City Council, Mayor and LAPD Continue Assault on Poor People Community residents organize against increased enforcement and new ordinances that target homeless residents, people with disabilities, street vendors, and others

Written by General Dogon

On June 23, the City Council approved revisions to two existing ordinances in the Los Angeles Municipal Code, LAMC 56.11 and 63.44 (sections B and I). The new ordinances make it nearly impossible to have any personal property of any size on public sidewalks, parks, and beaches. Despite the efforts of Councilmember Cedillo to stop these revisions from being approved, which criminalize homelessness and poverty without providing any alternatives or reasonable means to comply with the laws, the City Council voted 12-1 to approve the changes. The changes are discriminatory in nature, putting homeless residents, people with disabilities, street vendors and others in a position to simply not be able to comply.

Earlier this year, LA CAN members and allies were able to convince policymakers that the changes to LAMC 56.11 should not move forward, with the Public Works and Gang Reduction Committee holding the item for later consideration. Yet, without any further engagement with the public and no changes in the City Attorney’s proposals, 56.11 and 63.44 were put back on this committee’s agenda in May. LA CAN members again went to testify in front of the three Councilmembers: Buscaino, Price and Cedillo.

Members spoke passionately about the intent of the ordinance to criminalize people who have no other place to store their belongings and the severe lack of storage in the City for seized property, with the only identified storage facility in Downtown LA though property will be seized citywide, from the Valley to San Pedro to Venice. LA CAN and others raised the importance of being able to maintain personal property, especially that needed for daily survival such as medications and the most basic protections from the elements like rolled up tents and blankets.

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Concejo Municipal, el alcalde y la policía de Los Ángeles continúan su asalto sobre los pobres
Residentes organizan contra el aumento de la aplicación de leyes que se dirigen a los residentes sin hogar, personas con discapacidad, los vendedores ambulantes y otros

Escrito por General Dogon | Traducido por Thelmy Perez

El 23 de junio, el Consejo Municipal aprobó revisiones a dos ordenanzas existentes en el Código Municipal de Los Ángeles, LAMC 56.11 y 63.44 (secciones B y I). Las nuevas ordenanzas lo harán casi imposible tener cualquier propiedad personal de cualquier tamaño en las aceras públicas, en los parques y en las playas. A pesar de los esfuerzos del concejal Cedillo para detener la aprobación de estas revisiones que criminalizan la falta de vivienda y la pobreza sin aportar alternativas razonables para cumplir con las leyes, el Consejo votó 12-1 para aprobar los cambios. Los cambios son discriminatorios, poniendo a los residentes sin hogar, personas con discapacidad, vendedores ambulantes y en una posición en la cual simplemente no podrán cumplir.

A principios de este año, miembros y aliados de LA CAN fueron capaces de convencer a los políticos de que los cambios a LAMC 56.11 no deberían moverse hacia adelante con el Comité de Obras Públicas y la Reducción de Pandillas sosteniendo el tema para considerarlo en una fecha subseguinte. Sin embargo, sin ningún tipo de consulta adicional con el público y sin ningún cambio en las propuestas del Fiscal de la ciudad, 56.11 y 63.44 se pusieron de nuevo en la agenda de este comité en el mes de mayo. Los miembros de LA CAN se fueron de nuevo a declarar delante de los tres Concejales: Buscaino, Price y Cedillo.

Los miembros hablaron apasionadamente sobre la intención de la ordenanza a penalizar las personas que no tienen otro lugar para guardar sus pertenencias y la severa falta de almacenamiento de los bienes incautados en la Ciudad, con la única instalación de almacenamiento identificada en el Centro de LA, aunque la propiedad se incautará en todas las partes de la ciudad, desde el Valle hasta San Pedro hasta Venice. LA CAN y otros plantearon la importancia de poder mantener la propiedad personal, especialmente esas cosas necesarias para la supervivencia, tales como medicamentos y las protecciones más básicas contra los elementos tales como las tiendas de campaña enrolladas y las colchas.

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Participatory Budgeting at the City’s Housing Authority
Tenants working toward their goal of inclusive and transparent decision making

Written by Thelmy Perez

For years, the LA Human Right to Housing Collective’s Public Housing Committee has advocated for transparency and the right to participate in the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)’s budget process. HACLA has a terrible track record when it comes to managing their more than $1 BILLION dollar budget and this mismanagement has huge implications for its residents.

HACLA has been quick to cite budget deficits as motive for privatizing our public housing stock or cause for deferring maintenance and lack of new programming. In late 2012, City Controller Wendy Greuel published a scathing audit of the agency saying, “it is greatly disconcerting that HACLA’s Finance Department does not have the capacity to evaluate the financial operations or to identify control weaknesses that may result in fraud, abuse or financial performance weaknesses.” Greuel’s audit demonstrated to the Housing Collective that public oversight over HACLA’s budget is a righteous demand and that we have a long way to go before achieving our goal of ensuring that HACLA’s budget, in its totality, reflects the priorities of its residents in preserving, improving and expanding public housing. This is now beginning to change.

Last August, the Housing Collective mobilized over 100 residents to HACLA’s annual Agency Plan hearing. One by one, residents testified to the HACLA Board of Commissioners about the need for community participation in its budget process. In September, 16 Collective members from various LA public housing communities attended a Participatory Budget (PB) conference in Oakland. They learned that PB is a process being used all over the world that gives tenants the power to decide making power over how public funds are spent and they were excited to observe PB in action in the City of Vallejo, as residents there voted on how to spend millions of dollars of City funding. Back in Los Angeles, Housing Collective leaders continued discussions and recommendations for the concept of PB as a tool towards building community understanding and control over HACLA’s budget. Yet HACLA was opposed to residents deciding how any of the budget was spent and went about their own plan for appeasing the increasing pressure for participatory budgeting, which included having meetings related to community specific budgets and distributing a survey to tenants.

The Collective criticized HACLA’s process as calculated and manipulative and launched a mock PB process in several different neighborhoods to prove that, when engaged meaningfully, residents know best what the needs are in their community and are a valuable asset to HACLA. A key component of determining how to best utilize precious limited funds. The result of both of these efforts was ultimately positive. Across every public housing community, even those which are not active in the Housing Collective, a conversation has been started, a seed planted; people are hearing, seeing and talking about the role they could play in the HACLA budget.

What we learned from last year’s efforts is that most residents do not think about HACLA’s budget and how it affects them. They are too busy strategizing as to how to survive on their own household budgets. They don’t realize that when it comes to budgets, THEY ARE ALREADY ENGAGED. Most residents have no idea that there is a role for them to play in all decisions that are made at HACLA or the importance of this role where the money is concerned. What was especially clear from last year’s efforts is that most residents were eager to participate when approached and asked for their opinions about what the priorities should be for the HACLA budget and who or what deserves the participatory budget for HACLA. This year, the Collective has been working with HACLA to improve their budget consultation process and to build toward a truly participatory process in future years. Although there is not yet a decision making role for residents in this year’s budget process, HACLA’s new Community Budget Process demonstrates the influence of public housing leaders in moving HACLA to utilize its resources to educate residents about the budget. This creates an opportunity for the Collective to expand its reach to all 6,500 public housing families and to make sure that the materials which are developed are relevant and build knowledge and access to the once-untouchable HACLA budget.

