building the plane while flying it." Who the fuck wants to be 30,000 feet in the air when the plane's still being built? Sounds more like Mayor Karen Boeing.

In its first year, Inside Safe spent at least \$93.8 million to "permanently" house just 255 people. For context, the City of Los Angeles is home to an estimated 46,260 unhoused people as of January 2023. In mid-2023, LA City Council approved \$250 million from the city's budget to fund Inside Safe for another year, not including the program's other funding sources from the state, federal government, and more.

Viewing these results as unacceptable, a federal judge ordered an audit of the Inside Safe program in March 2023. Even though the people of Los Angeles elected City Controller Kenneth Mejia to perform such audits at no additional cost, Karen Bass demanded a private audit of Inside Safe that would cost the city millions of dollars. What is she afraid the Controller might find? What is she hiding?

In the face of Mayor Bass continuing to

combat transparency, a coalition of mutual aid groups surveyed people living at nine Inside Safe motels across six LA City Council Districts to give voice to the people living with the consequences of her negligence. The median move-in date of survey respondents was October 2023. More than 34% entered Inside Safe over a year ago.

Housing

Permanent housing is the stated goal of Inside Safe, but 70% of respondents said no one from the program has worked with them to find housing in any capacity. One resident shared, "They never talk to us about housing. They don't treat us like human beings."

The program only helped 9% of respondents even obtain housing vouchers. One resident said Inside Safe didn't help them obtain a voucher, so they resorted to seeking assistance from an outside organization.

Mental Health

Even though Mayor Bass continues to claim Inside Safe is providing mental health treatment, 75% of respondents reported they haven't been offered mental health services. Of those who have received mental health services, only five respondents said they met with a provider more than one time.

Many residents have reported struggling with anxiety, depression, and poor mental health, exacerbated by Inside Safe's enforcement of a no-visitor policy, resulting in severe isolation for many. "I'm struggling with depression and we can't visit other rooms," said one resident. "That makes it really difficult."

Another echoed this feeling, describing their experience as "too isolating" because they're "not allowed to have anyone around, just



us in a room by ourselves. We were given a different impression of what this program would be like when we moved here."

Services

More than a third of respondents reported not knowing who their case manager is, and 45% of respondents said Inside Safe hasn't offered any additional types of services such as medical treatment, ticket clinics, assistance finding employment, job training, ID services, or harm reduction. "You would imagine that they would let you know about services they offer," said one resident.

Conditions at Inside Safe Motels

The majority of respondents reported the rules at Inside Safe locations becoming more strict and carceral since moving in, including new rules that bar residents from visiting each other's rooms and prison-like room checks that have resulted in violations of privacy and the trashing of residents' belongings.

A public campaign was organized that successfully pressured Inside Safe to start serving food, but the quality of meals has sharply declined. Two out of three respondents reported that the program's food has made them sick. Residents shared that the "food is horrible" and "sometimes expired." 29% of respondents said the food has made them sick 5 or more times, and one resident shared that she felt so ill that she felt she would have to go to the hospital.

The program does not honor religious observations in residents' diets either. "They don't respect religion with meals," one reported, saying they serve a lot of pork products. "You either eat it or you starve."

Even for those who can afford groceries, Inside Safe has undermined their ability to make their own meals. "They don't want us to cook. They took all of our food cooking appliances."

Not-So Permanent Housing

After 18 months, Inside Safe has evicted more people from their motels than it has placed in permanent housing. According to LA Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) data, 440 Inside Safe participants are "currently permanently housed." If you read "currently permanently" and thought—that's an oxymoron—you're right. But approximately 130 people who were "permanently" housed by Inside Safe are no longer housed.

That's largely because the majority of Inside Safe's "permanent" housing placements are actually just time-limited subsidies. In most cases, that means a person only receives assistance with their rent for a few months or a year before they have to pay full price. The average rent for a studio apartment in Los Angeles is currently \$1,668 while minimum wage is just \$17.28. Now, 130 people no longer have "permanent" housing. How many more who were "permanently" housed by Inside Safe will join them?

Tragic Outcomes

The media hasn't covered the 34 deaths at Inside Safe locations, many of which could have been prevented with harm reduction services. But Mayor Bass isn't interested in saving lives or housing people. There's a reason she was building the plane while flying it: she's in a rush to hide encampments, RVs, and any form of visible poverty from her wealthy donors' line of sight. No matter how many people she hurts.

City Reports back on 41.18

A new report from LAHSA on Los Angeles Municipal Code 41.18 has been released—a year late. The law, which prohibits sitting, lying, or storing objects in many areas across LA and has been used to justify brutal sweeps since its passing in 2021.

