Community Groups And Civic Leaders Demand More Than Political Rhetoric from Elected Officials in Addressing Homeless "State of Emergency"

Written by Alan Sutton and Eric Ares

Community groups, service providers, and civic leaders from across Los Angeles are mobilizing and calling for an end to the criminalization of homelessness and the allocation of real, substantive resources for housing after City leaders’ recent homeless state of emergency announcement. On September 22, Mayor Eric Garcetti and members of the LA City Council, in addition to declaring a homeless state of emergency, announced a $100 million plan to address the crisis, without any actual resources identified to meet this promise. In response, a group of over 130 organizations is pushing elected officials to back up this voluputous rhetoric with action if the city is serious about making progress in addressing homelessness, which has only grown worse in recent years after a number of failed policies.

A recent homeless count showed a 12% jump in the past two years in the number of homeless people living in LA County. Of the 44,000 homeless people counted, 70% were unsheltered and living on the streets. Another study shows that 13,000 fall into homelessness each month in the county.
Madison Hotel Tenants Fight Back against Harassment and Displacement

Written by Ariana Alcaraz

The Madison Hotel, on 7th Street between San Julian and Wall Streets, has gone through two ownership changes in the last year, and a new property management company, Williams Holding Property, is now providing on-site management in the building. As history has shown us, there is often trouble for tenants when a building changes hands multiple times in a short period of time, but new owners can’t change people’s tenant rights even if they claim they can. Within weeks of the new management in place, tenants began to see drastic changes. Reducing services, taking the tables, chairs and television from common areas, implementing a “no guest” policy which disallowed tenants from having visitors and mail tampering were just some of the things that quickly alarmed tenants who knew this type of behavior was illegal and must be stopped. This is how the tenant committee once again began to ramp up its organizing.

“I’ve lived in the Madison for more than three years and it is probably one of the only places I can afford to live in Downtown or anywhere in LA,” said Sharon Martin. “Since the new management took over, people in our building have been harassed, told that we can’t talk in public spaces, and threatened with illegal evictions. And it only got worse when we started to organize. Once we were forced outside to meet with organizers and the manager dumped a bucket of water on us. Many of us have been here for years and we don’t want to be pushed out of our homes.”

Built in 1914, the Madison Hotel is over 100 years old and has always been home to low-income residents in downtown. Some renters have lived there for more than 30 years. Many of these residents have witnessed the changes that have happened in downtown as landlords have attempted to push out low-income residents in favor of wealthier, gentrifying residents. Other long term downtown residents were not necessarily surprised that this sort of thing is now happening at the Madison.

“They tried to do the same thing to us at the Huntington Hotel, so I know exactly what Madison tenants are going through,” says LA CAN’s housing committee member, Wesley Walker.

But the tenant committee will not allow illegal practices to push people out of their homes and communities. To highlight the tenant rights violations and lack of adequate response by City officials, the Madison tenant committee organized an October 6 press conference in front of their building. Over 25 tenants and numerous community members who felt it was important to support Madison tenants and stand up against gentrification and displacement were in attendance. Speakers shared some of their stories and reported how dozens of housing complaints have been submitted without any real results. Nor had Williams Holding responded to a demand letter that detailed many of the housing violations that had been and continue to be occurring.

Attorneys from Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles and Inner City Law Center also spoke on behalf of tenants and vowed to support all tenants facing evictions. While management attempted to interfere with this public action and statement, tenants prevailed and will continue to pursue all organizing and legal efforts until all of their tenant rights are upheld and the building is managed in a way that promotes health, safety and stability.

Join Madison tenants in their continued efforts to protect their homes. Contact Ariana at LA CAN for additional information.

City of LA Tries to Sell Out Low-Income Tenants at the Oviatt Hotel

Written by Steve Diaz

In 2008, the City Council passed a residential hotel preservation ordinance regulating the demolition and conversion of residential hotels in the City of Los Angeles, the strongest housing preservation ordinance on record in the City. About 18,000 units are protected city wide, with about 8,000 of them in Downtown LA. One of these buildings is the Oviatt Hotel, located at 1325 S. Flower Street near the Pico Blue/Expo Line station. The hotel ordinance requires that residential hotel units cannot be converted or demolished unless replacement housing is created in the same neighborhood with the same rents or if a large fee is paid to the City’s Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

The owners of the Oviatt Hotel appealed the decision to include them in the City’s list of residential hotels covered by the ordinance, and lost. They then asked for a court intervention to grant the appeal, and lost. Yet, for no apparent reason, the City’s Housing and Community Investment Department negotiated and signed, without Council notification or approval, a settlement agreement granting permission to demolish or convert the units if they built only HALF of the required replacement units at higher rents than most tenants now pay. Basically, although the court upheld the City’s determination, they gave away 50 homes and all the affordability of the current hotel anyway. This in the midst of their self-declared “State of Emergency” related to homelessness. LA CAN’s housing committee does not intend to accept this outcome. The City is accountable to enforce its own ordinances, protect current tenants, and not negotiate deals with upscale boutique hotel developers at the expense of low-income residents of South Park and all of Downtown LA.