In July, surveys were completed in all public housing communities in Los Angeles and HACLA will create a draft budget based on the surveys which they will bring back to public housing communities to vet in the late summer. In October, tenants will have an opportunity to formally endorse or not endorse the process and also participate in HACLA’s Board of Commissioners budget hearings in the fall and winter. We encourage everyone to get involved and help build towards the goal of true participatory budgeting that will preserve and expand public housing for generations to come.

WHY LA SHOULDN’T STAND FOR LOSING ITS PUBLIC HOUSING

Written by Thelmy Perez

Earlier this year, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) submitted an application to its federal overseer, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), for a $30 million Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) grant that would be used to participate in the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) budget process. HACLA has a terrible track record when it comes to managing their more than $1 BILLION dollar budget and this mismanagement has huge implications for its residents.

HACLA has been quick to cite budget deficits as motive for privatizing our public housing stock or cause for deferring maintenance and lack of new programming. In late 2012, City Controller Wendy Greuel published a scathing audit of the agency saying, “it is greatly disconcerting that HACLA’s Finance Department does not have the capacity to evaluate the financial operations or to identify control weaknesses that may result in fraud, abuse or financial performance weaknesses.” Greuel’s audit demonstrated to the Housing Collective that public oversight over HACLA’s budget is a righteous demand and that we have a long way to go before achieving our goal of ensuring that HACLA’s budget, in its totality, reflects the priorities of its residents in preserving, improving and expanding public housing. This is now beginning to change.

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The Collective criticized HACLA’s process as calculated and manipulative and launched a mock PB process in several different neighborhoods to prove that, when engaged meaningfully, residents know best what the needs are in their community and are a valuable asset to HACLA. A key component of determining how to best utilize precious limited funds. The result of both of these efforts was ultimately positive. Across every public housing community, even those which are not active in the Housing Collective, a conversation has been started, a seed planted; people are hearing, seeing and talking about the role they could play in the HACLA budget.

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For more information or to get involved in the fight save public housing, contact Thelmy at 818-835-1091 or at lahumanrighttohousing@gmail.com.
Presupuesto Participativo en la Autoridad de Vivienda de la Ciudad

Los inquilinos trabajando hacia su objetivo de la toma de decisiones inclusiva y transparente

Escrito y Traducido por Thelmy Perez

Durante años, el Comité de Vivienda Pública de la Colectiva Pro el Derecho Humano a la Vivienda ha abogado por la transparencia y el derecho a participar en el proceso presupuestario de la Autoridad de Vivienda de la Ciudad de Los Ángeles (HACLA). HACLA tiene un historial terrible cuando se trata de administrar su presupuesto de más de 1,000 millones de dólares, y está más ocupada en el manejo de su estrategia de privatización pública para atraer el interés de los inversionistas privados. Los residentes tienen mayores e injustificados incentivos para participar en el proceso presupuestario. Luego, en septiembre, 16 miembros de la Colectiva de diversas comunidades de vivienda pública asistieron a una conferencia de representantes de HACLA en la propiedad de Elyson de Oakland, y se enteraron de que el PP es un proceso que se utiliza en todo el mundo que le da a la gente la oportunidad de tomar decisiones sobre cómo se gastan los fondos públicos. Milan estaban más interesados en observar PP la acción en la Ciudad de Valles, ya que los residentes allí estaban utilizando el proceso de votación sobre cómo gastar 24 millones de dólares en fondos municipales. De vuelta en Los Ángeles, el Comité de Vivienda de la Colectiva continuaron con sus esfuerzos para garantizar que el presupuesto de HACLA esté en manos de los residentes y reflejar la necesidad de la participación comunitaria en el proceso presupuestario. En el Comité de Vivienda, consultaron con residentes para formular propuestas, tomar decisiones y asegurar que el proceso esté abierto, transparente y democrático. Los residentes en el Comité de Vivienda también se reunieron con residentes de todos los distritos de HACLA y se identificaron como residentes en el distrito de Watts en el sur de Los Ángeles. Al mismo tiempo, la Autoridad de Vivienda de Watts en el sur de Los Ángeles y la Junta de Supervisores del Condado de Los Ángeles, la Colectiva demoró al Colectivo que vigilaba la participación pública en el proceso HACLA. HACLA en Watts, en total, está trabajando para mejorar el desempeño financiero. La auditoría de Gruel se realizó para determinar el impacto de los esfuerzos del año pasado es que a pesar de que la ciudad y la ciudad tienen más de 1,000 familias de vivienda pública y para asegurarse de que los materiales que se desarrollan y se envían a las familias sean relevantes y ayuden a construir el conocimiento y el acceso al presupuesto de HACLA anteriormente intocable.

El agosto pasado, la Colectiva movilizó más de 100 residentes a la audiencia anual del Plan de la Agencia de HACLA. Uno por uno, los residentes testificaron a la Junta de Comisionados de HACLA sobre sus necesidades personales y cómo las decisiones comunitarias en el proceso de presupuesto. Los residentes que se quejaron de que el PP es un proceso que se utiliza en todo el mundo que le da a la gente la oportunidad de tomar decisiones sobre cómo se gastan los fondos públicos en Watts en el sur de Los Ángeles. Al mismo tiempo, la Autoridad de Vivienda de Watts en el sur de Los Ángeles y la Junta de Supervisores del Condado de Los Ángeles, la Colectiva demoró al Colectivo que vigilaba la participación pública en el proceso HACLA. HACLA en Watts, en total, está trabajando para mejorar el desempeño financiero. La auditoría de Gruel se realizó para determinar el impacto de los esfuerzos del año pasado es que a pesar de que la ciudad y la ciudad tienen más de 1,000 familias de vivienda pública y para asegurarse de que los materiales que se desarrollan y se envían a las familias sean relevantes y ayuden a construir el conocimiento y el acceso al presupuesto de HACLA anteriormente intocable.

Porque Los Ángeles no debe permitir la pérdida de sus viviendas públicas

Escrito y Traducido por Thelmy Perez

A principios de este año, la Autoridad de Vivienda de la Ciudad de Los Ángeles (HACLA) presentó una solicitud a su superviso federal, el Departamento de Vivienda e Urbanismo (HUD), para la subvención de 30 millones de dólares, Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) que se utilizaría en el barrio Watts en el sur de Los Ángeles. Ellos estaban muy contentos de observar PP en la Ciudad de Valles, ya que los residentes allí estaban utilizando el proceso de votación sobre cómo gastar 24 millones de dólares en fondos municipales. De vuelta en Los Ángeles, el Comité de Vivienda de la Colectiva continuaron con sus esfuerzos para garantizar que el presupuesto de HACLA esté en manos de los residentes y reflejar la necesidad de la participación comunitaria en el proceso presupuestario. En el Comité de Vivienda, consultaron con residentes para formular propuestas, tomar decisiones y asegurar que el proceso esté abierto, transparente y democrático. Los residentes en el Comité de Vivienda también se reunieron con residentes de todos los distritos de HACLA y se identificaron como residentes en el distrito de Watts en el sur de Los Ángeles. Al mismo tiempo, la Autoridad de Vivienda de Watts en el sur de Los Ángeles y la Junta de Supervisores del Condado de Los Ángeles, la Colectiva demoró al Colectivo que vigilaba la participación pública en el proceso HACLA. HACLA en Watts, en total, está trabajando para mejorar el desempeño financiero. La auditoría de Gruel se realizó para determinar el impacto de los esfuerzos del año pasado es que a pesar de que la ciudad y la ciudad tienen más de 1,000 familias de vivienda pública y para asegurarse de que los materiales que se desarrollan y se envían a las familias sean relevantes y ayuden a construir el conocimiento y el acceso al presupuesto de HACLA anteriormente intocable.