The report shows that:

- From December 2021 to November 2023 there were 174 sweeps related to 41.18.
- 81% of encampments saw people return after sweeps.
- 94% of displaced people wanted shelter, of those, only 18% received it.
- LA County spent \$1.7 million on 41.18 signs and \$17 million on LAPD overtime enforcement.
- People were cited 3,183 times.
- Nearly half of the arrests in 2023 (836) were done by the Devonshire Division in the northwest San Fernando Valley (District 12), even though it has one the smallest populations of unsheltered people in the city. Councilmember John Lee is a major proponent of 41.18.
- Only 2 people were housed as a result of 41.18 sweeps.
- Over 1000 arrests made.

Do It Yourself!

Cut this out and paste it in your neighborhood! We suggest watered-down craft glue or traditional wheatpaste

Recipe for wheatpaste: 4 parts flour, 1 part water, whisk together and boil

41.18 = DEATH

A large pink tent icon is centered on the page.

REMEMBRANCE

Anjileen "Green Eyes" Swan



In Loving Memory, 1969-2024

We are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of our friend Anjileen "Green Eyes" Swan who passed away January 16th, 2024 inside her tent, just a block away from Aetna St. Her death is a stunning example of the cruelty & failure of LA's housing system. Because she had been hospitalized, she lost her room at the Econo Motor Inn on Sepulveda Blvd (run by Volunteers of America) & was sent back to the streets. The City of LA, including Mayor Karen Bass' Inside Safe & CM Imelda Padilla's office were well aware of Anjileen's grave health condition. She moved into a tent, with major health concerns, including a pace-maker. She died within a week. Green Eyes' death is not the exception, but the rule. Motel programs like the ones run by VOA that evict people after 3 days are complicit in the deaths of people like Green Eyes.

Green Eyes was a sharp & outspoken woman, who lived fearlessly, & in service of others. She was an elder, friend, mother. We are angered, traumatized & heartbroken by her death. The last week of her life she was hospitalized & stranded in Las Vegas. We were able to get her a bus ticket back to LA, but she had been exited from her motel program, because she had not shown up for three days.

As our community mourns & grieves the loss of our friend, we hold the memory of Green Eyes in our hearts. She showed up weekly to our community nights to organize clothing & book donations & set up our table to meet friends who sought the warmth of good company, a much needed laugh, & survival supplies. She loved to read, feed people, give out cards with affirmations. She was our elder that we looked to for guidance. We are lost without you. Even with major health issues, Green Eyes found it important to share the truth about how unhoused people were being treated by our city. She was vocal about systems that betray people living on the streets.

She lost her housing after getting sick & ended up back on Aetna St. She felt a duty to speak out against the harm LA brings to the unhoused.

We will never forgive a system that so brutally throws people away. We will never stop fighting for a world that brings warmth & liberation to those living outside.

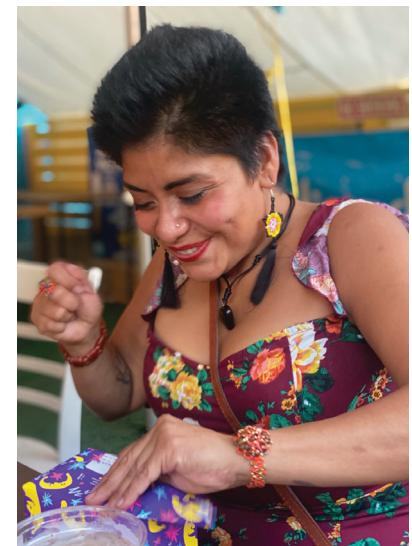
We love you forever.

THE 10 POINT HEALTH PROGRAM OF THE HEALTH REVOLUTIONARY UNITY MOVEMENT

1. We want Community-Worker Control of all health services in our oppressed communities
2. We want the right to form organizations of patients and workers to fight for improved working conditions, better patient care, and to make health policies
3. We want all new hospitals currently under construction to be built immediately to serve the needs of our oppressed communities.
4. We want full employment and upgrading for our people in all health facilities, and open admissions to all health science schools.
5. We want free health care for all people.
6. We want community-run health clinics on every block to deal with minor health problems.
7. We want door-to-door preventive care to deal with sanitation control, nutrition, drug addiction, child day care, and senior citizen services.
8. We want educational programs that expose the leading health problems, such as unemployment, poor housing, racism, malnutrition, police brutality, and all other forms of exploitation.
9. We want community, students, unions, and worker organizations to actively support and fight for these programs in the interests of our people.
10. The role of HRUM is to educate and unite all our people and to expose the corrupt health system that keeps our people weak and unable to fight for self-determination and complete liberation.