LA CAN housing committee members have been actively outreaching to tenants in the building to educate them about their rights and engage them in a fight for their building. If you want to get involved or get more information, contact Steve at LA CAN.
Housing

El presupuesto participativo mueve adelante

Escrito y Traducido por Thelmy Perez

Hay aproximadamente 6,500 familias viviendo en la vivienda pública de la Ciudad de Los Ángeles. También hay 45,092 familias en la lista de espera de vivienda pública con la esperanza de que se disfrute de un apartamento, un hecho que resulta en muchos ser traducidos en español por ejemplo: “hijas y yo habríamos terminado en la calle”, “Si hubiera perdido mi vivienda pública, mis ingresos, y la importancia de la vivienda pública. María vive en Pueblo del Rio en South Central LA y fue contraída para su casa, que es accesible independientemente de sus ingresos, y que es lo suficientemente grande como para vivir cómodamente sin importar el tamaño de la familia. Las políticas de espera se consideran de “extremadamente bajos ingresos (ELI),” que ganan menos de $ 25000 por año, en promedio, para una familia de cuatro. La vivienda disponible para las familias de ELI en una ciudad donde un apartamento de una recámara cuesta aproximadamente $ 2000 por mes para dos personas. Además, 13,000 nuevas personas por mes, el condado enfrentándose a la falta de techo, de acuerdo con Los Ángeles Times (25 de agosto, 2015). El recorte continuo de fondos para la vivienda a nivel federal ha devastado los esfuerzos locales empleados para la falta de vivienda pública, una lista de espera de la lista de espera de la lista de espera de las familias de ELI quienes hacen que se dispare el año después de un año en la primavera y en el verano de 2015.

Los residentes que actualmente viven en la vivienda pública y se están organando para proponer a HACLA un apartamento de planta baja en la parte de la Colectiva Pro el Derecho Humano A la Vivienda entienden las condiciones actuales y la importancia de la vivienda pública. María vive en Pueblo del Rio y fue abandonada después de una huelga de pay out en la calle”, “Yo sabía que mi única opción era luchar, y cuando la mandé a HACLA, también ha culpado HACLA por aprobar el proceso porque sentía que había sido injusto. En su gran mayoría, y con el apoyo de la Colectiva, los residentes respondieron y dejaron claro que seguir luchando para asegurarnos de que la vivienda pública continua siendo pública con el fin de beneficiar a otras madres solteras y personas de bajos ingresos como yo.” María ha estado trabajando con otros residentes líderes de comunidades de vivienda pública de todas partes de la ciudad para luchar contra la privatización de la vivienda pública.

HACLA, a la agencia gubernamental cuyo único propósito es proporcionar viviendas económicas para los pobres, maneja un presupuesto de cerca de mil millones de dólares. A pesar de que el presupuesto de HACLA incluyendo de dónde el dinero se gasta, el hecho de que factores que todos los inquilinos de vivienda pública son considerados un infraventa que no tiene el dinero para hacer las reparaciones necesarias en las comunidades de vivienda pública. HACLA se ha hecho famoso por su orientación hacia publicidad, hay que privatizar o subcontratar sus servicios de gestión a empresas privadas con el fin de equilibrar su presupuesto. HACLA había estado trabajando en un programa de aprovechamiento de esfuerzos para el diseño e implementación de un programa que le permita a todos los residentes entender de dónde el dinero se gasta en el presupuesto de HACLA.

“¿Cómo vamos a poder encontrar alternativas a la privatización si no entendemos el presupuesto?” preguntó Ana, miembro del Comité de HACLA y residente de Pico Gardens en el Eastside. “Yo sabía que la única manera de asegurarnos de que el presupuesto de HACLA no se utiliza como una excusa para privatizar la vivienda pública."
Every year, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) is required to create and update its one and five year Agency Plan and Section 8 Administrative Plan. The Agency Plan is a document that describes major anticipated policy changes for the agency in the upcoming year. Similarly, the Section 8 Administrative Plan is also updated annually as a part of the Agency Plan process. For the last six years, the LA Human Right to Housing Collective has convened a public and Section Housing leaders from across the city. Every year, this group analyzes HACLA’s draft Agency Plan to ensure that the rights of public housing and Section 8 tenants are not threatened by new HACLA policies and every year, this group mobilizes to the Agency Plan public hearings to propose solutions to problems and, almost always, to oppose negative or poorly thought out policies outlined in the draft Agency Plan. This year, the Committee caught three such policies that they turned out to oppose on August 20th, 2015 at the Los Angeles Convention Center:

1. No-Smoking Policy: For the second year in a row, HACLA proposed to ban tobacco smoking in all of its public housing developments (marijuana smoking is already prohibited). Although many tenants agree that smoking and second hand smoke are dangerous or annoying, very few agree that HACLA should be able to evict someone from their home if they or their guests were caught smoking. The Committee testified that they were opposed to this policy and that if the federal government were to require such a policy in the future, that it should be health focused (aimed at helping people to quit smoking) and not punitive, meaning that eviction must not be a consequence for those smokers who have a hard time quitting or who don’t want to quit.

2. Water Conservation Policy: It is important to conserve water in this time of drought and most Californians are doing their part to save water. HACLA is also doing its part and has installed water saving devices in all their properties, strictly limiting the use of water outdoors. The 2016 draft Agency Plan, however, outlined an even stricter policy that would expressly prohibit the use of water for recreational activities outdoors. This means that children would not be able to bathe in kiddie pools, play with water toys or balloons, or even hose off on a hot day. The violation of this new policy would result in eviction, according to the draft document. The Collective argued that in these record breaking drought years, such a policy was both draconian and unnecessary. We suggested that HACLA set size and gallon limits on kiddie pools given that a three foot kiddie pool uses 22 gallons of water, about half the amount of a regular bath. We also suggested that they remove this policy from the Agency Plan altogether and look at other water saving measures that are in line with City and State requirements such as low-flow toilets and shower heads.