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Surveillance of Our Communities Cannot be Legitimized

Written by the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition

Within the national dialogue of how to end police violence, and bring “accountability” and transparency to policing in our communities, we must continue to forcefully highlight the structural apparatus of policing, how it transforms itself, and how it preserves its legitimacy and monopoly over violence in our communities. Surveillance, spying and infiltration is local, everyday, and present 24 hours in our communities. Counter-Terrorism programs and tactics are an integral part of domestic policing. Advance technologies allow rapid real time collection of data through a massive architecture of surveillance.

We must not start and limit the dialogue regarding surveillance, spying and infiltration to civil liberties frame but clearly articulate it as violations of our basic human rights. There is massive amounts of corporate profit, violation of privacy rights inherent in the surveillance industrial complex, but more important is the extensive human impact of these policies. Policies that begin with the criminalization of our lives. Tactics that give law enforcement and the larger state apparatus extra-judicial powers to stop, detain, follow, trace, track, and share our existence at will.

Programs such as Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) and Predictive Policing are telling the same historic tale- the most surveilled communities are poor communities of color and predominantly Black lives. In impoverished communities where public health resources are completely underfunded, the starting point of civil liberties advocates—mostly white and those with class privilege—is the acknowledgement and acceptance of surveillance, spying and infiltration within “constitutional” parameters that has “over sight and reporting” attached to it. Instead of taking the lead from and following the peoples’ demands, these same people have historically opened doors to the legitimization of the surveillance industrial complex instead of challenging its very existence and exposing its impact, all while enriching the apparatus with the expenditures of federal and local dollars into this legitimization.

We say NO to such “advocacy.” These surveillance programs must be halted and dismantled, with the human impact thoroughly investigated. We must have complete transparency and vigorous examination of the incorporation of counter-terrorism policies into domestic policing.

Therefore the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition and other grassroots organizations in Los Angeles sent a letter to the American Civil Liberties Union - Southern California (ACLU-SC) Board of Directors requesting an urgent meeting to share deep concerns about the role of ACLU-SC with the Los Angeles Police Department’s (LAPD) Counter-Terrorism efforts in the development of a model ordinance regarding surveillance technology in Los Angeles, CA.

For more information or to get involved, visit www.stoplapdspying.org.

Ten LAPD Officers Tase, Fire Bean Bag Rounds at Homeless Man in Wheelchair

Written by Pete White and Eric Ares

In a manner that appears consistent with the ongoing trends of the Los Angeles Police Department using excessive force on low-income and/or houseless, primarily Black residents, LAPD officers shot bean bags, tased, and then wrestled to the ground a man in a wheelchair at around 7:30 am on Friday, July 18. Eye witness, cell phone video footage from the shooting — acquired by LA CAN — appears to show a standoff (really a “sit-off”) between the man and at least 10-12 LAPD officers. About 30 seconds into the video, the visibly distressed man, since identified as Christopher Adam Zareck, 43, is shot twice. Then MANY seconds after, officers shoot the man again and gang tackle the man to the ground commencing to tasing him. Despite several requests, the medical status of the man, nor his charges, have been released.

Unfortunately, this is just the latest of a similar string of incidents involving escalated use of force on the part of LAPD. And while this shooting thankfully did not result in another dead resident, it is important to note that this is indicative of the type of escalated policing that low-income residents, particularly in gentrifying communities, have been experiencing in recent weeks (and months and years, in some cases). It also represents the problem with the rhetoric around the emphasis on de-escalation training that the LAPD has been pushing in the media recently. No matter what this man was doing that resulted in a call to the police, at the time of the incident it is clear in the video that the man was not an immediate threat. So why was it necessary to shoot him three times with bean bags? Why was it necessary to tase him? Why was it necessary that a herd of officers were needed to violently wrestle down a man in a wheelchair? The man did appear to be upset and was shouting. Would this have been a situation better served by the Systemwide Mental Assessment Response Team (SMART) versus a gang of officers? How much would de-escalation training matter if there are so many officers on hand to escalate the incident?

So, why were there so many officers called to the scene? In the past two weeks, LA CAN Community Watch teams have documented law enforcement citing and arresting homeless and low-income individuals in mass. Probation officers, Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department, LAPD — all have been actively patrolling the streets of Downtown LA (particularly in Skid Row) and aggressively enforcing so-called quality-of-life violations and warrants for these non-violent offenses, like illegally lodging on public property or sitting/lying on the street. Ironically, this comes just two weeks after community residents demanded that Eric Garcetti veto changes to LA Municipal Eyewitness, cell phone footage of the excessively violent arrest of Christopher Zareck was captured by Downtown LA Resident Hubert Jackson. A close up zoom on the video shows Mr. Zareck jerk violently back in his wheelchair after being shot with rubber bullet rounds.

Codes 56.11 and 63.44, which were passed by City Council under the arguments that they would be used to stop illegal encampments. Low-income and homeless residents argued that these changes were largely unnecessary (as existing laws could be enforced to stop illegal encampments) and that these would just be used to further criminalize and punish residents simply for being poor. And we see that now.

The bottom line is this: No amount of training will help when the problem has to do with the oversaturation of police and a seemingly limitless budget to put officers on the street and enforce largely non-violent crimes. This is a culture and tradition of abuse, force and extermination of "undesirable" people fully supported by the Mayor Garcetti, Chief Charlie Beck, and the Los Angeles City Council. We say HOUSING FOR EVERY Angeleno and they say ENFORCEMENT, DEATH and EXCUSES.
LAPD Continues Killing with Impunity

After two police murders of homeless residents in Skid Row within a 9-month period, LAPD kills two homeless residents in Venice within 10 weeks

Written by Becky Dennison

On May 5th, Los Angeles Police Department shot and killed Brendon Glenn, an unarmed Black man who was also a homeless resident of Venice. Just 10 weeks later, on Monday, July 13th, LAPD shot Jason Davis, another homeless resident in Venice, who died three days later and was the 11th person killed by LAPD in 2015. According to The Guardian, LAPD has killed more people this year than any other police force in the country, putting LAPD in 2015. According to The Guardian, LAPD has killed more people this year than any other police force in the country, putting LAPD in the dubious distinction of implementing the most widespread and aggressive practices of criminalization, which has also led to high rates of non-lethal use of force as well as negative health and mental health outcomes, loss of housing or eligibility for housing, and a multitude of other human rights violations.

LA CAN honors the memory of all those murdered by LAPD and other law enforcement and is working with partners throughout Los Angeles and the country to stop the assault on Black people, on poor and homeless people, and the growing violence of law enforcement against all of us.

Chief Beck and Mayor Garcetti did not attend the May community meeting in Venice, with the Mayor later characterizing it as unproductive. The Chief and Mayor also did not meet with the Skid Row community after LAPD murdered Charlie Keunang in March of this year. Is it unproductive to express outrage at an unarmed man being shot down in the middle of the street, with even the Chief himself questioning the circumstances? Is it unreasonable for communities to expect that the people directly responsible for the police department’s oversight would make themselves available and accountable after unfathomable events?

The disproportionate impact of LAPD’s violence on homeless people is not by accident. The City of Los Angeles has long had the tragic consequences of criminalization, which has also led to high rates of non-lethal use of force as well as negative health and mental health outcomes, loss of housing or eligibility for housing, and a multitude of other human rights violations.