Jessica "Queen" Mendez



Our Queen of Echo Park
In Loving Memory, June 18, 1988 - May 10, 2024

Queen passed away on the evening of May 10th, 2024 after being hospitalized. Queen is survived by her mother, five daughters, a son, and a granddaughter, along with family and friends who will miss her deeply. She was 35 years old.

Jessica "Queen" Mendez moved to Echo Park on February 15th, 1991 at the age 3. Echo Park was her playground, her home, her sanctuary. She was the daughter of a proud and humble Yaqui woman from Sonora, Mexico who sold corn by the lake. Her mother shares fond memories of Queen who, from a young age, did everything she could to help her mother make ends meet. She never forgot her roots, and she dedicated her life to her community of Echo Park, where she raised five girls.

Queen touched countless lives through her powerful speeches, her dedication to helping others, and her commitment to the liberation of all people. She will be remembered as a fierce organizer for housing justice for those living at the Echo Park Lake community and for her lasting contributions as a community scholar and researcher with the Institute on Inequality and Democracy at UCLA.

Queen was a mother, a daughter, an indigenous woman, an undocumented immigrant, an activist, an organizer, a truth-teller, a bruja, a poet, a lover, a friend, but to those of us who knew her and loved her, she will forever and always be Queen of Echo Park. Her legacy will never be forgotten and her life was her testimony to give. It is written on the walls, in prophecy, in dreams, in the parks, in the streets. She was a warrior for her people. She never stopped fighting for a better future for her children.

Our Queen was an indigenous immigrant mother, daughter, activist, organizer, worker, bruja, friend. She was raised in Echo Park and ended up living in a tent in a community that was organizing at Echo Park Lake and was part of a movement led by the poor. She organized me, she made our movement more loving, more complex, more fierce, more honest, she was filled with contradictions. She saw the world as it was, she lived through it all and she still fought for it. Dying at 35 is not peaceful or beautiful. It's political. Look at those of us who are dying on the streets, in our cars, of treatable diseases, believe us when we tell you we are dying. Because we are. We're dying from this madness every fucking day. The only hope we have is to change it. May our Queen of Echo Park live forever.

Gustavo Otzoy



In Loving Memory, 1966-2023

Our friend, brother, comrade, leader, and teacher Gustavo Otzoy passed peacefully in his sleep last week. Gustavo joined the tenant movement in 2020 after he was evicted from his home in Palmdale and became homeless for the first time. He found his way to Echo Park Lake in Los Angeles, where an encampment community was organizing with housed neighbors living nearby to defend their right to stay. There, Gustavo created a food and clothing distribution center in a 'Power Up!' table where housed and unhoused tenants gathered and organized. He helped build showers, run the kitchen, and plant the garden to make Echo Park Lake home for him and many others. Gustavo always had a warm smile, a welcoming ear, and creative ideas for an action or banner, always recruiting others to help him. He strongly believed in the importance of being together to build new relationships of love, support, and family.

Yo soy Gustavo!

Following the 2021 eviction of over 150 people living at Echo Park Lake, Gustavo was forced back to the street as the park was fenced and closed. Through organizing connections, he got a temporary hotel room in Chinatown where he—like all the others there—involuntarily signed away tenancy rights as a condition of entry. Gustavo compared the hotel to his experience of prison. Staff lied, stole, disrespected residents, entered rooms without notice at all hours, and forbade people from talking to each other on the property. He filmed and took pictures to arm himself with the truth.

Yo soy Gustavo!

The truth alone wasn't enough. Gustavo gathered with other former Echo Park Lake residents scattered in hotels all over the city. Together, they formed Unhoused Tenants Against Carceral Housing (UTACH, pronounced "attack!") with the LA Tenants Union, organizing in temporary hotels like Gustavo's. They won victories like changed curfews, space for residents to gather on-site, and better treatment by staff. Gustavo also fought for the fence to be removed from Echo Park. One day, he was attacked unprovoked by park rangers, arrested, and put into a chokehold so brutal that he was hospitalized, all because he put a flyer on the fence.

Yo soy Gustavo!

UTACH and members of Gustavo's community posted bail for him after a week. Against his attorney's advice, Gustavo refused a plea deal—he knew he was morally right, refusing to accept guilt. After he rejected three plea offers, the judge dropped the case entirely. Although Gustavo could have easily been incarcerated for the rest of his life, he stayed strong because he knew the truth. During our October 1st march, Gustavo was attacked and harassed by police repeatedly, but was never afraid. Gustavo never gave up his own struggle because he knew it was connected deeply to the struggle of all tenants, on the street, in a shelter, or in an apartment.

Yo soy Gustavo!