3. Shelter Plus Care: A new policy in the Section 8 Admin Plan would have restructured the Shelter Plus Care program, a small yet important voucher assistance program designed to house disabled homeless residents. The proposal would have allowed HACLA to evict families if any member had committed a crime, and landlords to conduct indiscriminate criminal background screening (even non-smoking) and not punitively, meaning that it should be health focused (aimed at helping people to quit smoking) and not punitive, meaning that eviction must not be a consequence for those smokers who have a hard time quitting or who don’t want to quit. The Collective argued that these changes were overly broad and discriminatory and would devastate the small number of tenants who currently benefit from the Shelter Plus Care program.

In response to the overwhelming objection to these three policies, in early September, HACLA announced that it would be removing the smoking and water conservation policies from the Agency Plan, and work with the Collective to restructure the proposal for the Shelter Plus Care program to include provisions specifically for recipients who must register as lifetime sex offenders (without barring them from the program altogether). This outcome is a testament to the power of organizing and we encourage all public housing and Section 8 residents to join your local Collective leadership Committee or contact us to learn how to build one! It is important that tenants participate in the ways policies are designed and implemented, especially in cases of evictions (involuntary smoking) and discriminatory and devastating the few number of inquilinos que actualmente se benefician del programa Shelter Plus Care.

In response to the objection abrumadora a estas tres políticas, a principios de septiembre, HACLA anunció que iba remover las políticas de no fumar y de conservación del agua del plan de Agencia que trabajaría con la Colectiva en la reestructuración de la propuesta del programa Shelter Plus Care para incluir provisiones específicas para las personas que deben registrarse como delincuentes sexuales de vida activa (sin requerir registro por completo). Este resultado es un testimonio del poder de la organización comunitaria y los animamos a todos los residentes de vivienda pública y Sección 8 a unirse a la Colectiva a través de su Comité de liderazgo local, que se ponga en contacto con nosotros para saber cómo construir un! Es importante que los inquilinos participen en el diseño e implementación de las políticas, sobre todo porque HACLA propuso eliminar el seguir adelante con las políticas de no fumar y de conservación del agua. Comuníquese con nosotros en lahnarighthousing@gmail. com o 818-835-1091.

**Los residentes de vivienda pública derrotan la malas políticas en el plan anual**

Escrito y Traducido por Thelmy Perez

Cada año, la Autoridad de Vivienda de la Ciudad de Los Ángeles (HACLA) es requerida a crear y actualizar su Plan de Agencia de uno y cinco años y su Plan Administrativo Sección 8. El Plan de Agencia es un documento que describe los principales cambios de política previstos para la agencia en el próximo año. Del mismo modo, el Plan Administrativo de la Sección 8 también se actualiza anualmente como parte del proceso de Plan de Agencia. Durante los últimos seis años, LA Colectiva Pro el Derecho Humano a la Vivienda ha convocado a un comité de líderes de vivienda pública y Sección 8 en el contexto de las partes de la ciudad. Cada año, este grupo analiza el anteproyecto del Plan de Agencia de HACLA para asegurar que los derechos de los residentes de vivienda pública y Sección 8 no serán amenazados por las nuevas políticas y cada año, este grupo se moviliza para las audiencias públicas del Plan de Agencia para proponer soluciones a los problemas y, casí siempre, para oponerse a las políticas negativas o mal pensadas descritas en el anteproyecto del Plan de Agencia. Este 20 de agosto de 2015, el Comité se movilizó a la audiencia pública para el Plan de Agencia en el Centro de Convenciones de Los Ángeles para llamar atención a tres políticas problemáticas:

1. Política de no fumar: Por segundo año consecutivo, HACLA proponía prohibir el consumo de tabaco en todos sus desarrollos de vivienda pública (fumar marihuana ya está prohibido). Aunque algunos inquilinos están de acuerdo en el uso del tabaquismo y el humo de segunda mano son darianos, muy pocos están de acuerdo que HACLA debe ser capaz de desalojar a una familia si ellos o sus invitados se encuentran en violación de esta política. El Comité declaró que se oponen a esta política y que si el gobierno federal llegara a requerir una política de este tipo en el futuro, debe ser centrada en la salud (destinada a ayudar a la gente a dejar de fumar) y no punitiva, lo que significa que el desalojo no debe ser una consecuencia para aquellos fumadores que tienen dificultades para dejar de fumar o que no quieren dejar de fumar.

2. Política de conservación de agua: Es importante conservar el agua en esta época de sequía y la mayoría de los californianos están haciendo su parte para conservarla. HACLA también está haciendo su parte y ha instalado dispositivos de ahorro de agua en todas sus propiedades, lo que limita estrictamente el uso del agua afuera. El anteproyecto Plan Agencia de 2016, sin embargo, proponía una política que prohibiría expresamente el uso de agua para actividades recreativas al aire libre. Esto significa que los niños no serían capaces de bañarse en piscinas para niños, jugar con juguetes o globos de agua o incluso mojarse afuera en un día caluroso. La violación de esta nueva política tendría como resultado el desalojo, según el anteproyecto. La Colectiva argumentó que en estos años altas temperaturas, la política es tanto draconiana e innecesaria. Sugerimos que HACLA establezca límites en el tamaño y galones de piscinas para niños, dado que un piscina para niños de tres pies utiliza 22 galones de agua, sobre todo que la gente a dejar de fumar y de conservación del agua de la plan de Agencia que trabajaría con la Colectiva en la reestructuración de la propuesta del programa Shelter Plus Care para incluir provisiones específicas para las personas que deben registrarse como delincuentes sexuales de vida activa (sin requerir registro por completo). Este resultado es un testimonio del poder de la organización comunitaria y los animamos a todos los residentes de vivienda pública y Sección 8 a unirse a la Colectiva a través de su Comité de liderazgo local, que se ponga en contacto con nosotros para saber cómo construir un! Es importante que los inquilinos participen en el diseño e implementación de las políticas, sobre todo porque HACLA proponía eliminar el seguir adelante con las políticas de no fumar y de conservación del agua. Comuníquese con nosotros en lahnarighthousing@gmail.com o 818-835-1091.