LA CAN honors the memory of all those murdered by LAPD and other law enforcement and is working with partners throughout Los Angeles and the country to stop the assault on Black people, on poor and homeless people, and the growing violence of law enforcement against all of us.

Charlie “Africa” Keunang – ¡Presente! Brendon Glenn – ¡Presente! Jason Davis – ¡Presente!

Civil Rights

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS:
Self-Defense Against Police Attack

Written by John Raphling

“If a [police] officer uses unreasonable or excessive force while arresting or detaining a person, that person may lawfully use reasonable force to defend himself.” (CalCrim 2670.) This statement, from the standard instructions given to jurors in our courts, is the law here in California. If a police officer attacks us, using unreasonable force, even if he has the right to arrest us, we can fight back, legally. We have the right to defend our bodily integrity, even from a police officer.*

Of course, as with any of our dealings with police, it is never as simple as what the law claims to allow. First of all, we have a legal requirement, under Penal Code section 834a, to submit to an arrest. But, if the arrest is unjustified, it is not a crime to resist or refuse to submit to that arrest— as long as we don’t resist with physical force. An unlawful arrest, one in which the officer doesn’t have a good reason (probable cause) to arrest us, does not give us the right to physically fight back.

In reality, we may not know whether or not the officer has probable cause to arrest, even if we have done nothing wrong. Police have probable cause if they reasonably think you did something criminal or if someone told them that you committed a crime. It is generally safer to cooperate with arrest, while firmly asserting your rights (“I do not consent to a search of my person or property.” “I do not give up my right to remain silent and will not speak to law enforcement.”) and sort out the legalities in court.

However, if the officer uses unnecessary force in the course of detaining or arresting us, we may respond with physical force. As with the right to self-defense against a non-police officer, our force has to be proportionate. If the officer pushes us, we don’t then have the right to break his skull with a crowbar. We can push back if necessary to defend ourselves.

The difficult question is determining what force used by a police officer is unnecessary or excessive. Police have legal authority to use force needed to make an arrest. So, if we start struggling first, they have the right to use physical force to control us. Their force has to be reasonable to the amount of resistance. If we push a police officer away, they don’t have the right to shoot us. But, they do have the right to overcome our resistance, and they are very good at exaggerating the amount of resistance we put up in order to justify their violence. Practically speaking, if we start the fighting, they will probably get away with just about any violence they do to us.

If police are using physical force, even that we believe is excessive, it is best not to give them the excuse to seriously injure or even kill us by fighting them. Instead, we should look out for each other, observe and film police violence, report it immediately to LA CAN, file complaints and be willing to go to court to defend our brothers and sisters.

Some police violence, though, is unquestionably excessive, and likely to cause serious injury or death. We can’t wait around for the courts to sort out the legalities of an extremely violent attack. In those situations, we have to fight back to defend ourselves. We have that right. And, just as if the attacker were a regular civilian, we have the right to defend each other.


Disclaimer: This column provides a very general and incomplete explanation of basic legal principles, and may not apply to the specific facts of your case. Please consult an attorney concerning your particular situation.
Council ignored the voices of the people, and again voted to approve with Councilmembers to imagine not being able to have personal property, the LIVES AND VOICES MATTER and then the group told and showed the poor folks and LAPD. General Dogon kicked it off by declaring, “BLACK general public comment period, several members boldly performed a skit the week prior, LA CAN members decided to use Theatre of the Op 23rd, when they were passed into law. Since the public had been silenced the second reading of the ordinances was the following week, on June 16th, where members of LA CAN civil rights committee went to June 16, where members of LA CAN civil rights committee went to a Citywide ordinance, and that there was no enforcement plan in place. The ordinances were then fast forwarded for a full City Council vote on June 23rd, when they were passed into law. Since the public had been silenced the week prior, LA CAN members decided to use Theatre of the oppressed methods to have our voices and opposition heard. During the general public comment period, several members boldly performed a skit showing exactly how these new laws would play out in reality between poor folks and LAPD. General Dogon kicked it off by declaring, “BLACK LIVES AND VOICES MATTER” and then the group told and showed the Councilmembers to imagine not being able to have personal property, the fear of being ticketed or arrested and having their property taken. Yet the Council ignored the voices of the people, and again voted to approve with the last hope for justice was a Mayoral veto, yet the Mayor refused to do so. Despite dozens of homeless residents, street vendors, and their allies converging on the Mayor’s house over two days and calling his office, the Mayor decided to take a “middle road” by not signing the ordinances and calling for revisions. However, what his public relations team downplayed is that this decision has the EXACT SAME impact as signing the ordinances, and they went into effect on July 18, 2015. The Mayor, besides his rhetoric, simply refused to stand against the criminalization of poverty and homelessness. “These changes impact anyone resting their bag on the ground at a bus stop or someone with a small cart of goods to sell, but, primarily, they will cause unhoused individuals to be targeted by law enforcement simply because they do not have a home of their own to store their property,” said Cynthia Ruffin of the Downtown Women’s Action Coalition. “These policies do not have a real purpose, they are designed to allow LAPD to taking the medication, birth certificates, legal documents, and other essential life possessions of homeless people. The Mayor has acknowledged this, but still allowed them to become law. This is not an acceptable approach, and we have no guarantees they won’t be enforced or that they will ever be amended.” Though grassroots efforts were the main opposition raised to these ordinances, other experts agreed. As described by Professor Gary Blasi and Phillip Mangano in an editorial in the Los Angeles Times after the Council vote, “Under the ordinances — one covering streets and sidewalks, the other parks — if the police cite a homeless person for having possessions on public property, the person must move them within 24 hours. But they cannot move their possessions to any public property within the 486 square miles of the city. This means that someone would have to carry everything they own 24 hours a day, without ever putting it down to rest — something that is simply impossible for homeless residents, street vendors, people with disabilities and many others. LA CAN continues to work with impacted residents, allies and legal supporters to monitor the implementation of these unconstitutional laws. We must rally up a citywide fight because this issue affects all of us, and no matter how far this thing goes we are going to continue to fight back because the city is intent on policing and criminalizing homelessness and poverty and we can’t allow that!” The city refuses to invest in real solutions — like housing, something we know that works — but we can and must change that. We invite everyone to LA CAN’s Civil Rights Committee meetings every Monday at 1:00 pm to create our fight back plans...ALL POWER 2 THA PEOPLE.
Viene de la página 1
Concejo Municipal, el alcalde y la policía de LA

Sin embargo, los representantes de la Ciudad ignoran estas realidades. Hablar sobre cómo las calles se están volviendo tan inundadas con la propiedad de las personas sin hogar que otros residentes no pueden acceder a los espacios públicos. Ellos testificaron que los traficantes de drogas se esconden en las tiendas de campaña vendiéndoles drogas a las personas con discapacidades de la mente y que es más peligroso y difícil para los policías a vigilar a las zonas donde hay concentración de residentes sin hogar. El Departamento de Basura de la Ciudad habló sobre lo sucio que las calles son y cuántas aguas y heces recogen. Sin embargo, ninguno de estos problemas se resolvieron con las nuevas leyes – estos podrían ser resueltos a través de las leyes y los códigos de salud y seguridad existentes. La prohibición de cualquier y toda propiedad es completamente diferente que garantizar que las aceras sean transitables y puedan ser compartidas entre todos los residentes, o la garantía que hay servicios de recogida de basura suficiente para cada vecindario.