3. Shelter Plus Care: Una nueva política en el Plan Administrativo de la Sección 8 habría reestructurado el programa Shelter Plus Care, un programa pequeño pero importante diseñado para albergar de forma rápida a residentes sin hogar con discapacidades. La propuesta le daría a la poder a HACLA a desalojar a una familia si algún miembro comete un delito, y a los propietarios de tener el poder a llevar a cabo exámenes indiscriminados de antecedentes penales y “establecer sus propias políticas con respecto a los ex delincuentes”. La Colectiva argumentó que estos cambios son demasiado restrictivos y discriminatorios y devastarían el pequeño número de inquilinos que actualmente se benefician del programa Shelter Plus Care.

En respuesta a la obstrucción abrumadora a estas tres políticas, a principios de septiembre, HACLA anunció que iba remover las políticas de no fumar y de conservación del agua del plan de Agencia que trabajaría con la Colectiva en la reestructuración de la propuesta del programa Shelter Plus Care para incluir provisiones específicas para las personas que deben registrarse como delincuentes sexuales de vida activa (sin requerir registro por completo). Este resultado es un testimonio del poder de la organización comunitaria y los animamos a todos los residentes de vivienda pública y Sección 8 a unirse a la Colectiva a través de su Comité de liderazgo local, que se ponga en contacto con nosotros para saber cómo construir un! Es importante que los inquilinos participen en el diseño e implementación de las políticas, sobre todo porque HACLA proponía eliminar el seguir adelante con las políticas de no fumar y de conservación del agua. Comuníquese con nosotros en lahnarighthousing@gmail.com o 818-835-1091.
Breaking Humanity’s Windows
Written by Karl Scott

In the spring of this year, the Mayor and City Council continued the assault against poor people with extremely punitive amendments to Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) 56.11 and 63.44 that basically make it impossible for homeless residents, vendors, and anyone else to possess personal property in public space. After public outcry and community organizing by LA CAN and many other allies, the Mayor called for additional amendments to reduce the punitive measures and called for a moratorium on enforcement of the new laws. However, the versions of the laws that allow for intense criminalization remain on the books as of the Community Connection’s publication date.

The City Council’s Homelessness and Poverty Committee began the additional amendment process this summer. Unlike the original hearings when the punitive, and probably illegal, process this summer, the Homelessness and Poverty Committee moved forward amendments to LAMC 56.11, yet left LAMC 63.44 unchanged. In a 6-3 vote, Councilmembers Huizar, Cedillo, and Harris-Dawson removed any criminal penalty for violation of LAMC 56.11, with Councilmembers Bonin and Price voting against this change. The Committee also moved forward recommendations requiring substantially more storage facilities throughout the City. While these could be positive changes, we also need to ensure this doesn’t lead to stuffing belongings in bins and never get to the true solution of having keys to a home.

From Skid Row to Frisco, “Broken Windows” Has Got to Go!
Written by General Dogon

On September 29, ten members of the Homeless Bill of Rights Coalition led by LA CAN jumped into the “CAN-MOBILES” and took off to San Francisco to join other council members in protesting the International Downtown Association’s (IDA) annual conference. The IDA is the umbrella organizations for Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) across the U.S. and Canada, including the Downtown Los Angeles BIDs. Why the protest? Because their keynote speaker was none other than George Kelling, the architect of broken windows policing. Broken windows policing, a racist and overly punitive approach, is the underlying theory that drove the Safer Cities Initiative in Downtown LA and led to mass criminalization of poor and homeless Skid Row residents.

In addition to opposition to broken windows policing and questioning why private business associations would have their main focus on this, the statewide Homeless Bill of Rights supporters called out the BIDs for their many activities focused on forcibly moving poor and homeless residents out of their areas. Across the country, BIDs and their private security forces are illegally confiscating property they claim is abandoned but are not even engaged in daily profiling, harassment, intimidation, and assault. In fact, two Downtown LA BIDs, the Fashion District and the Downtown Industrial, are currently facing lawsuits for illegally confiscating the property of homeless residents and street vendors. The BIDs are also among the public and most vocal opponents of SB 608, the Right to Rest bill that is part of the Homeless Bill of Rights campaign.

For all of these reasons, public protest actions were planned. While George Kelling was preparing to speak, community organizers and activists met in a nearby park and put on teeshirts that read “Broken Windows Breaks Lives” and then proceeded into the hotel. Though security removed some people and prevented access to the conference hall (and, in fact, used physical force on some protesters throwing them against the wall), about a dozen people were able to chant right outside the hall and disrupt Mr. Kelling’s promotion of the broken windows theory.

At the same time, dozens of people remained outside, in front of the hotel, occupying public space and educating passersby about the conference and the dangers of policing homelessness and poverty. Tiny, from Poor Magazine, led the rally outside with chants. Homeless Bill of Rights Coalition member Paul Boden added, “Members of the IDA are the strongest advocates of an approach to homelessness that favors policing, harassment, and discrimination over housing and services by supporting and encouraging policies and programs that punish people for being poor.”