El concejal Buscaino respondió rápidamente a todos los testimonios, sin perder tiempo, mostrando su apoyo y condenando a las personas sin hogar y sus bienes personales en las vías públicas, tal como lo dijo. El concejal Cedillo, sin embargo, manifestó su oposición a la propuesta y dijo que creía que no estaba lista para seguir adelante porque la cuestiones fundamentales permanecerían. El dijo que la ciudad no sabía la capacidad actual de la instalación de almacenamiento, que una instalación no es suficiente para hacer cumplir una ordenanza que cubre toda la ciudad, y que no había ningún plan de ejecución en el lugar en que el almacenamiento se llene. Sin embargo, las revisiones pasaron porque Cedillo fue superado en el voto por 2-1, con el concejal Price también votando en apoyo.

Entonces, las ordenanzas fueron remitidas rápidamente para una votación por el consejo el 16 de junio, donde miembros del comité de derechos civiles de LA CAN fueron a testificar y defenderse. Sin embargo, el concejal Herb Wesson, el presidente del consejo, se negó a permitir comentarios públicos bajo las ordenanzas – estos podrían ser resueltos a través de las leyes y los códigos de salud y seguridad existentes. La prohibición de cualquier y toda propiedad es completamente diferente que garantizar que las aceras sean transitables y puedan ser compartidas entre todos los residentes, o la garantía que hay servicios de recogida de basura suficiente para cada vecindario.

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La última esperanza por la justicia era un veto consistorial, sin embargo, el alcalde se negó a hacerlo. A pesar que decenas de residentes sin hogar, vendedores ambulantes, y sus aliados se manifestaron en la casa del alcalde durante dos días y llamaron a su oficina, el alcalde decidió tomar un “camino intermedio” al no firmar las ordenanzas y pidiendo revisiones. Sin embargo, lo que su grupo de relaciones públicas minimizó es que esta decisión tiene el mismo impacto como la firma de los decretos que tomaron efecto el 18 de julio de 2015. El alcalde, además de su retórica, simplemente se negó a oponerse a la criminalización de la pobreza y a la falta de vivienda.

“Estos cambios impactan a todas personas descansando su bolso en el suelo en una parada de autobús o alguien con un carrito de mercancías para vender, pero sobre todo van a hacer que los individuos sin techo sean el blanco de las fuerzas del orden, simplemente porque no tienen un hogar propio para almacenar sus cosas,” dijo Cynthia Ruffin de la Coalición de Acción de Mujeres del Centro. “Estas políticas no tienen un propósito real, están diseñadas para permitir LAPD a confiscar las medicinas, certificados de nacimiento, documentos legales, y otras posesiones esenciales de las personas sin hogar. El alcalde ha reconocido esto, pero aún permitió que se conviertan en ley. Esto no es una estrategia aceptable, y no tenemos garantías de que no se vayan hacer cumplir o que se modificarán”

Aunque los esfuerzos de base fueron la principal oposición a estas ordenanzas, otros expertos estuvieron de acuerdo. Según lo descrito por el profesor Gary Blasi y Phillip Mangano en un editorial en el diario Los Ángeles Times, después de la votación del Consejo, “Bajo las ordenanzas - una que cubre las calles y las aceras, y la otra los parques - si la policía cita una persona sin hogar por tener posesiones en propiedad pública, la persona debe moverlas dentro de 24 horas. Pero no pueden mover sus posesiones a cualquier propiedad pública dentro de las 486 millas cuadradas de la ciudad “Esto significa que alguien tendría que chinar todo lo que poseen durante las 24 horas del día, sin poder descansar - algo que es simplemente imposible para los residentes sin hogar, vendedores ambulantes, personas con discapacidades y muchos otros.

LA CAN sigue trabajando con los residentes impactados, sus aliados y sus amigos legales para vigilar la aplicación de estas leyes inconstitucionales. Deberemos levantar una pelea a través de toda la ciudad, porque este problema nos afecta a todos, y no importa lo lejos que esta cosa se vaya, vamos a seguir luchando por resolver este problema. El alcalde tiene la intención de penalizar a la gente sin hogar y la falta de vivienda. La ciudad se niega a invertir en soluciones reales - como la vivienda, algo que el concejal Cedillo, el único en votar en contra, creía que no debería ser implementado.

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Amidst Deeply Troubling Times, the U.S. Supreme Court Issues Three Rulings That Promote Equity for All

Written by Barbara Schultz

After the horrific events in Charleston, the escalation of police violence, skyrocketing income and wealth inequality, and so many more issues that we as a country are dealing with, the country could use some good news, and we got it from an unexpected place - the Supreme Court of the United States. As most of you know, three landmark rulings came out of the Supreme Court on June 25 and 26, 2015.

1. The least heralded of the three cases is the one that might be most impactful for low-income communities of color. In Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs v. The Inclusive Communities Project, Inc., the Supreme Court upheld the right to argue racial discrimination based on disparate impact in fair housing cases. If the court had ruled the other way, impacted tenants could only prove a fair housing violation by proving intentional discrimination, which is very difficult. With disparate impact, it is enough to show that the effect of the policy being challenged is discriminatory and there is a connection between the policy and the discriminatory effect. The Fair Housing Act "must play an important part in avoiding the...grievous wrong that [owe]n our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal."

2. The Supreme court ruled that same-sex couples have a constitutional right to marry in all 50 states (Obergefell et al. v. Hodges). This case specifically struck down same-sex marriage bans. The majority opinion was again written by Justice Kennedy who wrote, "No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family. In forming a marital union, two people become something greater than one because they are living together in the eyes of the law. The Constitution grants them that right."

3. While the Affordable Care Act, aka Obamcare, has significant barriers to finally achieving health care for all, it has been a big step forward for many. In King et al. v. Burwell, the Supreme Court held that everyone who participated in either a state or federal insurance exchange is eligible for federal subsidies. This is extremely important to the Affordable Care Act to ensure it can only purchase insurance through a federal exchange because their state does not have a state exchange. If the Court had ruled the other way, they would have lost their federal subsidies that help the people who are affordable. Chief Justice Roberts, writing for the 6-3 majority said that one had to look at the whole law and its purpose, rather than the few words plaintiffs based their lawsuit on. "Congress passed the Affordable Care Act to improve health insurance markets, not to destroy them."

It's Only My Opinion, But...

Written by Al Sabo

Wrong Again - Once again the Mayor and City Council got it wrong by postponing the minimum wage increase to $15 per hour until 2020. It’s been over a year ago since Seattle raised its minimum wage to $15 per hour. Not only did businesses not get hurt by this move, but more and more qualified low income workers left neighboring communities to fill open jobs that were available in Seattle. And the doomsayers who predicted gloom for small business owners got it entirely wrong. Profits for small business actually rose.

What conservatives failed to realize is that minimum wage earners, not the wealthy, are the people who support small business. While the wealthy shop at Macy’s, Nordstrom, Bloomingdales, etc., it’s the minimum wage earners who generally support the small businesses within their local communities. And with more money to spend at their mom and pop stores, small businesses have flourished. The same is likely to happen in LA. The Mayor and City Council made a big mistake by not raising the minimum wage to $15 per hour immediately!