On the second day of the IDA conference, Homeless Bill of Rights supporters held an alternative conference session that challenged the IDA’s strategies that criminalize homelessness. There were six panelists representing the academic, legal, and “hood perspectives on broken windows policing and BID security practices and how those criminalize poor and homeless people and people of color.” Among the panelists, LA CAN member and unhoused resident Jojo Smith talked about how building community resistance against police and security guard brutality has been effective in anti-criminalization work in Skid Row. Other panelists included Sulaiman Hyatt, from the bay area chapter of BlackLivesMatter, who brought a fierce and revolutionary voice to challenge the crowd.

LA CAN and other allies have been organizing, speaking out against and fighting back against the practice of taking and destroying people’s personal property has been going on for too many years and the changes to these laws, as well as the practice of enforcing them, continue to raise serious concerns. Additionally, the police continue to criminalize people for many other reasons, especially in gentrifying communities like Downtown and Venice. However, the decriminalization vote, if approved by the Council, is a huge step forward in ensuring the constitutional rights of people are upheld in Los Angeles.

City Council President Wesson is expected to a gendize the Committee’s report and amendments no later than the middle of November. So this leaves one to wonder if our elected officials are truly capable of listening to the people, being part of the solution of housing for all and ending criminalization, and creating policies that advance these goals. Until solutions are seen and felt by the communities, LA CAN and allies will continue the fight. To stay connected, please join our Civil Rights Committee meetings every Monday at 1:00 pm or join us for our Residential Organizing Committee meetings on the 1st & 3rd Friday of the month at 6:00pm.

Above: Protesters rally outside the Marriott after being escorted out of IDA Conference; Below: Audience members listen and learn about how BIDs push criminalization policies.
Homeless State of Emergency

The numbers are perhaps more concerning when race is taken into account, with homelessness up over 30% for Black residents at the same time it is down 30% for white residents.

And while the state of emergency announcement might sound like a step in the right direction, the so-called plan does not add up at the moment as the City Council has only identified $13 million of the $100 million. However, what is known is that last year $87 million of the $100 million of the City’s General Fund that went toward homelessness went to LAPD to arrest houseless residents.

This is why on October 14, at the City Council’s Homelessness and Poverty Committee meeting, the group of over 130 of the City’s community leaders delivered an open letter to the Mayor and Council members regarding the state of emergency declaration. The letter calls on the city to:

1. Identify long-term, sustained sources of local funding totaling at least $100 million per year and dedicate the large majority of those resources toward new permanent supportive housing units.

2. End all “quality-of-life” and “safer city” enforcement against houseless residents, including but not limited to:
   a. Evaluating and repealing punitive laws such as LA Municipal Code 56.11, 63.44B and I, and 41.18D.
   b. Redirecting the $87 million spent on arresting homeless people, as identified in the recent CAO report, toward permanent solutions to homelessness.

3. Provide emergency public health resources to people living on the streets without major investment in infrastructure, including mobile restrooms and showers, mobile health and mental health services, and voluntary storage facilities.

“The homeless ‘state of emergency’ did not create itself,” the letter reads. “The City has invested hundreds of millions dollars to address homelessness in the past several years, but the large majority of that money has gone to the Los Angeles Police Department to cite, arrest and otherwise police people who need resources, not fines and jail time.” According to those who signed the letter, only by building enough housing for everyone will we end this crisis. And a policing approach takes away money that should be going to housing instead of handcuffs. Policy makers, after years of supporting the policing approach, are starting to agree.

Councilmember Huizar recently stated that, “this approach to homelessness has failed” and that “we can’t ignore the problem, and we can’t arrest our way out of it.” At the press conference announcing the state of emergency, Council President Herb Wesson declared, “Today, we step away from the insanity of doing the same thing and hoping for different results, and instead chart our way to ending homelessness.”

However, again, there has been little done since this announcement to make this plan a reality. So on October 27, around 100 of the groups and people who signed the demand letter met at Bethel AME Church in South LA for a town hall meeting to strategize on how to push elected officials beyond words and into action. For two hours, folks from across Los Angeles - from Venice to Boyle Heights to Hollywood to San Pedro - discussed how policies that punish, cite, and arrest homeless people for being poor impact their communities must end.

Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson was present as speaker after speaker reinforced how criminalization only makes it harder for people to access the limited services that exist to support homeless individuals in getting off the streets and how a housing approach is necessary. Attendees then created a plan to converge at City Hall on November 13 for a day of action to demonstrate to City Council that people across LA are indeed ready for a new way of addressing homelessness.

Councilmember Bonin has said that the City’s new proposal is “more than just words.” Communities across LA hope this is true. But they aren’t depending on it. And they will continue to demand real solutions to the crisis. It starts with stopping the failed policy of criminalization and allocating new, substantive resources to new housing options.
We write you in response to the recent declaration of a “state of emergency” in Los Angeles and an announcement of a $100 million investment towards homeless services and housing. While we welcome the call for more resources for solutions to homelessness, this must translate into substantial, long-term solutions of funding and, equally important, an end to the failed policy of criminalizing the lives of homeless residents through laws and enforcement that punish people for being poor and only make it more difficult for someone to get out of homelessness.