Parents Beware - The two new children’s playgrounds being built in Pershing Square are expected to open by the end of July. With the absence of trees, drinking fountains and bathrooms, be sure to bring your sun screen because kids who frequent the park will surely burn up in the hot desert sun. And parents beware too. The shade trees and benches that were once there are gone. Where will you sit? If you are lucky, some shade on the 6th Street side playground will be provided by the buildings by late afternoon. But much like the chess tables that have sat idly by with not one game of chess being played, these playgrounds will prove to be another ill-conceived project. And don’t forget! These playgrounds are only a temporary fix and may not be included in the renewal of Pershing Square that is not expected to be completed by 2020 at the earliest.

The real reason behind this temporary fix is to continue the forced removal of the less fortunate people who frequent the park daily - taking away their only respite with no other place to go is unconceivable.

Reasonably Priced Restaurants in Town Disappearing - Another fast food restaurant in town, McDonald’s on Broadway, is being forced to close. Mom and pop restaurants throughout Downtown are finding it too difficult to stay open. It seems as if Downtown LA will soon be home of the $17 burger. Oops! It already is. As prices of food in markets and restaurants in Downtown are rising to unreasonable levels, more and more low income residents are being forced out of town and being replaced by a more affluent class of people. Former Councilmember Jan Perry’s plan to eliminate fast food restaurants will only purchase insurance through a federal exchange because their state does not have a state exchange. Her vision to make Downtown LA more like New York City west. Councilmember Jan Perry, who I had many issues with, would at least listen to her constituents. Former Councilmember Jan Perry’s plan to eliminate fast food restaurants may soon become a reality. Her vision to make Downtown LA more like New York City west. "The Court acknowledges the Fair Housing Act’s continuing role in moving the nation toward a more integrated society."

Mr. Wesson, What Have You Done? - Taking most of Downtown out of the 9th Council District and placing it in the 14th District is becoming one of the biggest mistakes ever made by the City Council. Former Councilmember Jan Perry, who I had many issues with, would at least listen to her constituents. The same can’t be said of her 14th district replacement. Perhaps blinded by his good looks, ambitions and a desire to potentially seek higher office, Councilmember Jose Huizar is transforming Downtown into a place hardly recognizable to long-time residents.

When I first moved to town 35 years ago, hotdog vendors and other sidewalk vendors were the norm. As I traversed the streets of Broadway I immediately knew where I was - it had an ambiance and air like no place else. It was my new home, Los Angeles, a great place to live and I was proud to live there. Today the Broadway hot dog vendors are long gone. What once was a cultural, ethnic experience is swiftly looking more and more like New York City west. Councilmember Huizar is largely responsible for these changes taking place, with more expected to follow.

Perhaps someday we will all envision return ing back to the future and reliving how Los Angeles used to be. Well, I for one am fighting for a better price for a Broadway dog. Yes, those days are gone. Our dreams of what once was are being torn down by ambitious and greedy developers. It wasn’t long ago that the "old Broadway" was the place to go. The big question remains: How did Mr. Ford’s DNA end up on the officer’s gun? Ford’s DNA could have been applied to the gun after the fact. This brings up a great question. Why are 95.5% of homicides by cop ruled "justifiable"? Who are you going to believe? Chief Beck? Eye witness accounts say Ezzell Ford never tried to take the police officer’s gun, yet it was reported that Mr. Ford’s DNA was found on the gun. The big question remains: How did Mr. Ford’s DNA end up on the officer’s gun? Ford’s DNA could have been applied to the gun after the fact. The only way to account for a 95.5% innocent rate is that the police policy for engaging with an unarmed citizen is wrong and must be changed or it proves that police are not infallible but rather they are good liars.

While the Police Commission did overturn the conclusions of the Chief, still no charges were filed against the officers. The LAPD should be placed under the same restrictions imposed on the police of Baltimore by the Federal Government.

Police Policies Obsolete - Police shootings of citizens, many of whom are unarmed, will total more than 400 so far this year in America. There have been 11 in Los Angeles, making it the worst in the nation. Now is the time for change in police policies. Chief Beck, stand up to the police unions and stand up for justice. Make the necessary changes. Chief, it’s time to step up to the plate. The only question is, do you have the huevos to do it?

Ezzell Ford - It came as no surprise that it was leaked to the press that the police officers who shot Mr. Ford were ruled "justified". Who are you going to believe? Chief Beck? Eye witness accounts say Ezzell Ford never tried to take the police officer’s gun, yet it was reported that Mr. Ford’s DNA was found on the gun. The big question remains: How did Mr. Ford’s DNA end up on the officer’s gun? Ford’s DNA could have been applied to the gun after the fact. This brings up a great question. Why are 95.5% of homicides by cop ruled "justifiable"? Who are you going to believe? Chief Beck? Eye witness accounts say Ezzell Ford never tried to take the police officer’s gun, yet it was reported that Mr. Ford’s DNA was found on the gun. The big question remains: How did Mr. Ford’s DNA end up on the officer’s gun? Ford’s DNA could have been applied to the gun after the fact. The only way to account for a 95.5% innocent rate is that the police policy for engaging with an unarmed citizen is wrong and must be changed or it proves that police are not infallible but rather they are good liars.

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These are only my personal opinions. If you want to agree with or counter these positions, send your comments to The Community Connection, Attn: Al 838 E. 6th St., Los Angeles, CA 90021
LAPD Harassment of Homeless Folks near Olvera Street Needs to STOP NOW!

Written by Sean Gregory

One Friday in May, I stopped by Spring Street, near Arcadia, to check up on my friend Uncle Gary and hang out with the homeless locals who stay on Spring Street. I had gotten word from Gary that LAPD Sergeant Walker came by earlier that day and said that the encampment on Spring Street is now coming to an end and ordered everyone to leave.

Gary reasoned with Walker and it was agreed that they would have the weekend to get their stuff together and be ready to move out Monday morning. I set my alarm for 6:00 am with a plan to check in with the folks and do a briefing before the fuzz rolled up at 6:00 am.

However, as I was walking up to the location at 5:20 am, Walker and his crew were already on the scene in their squad cars telling people over the intercom to pack their stuff up, leave and not come back. I challenged the officers about them kicking people out of public space and they referred me to Walker. He said he wasn’t telling people they had to leave but he was enforcing LA Municipal Code 56.11 and 647(e), so if people packed up their stuff neatly and didn’t leave their property unattended they could stay.

The next morning Walker & Friends showed up at 6:00 am and told everyone to pack up and ship out. When I asked which ordinance was being enforced, Officer Soborof said, “All of them.” Walker made a bee-line for Gary and cited him with 56.11 and took his mini bench and his folding chair (not a bulky item), as others were also referred to Walker. He said he wasn’t going to move all of their things.

In 1947 agriculture and manufacturing employed a third of the workforce. But by 2009 those sectors employed only one in eight. Construction and mining together, during that time period, have remained almost exactly flat at 7.6% of the US workforce. These value-adding employment opportunities promised a decent life to those who worked them and who worked at them armed, in the main, with only a high school diploma. Now these represent only 20% of the US economy.

Capitalism with ever greater mechanization of such work found ways to do the same and more with a relatively lesser amount of workers. Today, the same pattern continues as ATM machines replace bank clerks, scanners have driven grocery clerks out of the airports, and the rise of drone technology now threatens the extinction of bus, truck and taxi drivers.

On Baltimore, Ferguson, Los Angeles 1992, etc.