The homeless “state of emergency” did not create itself. The City has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to address homelessness, but the large majority of that money has gone to the Los Angeles Police Department to cite, arrest and otherwise police people who need resources, not fines and jail time. Just last year, according to Chief Administrative Officer Miguel Santiago, $87 million of the $100 million that went toward addressing homelessness out of the City’s general fund was spent on LAPD arrests of homeless people. This is not only an inhumane strategy, it is a wasteful and ineffective one as we all seem to agree, which we welcome. Mayor Garcetti has called criminalization efforts “pennywise pound foolish.” We were encouraged that Councilmember Huizar also joined us in saying that “this approach to homelessness has failed” and that “we can’t ignore the problem, and we can’t arrest our way out of it.”

Only $13 million in one-time funds have been identified with no real plan of how you all will get the additional $87 million or ensure long-term investments to really impact the homeless crisis. This must happen immediately if your constituents are to believe this announcement is a real commitment to change. Additionally, increases in financial resources towards this crisis will only work if the City abandons what has been its primary approach towards homelessness over the past decade: criminalizing the lives of homeless residents. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is now requiring that localities have a proactive plan to prevent the criminalization of homelessness or federal funds will be at risk. The time is now. The City can and must redirect millions of dollars towards housing and services and create an environment to ensure homeless residents are not criminalized or penalized for life-sustaining activities.

As Councilmember Bonin recently stated, the City needs to “get out of this cycle we’ve been in of trying to enforce against people who have no alternative.” To this end, in order to adequately address the homeless “state of emergency” with a plan for long-term dedicated resources, we call upon you to do the following:

1. Identify long-term, sustained sources of local funding totaling at least $100 million per year and dedicate the large majority of those resources toward new permanent supportive housing units.
2. End all “quality-of-life” and “Safer Cities” enforcement against homeless residents, including, but not limited to:
   a. Evaluating and repealing punitive laws such as LA Municipal Code 56.11, 65.44 B and I, and 41.18D.
   b. Redirecting the $87 million spent on arresting homeless people, as identified in the recent CACP report, toward permanent solutions to homelessness.
3. Provide emergency public health resources to people living on the streets without major investment in infrastructure, including mobile restrooms and showers, mobile health and mental health services, and voluntary storage facilities.

At the announcement, City Council President Wesson declared, “Today, we step away from the failed policy of criminalizing the lives of homeless people who are living on the streets without major investment in infrastructure, including mobile restrooms and showers, mobile health and mental health services, and voluntary storage facilities.

In light of trying to enforce against people who are living on the streets without major investment in infrastructure, including mobile restrooms and showers, mobile health and mental health services, and voluntary storage facilities.

In addition to this, the City has the financial resources to pay for different results, and instead chart our way to ending homelessness.” Announcing a goal of $100 million is a start. Words that acknowledge the failed policy of criminalization are promising. But if the City is to truly achieve different results, we need your leadership to ensure $100 million per year is identified and spent on housing and public health solutions and finally step away from policing as a strategy to address homelessness. We have the solutions and the City has the financial resources, we now need sustained political action.

Signed,


Individuals (Organizational Affiliation for Identification Purposes Only)

Aminah Abdul-Jabbar, Filmmaker and Professor, CSULA Dr. Melina Abdullah, Professor, CSULA & Black Lives Matter-Los Angeles Professor Jody Armour, Roy Crocker Professor of Law, UCLA Akielah Bakere, Social Worker Larry Aubry, Journalist, ABISA, BCCLA Gary Blass, Attorney at Law, Professor of Law Emeritus, UCLA Margo Bouchet, Attorney at Law Jordan T. Camp, Policy Director, Social Justice Fellows Center for the Study of Race & Ethnicity in America (CSREIA) Thandisizwe Chimurenga, Journalist Chuck D, Public Figure Black Crescent, Center for Black Media, Professor, Loyola Marymount University Ralph D. Fertig, ASCW Federal Admin. Judge (Ret.) Professor, USC School of Law Regina Freer, Professor, Occidental College Alicia Garza, Co-Founder of Black Lives Matter Jonathan Gomes, Artist Nana Gycali, Attorney at Law Stephen Gyllenhaal, Film and Television Director Dr. Argo-Marie Hanney, Professor, CSULA Christina Heatherton, Professor, Trinity College Phyllis Jackson, PhD, Associate Professor, Pomona College Dr. Angela James, Professor, Loyola Marymount University Gaye Theresa Johnson, Associate Professor, UCLA Erin Aubry Kaplan, Journalist Rev. Peter Laarman, Coordinator, Justice Not Jails Dr. Libby Lewis, Professor, CWRU, UCLAHuman Rights Alliance of Greater LA, Attorney Lynn Martinez, Attorney at Law Diane Middleton, Diane Middleton Foundation Dena Montague, Postdoctoral Fellow, CSULA-University of Delaware Keisha Motley, Director, RELC Laguna College Reginald Brown, Professor, USC, University of Southern California S. Phyllisng Jackson, PhD, Justice Studies, CSULA Aminah Abdul-Jabbar, Filmmaker and Professor, CSULA Women’s Council Prison Project Maegan Ortiz, IDEFSCA Jose M. Paez, Professor, CSUN Yasser Arafat, Painter, Dean, Associate Professor, University of Delaware Kevin Powell, Author and Journalist Margaret Prescod, Global Women’s Strike Vivian Price, Ph.D, Associate Professor, CSUSD John Raphling, Attorney at Law Dr. Anthony Ratcliffe, Professor, USC Steven Renderos, Center for Media Justice Dr. Boris Ricks, Professor, CSULynne D’Entremont, Professor, CSU California League of Women Voters Regina Sisson, Professor, CSU Jocelyn Rinehart, Director, Torrance Women’s Action Coalition/ Liberation Artist/ Revolutionary Angel

Rev. Dr. Roslyn Satchel, Minister, Arlington Community Church Phyllis Jackson, PhD, Justice Studies, CSULA-University of Delaware John Walton Senterfitt, PhD, RN Epidemiologist and Ethicist, L. A. County Dept. of Public Health Swindell Wagner, Professor, University of Southern Nevada Mark Simon, Rodney Drive Tenants Association Carol Sobel, Civil Rights Attorney Dan Sturman, Attorney at Law Alan Sutton, The Louise Sutton Kindness for the Homeless South LA Union de Vecinos United Homeless Healthcare Partners Venice Community Housing Corporation Venice Justice Committee Voice of My People Foundation Wesley Health Center – IWCH Institute Western Center on Law and Poverty Western Regional Advocacy Project Women Organize Resources, Knowledge and Services (W.O.R.K.S.)
Don’t Just Prop 47 Your Felonies - Have Your Misdemeanors Expunged Too!

Written by Wesley Walker

I have written about Prop 47 in the past and how this is a resource that many people with non-violent felony records can benefit from. Back in March, I went to the LA CAN legal clinic to work with attorneys from the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA). I went for Prop 47, to reclassify my felony conviction to a misdemeanor, but did not know that I would also be helped with expungement as well. When I presented my court docket to LAFLA, I had three misdemeanors and one felony.

Once my Prop 47 paperwork was submitted, I started working with my attorney to have all four of my misdemeanors expunged from my record. Over the course of the summer, LAFLA not only helped me with this but also helped me get few waivers so I would not have to pay court fees for these expungements. This was very important to me as I am a low-income renter who would not be able to afford these fees. Also, I didn’t have to go to any court appearances. The attorney represented me each time. After a few hearings, we were able to get all my misdemeanors expunged.

A lot of people like prosecutors and law enforcement are saying Prop 47 is a bad thing, that it is leading to more crime. This isn’t true. Just look at me. After my convictions, I sought treatment for my addiction. I am now working in my community trying to change it for the better. But I still had a felony that had implications for housing, benefits and employment. That is why Prop 47 is so important. It can help people change their record, which can assist them in getting jobs, housing, and other benefits. There are many other people who can benefit from Prop 47 and have their non-violent felonies removed. But people also need to understand that by doing this you might also be able to have your misdemeanors expunged as well. It does not take that much work, but it does require folks to step up and take advantage of this resource.

There are groups working with people throughout Los Angeles. You can visit www.myprop47.org to find a clinic near you. For folks in Downtown

It’s Only My Opinion, But...

Written by Al Sabo

Trick or Treat at City Hall: It seemed to be a treat when City Councilmembers and Mayor Garcetti announced a $100 million plan to help end homelessness in the City. But beware - the truth is often in the details, and what sounded like a treat really is actually a trick when you realize that the $100 million is a goal and the money hasn’t been found out yet! In fact, Council has admitted that only $13 million has been identified and some of this money might go to things other than permanent ward storage facilities, which help folks, but will not end homelessness. If people had a home, then it wouldn’t need storage facilities, proving once again that the City is not doing enough to end this crisis.

It gets trickier when you look at where the money has been going. Last year, in case you didn’t know, $87 million of the $100 million dollars that went toward homelessness from the City’s General Fund went to LAPD to enforce unrealistic, cruel, and often illegal laws that punish people for being poor. That left $13 million - all of which went to things other than permanent housing - the only sure fire way of getting and keeping people off the streets!

Councilmember Gil Cedillo has been one of the only voices of reason in City Hall lately - speaking out against law enforcement and criminalization as a way to combat homelessness. Let’s not be fooled again, everyone.

Pershing Square Revisited: Pershing Square has undergone a makeover - one that was very costly and that has proven to be beneficial to a certain class of park visitors while the efforts to push and keep out low-income and homeless residents continues. Though some will argue that changes which have allowed more music and movie events to occur have been a great success, the $3 million price tag to fix the stage that didn’t need to be fixed was a huge costly mistake.

And for all of you chess players out there: Why is it that nearly two years since the opening of four chess boards, still no one game of chess has been played. Meanwhile, where are the water fountains, restrooms, and chairs?

Then there are the two new playgrounds where no more than one or two children can be found at any time of the day. The play areas have the same problems as the chess boards: no shelter from the sun, no shade and no supervision (for parents), no water fountains, and no restrooms or facilities to change the younger children - as if there were any there anywhere. Maybe kids would want to play there if there were swings, slides, see-saws, or jungle gyms. In reality, this face of a playground not only eliminated the original seating and shade trees, but drove away many frequent visitors (like me!) from the park. Now we have even less shade and seats, and all this during one of the hottest heat waves on record!

Councilman Huizar, please! Your “Pershing Square Renew” plan must have huge shade trees and, while you are at it, enough with the concrete benches. Let’s get grassy areas and wooden or metal benches throughout!

Real Gun Control Needed: When our founders added the second amendment to our constitution they never could have envisioned the types of weaponry available to the average citizen today. Back in the 18th century people shot long rifles and muskets. There were no automatic, semi-automatic or multi-chip guns. Yet these weapons are largely responsible for countless deaths every day throughout the country.