Written by John Imani

As American citizens, we have proudly worn a subhuman badge of honor, elevating our “freedom” to that of a black American Express Card which we can swipe at our leisure to freely and more we are spied upon by law enforcement, as though they were our “American dream” path toward the “yellow brick road.” Yet, more and more we are spied upon by law enforcement, thus deemed domestic terrorists in our own homeland. I wonder if Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz were on her spiritual quest and traveling these landscapes following the killings of Ezell Ford, Michael Brown, Eric Garner and countless other Black men and others of color.

The Stop LAPD Spying Coalition has publicized police force and the manipulation of “anti-terror”ism fears to expand surveillance of all of us.

The Growing Surveillance State and the Group Organizing to Stop It

Written by Suzette Shaw

As American citizens we have proudly worn a subhuman badge of honor, elevating our “freedom” to that of a black American Express Card which we can swipe at our leisure to freely and systematically dehumanizing when roaming this “land of the free and home of the brave” in their everyday lives. Law enforcement across the country appear to deem them as criminals through various forms of brutal police tactics, resulting in what’s been termed the New Jim Crow. Tensions between communities of color, especially Black communities, and their local police departments escalated throughout the fall of 2014 in response to the spike in police murders and have not abated much since. Although they have been honored by some, the Los Angeles Police Department has a long history of tension with Black and Brown communities. Rather than monies being spent proactively to empower impoverished Black and Brown communities, monies are being spent on non-essential means of oppression through increased policing and expansion of the police state. Monies that should be spent on education, homes and sustainable employment opportunities are being diverted to keep a brotha down!

According to Hamid Kahn of the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition, racially discriminatory Suspi- cious Activity Reports (SARs), or rather secret files, are being regularly filed on people whom law enforcement and the public deem as “suspi- cious” individuals. Rather than fostering better community-police relationships, law enforcement too often uses disorderly behavior as an easy way to pacify and to more and more we are spied upon by law enforcement, as though they were our “American dream” path toward the “yellow brick road.” Yet, more and more we are spied upon by law enforcement, thus deemed domestic terrorists in our own homeland. I wonder if Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz were on her spiritual quest and traveling these landscapes following the killings of Ezell Ford, Michael Brown, Eric Garner and countless other Black men and others of color.

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What’s Downtown Women’s Action Coalition Up to These Days?

Written by Ariana Alcaraz.

When was the last time you were at a Downtown Women’s Action Coalition (DWAC) meeting? If it’s been awhile, you’ve been missing out. If you’ve never been, make the next one your first one!

Since 2001, DWAC has been working hard to ensure that the voices of Skid Row women are heard from City Hall to Sacramento. Over the past few months, DWAC members traveled to the state capitol and spoke directly with legislators and staff about the critical actions that must be taken to ensure basic human needs are met and that people are treated with dignity and respect. DWAC has prioritized several important policies, including the repeal of the Maximum Family Grant Rule (SB 23) which states that if a mother gets pregnant while receiving cash aid, she is not allowed to receive an increase in her monthly allowance unless SHE CAN PROVE her contraception failed or she was raped. DWAC is in full support of SB 23, which would repeal this archaic regulation, and members had the opportunity to speak to the author of the bill, Senator Holly Mitchell, on the impacts this could have on the lives of mothers here in downtown. This bill has passed the Senate but still needs to be approved by the Assembly so it’s not over yet, keep an ear out for updates!

Unfortunately there’s not much to celebrate in our local policymakers. In fact, it’s quite the opposite. As we would expect from the city who leads the nation in criminalizing homelessness, Los Angeles is at it again. Two policies were passed in June (see full article on front page) criminalizing people’s right to simply have personal property. And does it matter if your property is right next to you, attended and packed up neatly? Nope. You’re now breaking the law. DWAC has been active in the fight to oppose these policies and we will continue work to monitor their enforcement and find ways to overturn them!

DWAC members have also been leading the Free Trishawn Carey campaign, in collaboration with LA CAN members and other concerned community members. Trishawn Carey was witness to the murder to Charlie Keunang, also known as Brother Africa, in the Skid Row community in March and has been in jail since that date. Trishawn picked up a police baton in response and fear to the brutalization of Africa and, though she never swung it or used it in any way, she is being charged up a police baton in response to the brutalization of Africa and, munity in March and has been in jail since that date. Trishawn picked up a police baton in response and fear to the brutalization of Africa and, though she never swung it or used it in any way, she is being charged.

Aside from our advocacy work, DWAC is now in the process of putting together our annual Women’s Day at the Park! We spent the last few months fundraising for Women’s Day by hosting two events. The first one was our party at the Downtown Women’s Center where we launched our Adopt-A-Mom campaign. The second was our variety show that took place the first weekend in May and it was a success! Thanks to DWAC members Cynthia Rufin and Janine Betts who produced and directed the events! We were able to raise enough money to bring the ladies an amazing day of celebration. Please join us on Saturday, August 8th at a new location for this event – Grand Hope Park on the south end of Downtown. This year’s event co-chairs are Chella Coleman and Frenchy Mbella and planning for Women’s Day in the Park is happening now, so if you want to get involved, stop by the LACAN office and speak to a DWAC member.

DWAC meets on the second Tuesday of every month at 3:30 pm at the LA CAN office. Come by and check out what we are up to and bring your ideas to the table. See you soon!

If I could sit across the porch from God, I’d ask HIM why?

Written by Suzette Shaw

Why do my people continue to die?
Yes, I’m happy to be alive but my spirit cries. You see, I can no longer deny, because by doing so I am living a lie.

If I could sit across the porch from God, I’d ask HIM why?

Why do my people continue to die?

Why do they brutalize?

If I could sit across the porch from God, I’d ask HIM why?

Why do they brutalize?

Why do they criminalize a black man’s life?

You see, my spirit cries.

As a black woman my spirit is caught between a hope, a dream and a sigh...

I look in every watered eye,
I hear the pain of the mother who says, “my son went before I, why?”

“I birthed him, then nursed him,
after YOU made him an earth one.
Only for them to curse him.
Only for them to hurt him....

If I could sit across the porch from God, I’d ask HIM why?

Why do my people continue to die?

Why is a black woman measured in less sum?
So much, that by the time her work is added up her sum equals...

- NONE.

Why do some of us have to whore?
So we can get to the store, to keep a roof over our head rather than a concrete floor?

Some even look for a hit...a score, so they don’t have to feel the pain no more.
Just ignore, ignore...ignore.

And why does the one who looks like her, fear her?
When the one who looks like her was his birther?
Is the sum of our pain too much for us to gain, even sustain...
in this life’s game?

If I could sit across the porch from God, I’d ask HIM why?

Why do my people continue to die?

Why do they sob, because they have no sustainable job,

or will they be criminalized?

Will they survive in their broken world,
so minimized, for the basics of food, shelter...
or will they be criminalized?

If I could sit across the porch from God, I’d ask HIM why?

Why do my people continue to die?
EBT Access for All

Written by Chella Coleman

When we talk about social justice, we usually think of work against the police state or for the rights of homeless folks and other marginalized groups or, if you’re like me, advocating for trans women of color. But do we think of food deserts? Places like Skid Row and South LA where there are little-to-no fresh fruits and vegetables available? I definitely think this is an issue of social justice because the easiest and cheapest places to eat in our communities are mostly McDonald’s, Pizza Hut, KFC, and other fast food that offer food that is low in nutrients and high in fats, sugars, and other unhealthy ingredients. These are the types of foods that contribute to the high levels of diabetes, high blood pressure, and other diseases that affect low-income people of color more than wealthier, white communities. But what are we to do? We eat what’s available and affordable to us – unless we can change our food desert conditions.

Thank goodness for the growing number of Farmer’s Markets in Downtown LA and across the City that sell healthy, fresh and organic fruits and vegetables. The problem! While there are many markets in the Downtown community, most do not accept EBT (CalFresh Food Stamps) or WIC (Women Infants and Children benefits). It is unacceptable that these markets do not make themselves available for people with public benefits designed to increase our access to sufficient and healthier food. In Downtown LA and some other communities, it is actually creating segregated markets in which most long-term, low-income residents of color simply can’t access the new sources of healthier food.

So what are we doing about it? Well, LA CAN’s food justice team is currently working on a campaign to pass a Citywide ordinance that would require all Farmer’s Markets that operate on public land – like parks and streets – to accept EBT and WIC. We are gaining momentum and support in the community by collecting signatures on a petition to show City Councilmembers and market operators that there is widespread support for such a policy. We are taking this petition through Skid Row and also to Farmer’s Market customers and vendors, like the Pershing Square market that operates on Wednesdays. Though Pershing Square accepts credit and debit cards widely, only one vendor accepts EBT.

Until EBT is accepted at all Farmer’s Markets, LA CAN’s Pop-Up Produce Market is a great alternative! The market operates at the James Slauson Community Center in Pueblo del Rio every Thursday from 1 pm to 3 pm, and you can pre-order from LA CAN’s offices downtown.

I urge you to support our campaign and join the fight for accessible fruits, vegetables and other healthy options in our communities. Our health, and lives, depend on it. For more information or to get involved, come to LA CAN’s Team Food Committee meetings every Thursday at 10:00 am at the LA CAN offices. And, while you’re at it, pick up a petition page and collect some signatures!

Juneteenth – A 150 Year Celebration or Wake Up Call?

Written by Karl Scott

This year, Our Skid Row - a coalition of Skid Row-based organizations - organized a fantastic community event to celebrate our neighborhood, residents, and Juneteenth! So let’s take a step back and revisit one of the most important holidays!

President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation that all slaves were to be freed, effective January 1, 1863. It was not until May of 1865 that news reached Texas and the words of General Order #3 were not officially announced in Galveston until June 19, 1865, stating that all slaves were free and had citizenship. Because Texas had not participated in the war, many slave owners had moved to Texas and at the time of the order, Texas had an estimated 250,000 slaves.

Newly freed slaves celebrated and rejoiced despite the challenging times they faced. The Order forced the slave owners to pay wages and many were let go without wages. Slaves in other states took advantage of the “40 Acres and A Mule” law enacted during the Reconstruction Period, but those in Texas, due to the lateness of the arrival of the news, did not get their 40 acres. Although the 13th amendment abolished slavery, the 14th amendment protected their civil rights and the 15th amendment gave them the right to vote, southern whites passed state laws depriving most Blacks of these rights. The 13th amendment was fought in courts by most southern states up until 1947. The 14th amendment saw southern states reacting against the 13th amendment by enacting “Black Codes,” laws which restricted movement and prevented freed slaves from suing or testifying in court. The 15th amendment gave Black people the right to vote, but also was challenged by the states with poll taxes, poll bullies, etc. This amendment did not live up to its full potential until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and today, some states are resorting back to using old tactics to again challenge the 13th amendment.

In the early 20th century, more laws were passed, including Jim Crow laws that further disenfranchised blacks. The Great Depression forced many Blacks off farms and into cities. Juneteenth celebrations were initiated in rural and urban neighborhoods and today is celebrated nationwide.

“I remember Juneteenth and Christmas being the two biggest holidays of the year,” said Mr. W, a Texan Baby Boomer and Skid Row resident. “Christmas was family, but Juneteenth was the one day that everybody in the community got together for a celebration. Nobody missed Juneteenth. It was an all-day event. We woke to the smell of Barbeque in the air outside and food cooking inside. There was lots of anticipation among everybody in the house. Most families didn’t earn a lot of money picking cotton, sharecropping, working rice fields, but still cakes managed to get baked, watermelons and sodas cooled in tubs and at night, homemade ice cream churned with rock salt and ice to bring it to end our full day.”

“We should all be thankful to the people working through the years to keep the day in our memory and continue its celebration that serves as a reminder so as not to allow history to repeat itself — the civil rights fighters of the 50’s, the freedom fighters of the 60’s as well as the many Congress people who introduced legislation to have June 19 recognized as Juneteenth Independence Day. Because Juneteenth originated as the result of Texas receiving the news of the Emancipation Proclamation 2-1/2 years late, it is only fitting that Texas would be the first state to establish Juneteenth as a state holiday in the country.”

Ironically, the Republican Party gave freedom to slaves and today, 150 years later, that same party wants to take away those freedoms. Here we are in 2013 celebrating 150 years of independence yet fighting to keep the same rights, faced with mass unjustified incarceration, excessive cops killings, and high unemployment.

Change is sometimes good as long as the message remains the same, the celebration the medium and the memory of the fight and the strength of our ancestors remain so that we will not forget those responsible for us being in the positions and conditions we have today, still fighting.
Rest in Peace Rosalinda | Descanse en Paz Rosalinda

Written by Steve Diaz | Escrito por Steve Diaz | Traducido por Thelmy Perez

In June the community lost an angel, a mother, a leader, and a great example of humanity. Long-time LA CAN member and Pueblo Del Rio resident Rosalinda Flores passed away after a long and brave fight against cancer. Rosita, as many of us called her, was an extremely active member of the community and for years would share her love of making purses by traveling to different community centers to teach people how to make them.

No matter when you saw her, you would always be greeted by her happiness and warmth. Even when she was facing her own issues or illness, she would always smile and say hi to everyone as she was walking down the street. Rosita was also a founding member of the LA CAN Pueblo Del Rio tenant committee, where she was an active advocate for community issues and organized other residents around issues of public safety, trash fees, and the preservation and improvement of housing in the neighborhood. In recognition of her hard work, dedication and impact, this year LA CAN honored her with the 2015 Freedom Now Award.

Rosita will be extremely missed and we hope to honor her life and legacy by continuing her work of improving and strengthening the community. May she rest in peace.

Este junio, nuestra comunidad perdió un ángel, una madre, un líder, y un gran ejemplo de la humanidad. Miembro de largo plazo de LA CAN y residente de Pueblo Del Rio, Rosalinda Flores falleció después de una larga y valiente lucha contra el cáncer. Rosita, como muchos la llamábamos, era miembro muy activa de la comunidad y durante muchos años ella compartía su amor de hacer carteras viajando a diferentes centros comunitarios para enseñarles a otros cómo hacerlas.

Donde fuera que la vieran, ella siempre recibía a todos con su felicidad y calidez. Incluso cuando ella estaba frente a sus propios problemas o enfermedades, siempre sonreía y saludaba a todo mundo mientras caminaba por la calle. Rosita también fue miembro fundador del comité de inquilinos de Pueblo Del Rio de LA CAN donde fue una defensora activa de su comunidad y organizó a otros residentes bajo los temas de seguridad pública, la basura, y la preservación y mejora de las viviendas en el vecindario. En reconocimiento de su fuerte trabajo, su dedicación y su impacto, este año LA CAN la honró con el premio, Libertad Ahora de 2015.

Rosita será extrañada por siempre y esperamos honrar su vida y su legado al continuar su trabajo de mejora y fortalecer la comunidad. Que descanse en paz.