The second amendment says that we all have a right to bear arms. If you want to end gun violence then the second amendment needs to be changed to reflect what it actually meant when it was originally written. All citizens should have the right to own a gun for protection. However, we have clarify that this cannot include weapons like semi-automatic machine guns that have resulted in so many senseless mass killings. However, let’s be honest: this issue is about money, gun manufacturers, the National Rifle Association (NRA) - and the control they have over spineless members of Congress. Will someone inform members of the NRA that they can keep their rifles, but they shouldn’t support multi-shot, rapid fire killing machines?

Police Out of Control, Everywhere: Another deadly shooting by police, this time in San Bernardino. Once again no weapon was seen nor found, but based on the testimony of a seven year old girl the police chased and killed yet another unarmed man.

Once again the police overreacted to a non-threatening situation. This incident once again shows why we need a universal policy for the rules of engagement and a different training policy for police academies everywhere. Today’s policies too often allow police to shoot first even when their lives are not in danger, though after the fact they claim they feared for their lives. If people shot others every time they experienced any fear for their lives, we’d all be dead by now.

More Racial Profiling: This time it happened in Prairie View, Texas. Four Black friends, including a Councilmember who was later tased, were stopped for no apparent reason other than being Black. Too often police profile individuals, which then escalates into an altercation and even a homicide. Profiling citizens because of their cultural identity or simply because of the way they look is seen by most as a continuous policy of the LAPD under the authority of the so called Safe Cities Initiative (SCI). It’s happening everywhere!
Beyond Gay Marriage
Written by Chella Coleman

After years of battling for gay marriage on a state by state basis, a US Supreme Court ruling in June granted the people of lgbtqia (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex) community the right to marry someone of their same gender. This means we finally have justice and equality for the lgbtqia community, right? Wrong!

Yes, people can now get married, but lgbtqia issues go beyond that - especially when you consider that transgender women of color are being murdered every 32 hours and there are a disproportionate number of lgbtqia people who experience homelessness due to things like family rejection and the lack of service providers that meet their needs. And we can’t forget the amount of lgbtqia teens experiencing bullying - too many of whom end up committing suicide.

Trans folks are so marginalized that at times they are blamed for defending themselves from transphobic attacks. In 2011, a Black Transgender Woman named CeCe McDonald was being harassed by with racist and transphobic attacks in a bar and was then hit in the face with a glass. When she left, the man who was harassing her followed her out and continued the taunts - at which point she defended herself with a pair of scissors and stabbed the man in the chest. He later died. The result? CeCe was charged and forced into accepting a plea bargain! She ended up with this on her record even though many people witnessed the transphobic attacks and the man even had a swastika tattoo!

Stories like this indicate just how few rights most lgbtqia community members get to exercise in this country. Physical and lethal attacks are occurring more and more. But, beyond that, there are just the daily homophobic and transphobic attacks. So while marriage equality is good because it allows folks to marry who they love, there are still too many out there who are being discriminated against, criminalized, imprisoned, deported, and murdered because of their lgbtqia identity. Not to mention the rates of poverty that lgbtqia people experience because of discrimination and challenges in finding employment.

So we need to look beyond gay marriage. The President cannot celebrate marriage equality one day and then the next day silence Jennicet Gutiérrez, who spoke up in the White House regarding the disproportionate number of lgbtqia people who experience homelessness due to things like family rejection and the lack of service providers that meet their needs. And we can’t forget the amount of lgbtqia teens experiencing bullying - too many of whom end up committing suicide.

During the first two years of the Safer Cities Initiative (which launched in 2006), over 19,000 arrests were made and 24,000 citations given out in a Skid Row community of about 15,000 mostly low-income and homeless residents. This set the tone for almost ten years of the city prioritizing policing and enforcement over housing and services.

Is RESET Really a Better Alternative to the Safer Cities Initiative?
Written by Ashleigh Hall

It is with healthy skepticism that the community is declaring victory in the fight against the Safer Cities Initiative (SCI). A new program, RESET (Resources, Enhancement, Services, and Enforcement), has launched in November that, according to LAPD, aims to refocus the resources once dedicated to SCI. This comes at a time when the Mayor and many members of the City Council are making public statements about how law enforcement approaches and strategies have failed to adequately address the homeless crisis. Of course, residents and allies in the community have been calling for the end to criminalization for years.

Since the inception of SCI, the Los Angeles Community Action Network has rejected and fought against the criminalization of our community. In meeting after meeting, action after action, residents have called for an end to SCI, which brought between 50 and 110 additional officers to Skid Row with a focus on “quality-of-life” law enforcement that resulted in mass citations, arrests, harassment, and dehumanization of homeless and low-income residents. For nine years the funding allotted to SCI has largely been wasted money spent on punishing people for being poor rather than ending homelessness by building homes.

RESET is supposed to include the realignment of SCI cops into four zoned areas of Skid Row. Each zone, distinguished by population and crime rates, will have one dedicated team of two officers on foot patrol and response officers assigned for back-up. Additionally, according to LAPD’s statements, each zone will have a Multi-Disciplinary Team made up of Department of Mental Health (DMH), Health Services, LAHSA, LAPD and a peer advocate working with individuals in need of services and housing. However, it is not clear whether the service teams are actually a part of RESET, or just LAPD trying to claim credit for the Skid Row-targeted Housing for Health/ C3 program funded by the County. According to County officials, the LAPD version of the outreach teams is inaccurate.

While RESET is being sold as a better alternative to SCI officers harassing and citing homeless folks for sitting and lying on the streets (and too often using violent and lethal force), we must remain skeptical. It’s crucial that we not accept the high-hopes and rhetoric that LAPD spews about our community and it’s more important than ever for us to come together and get involved, make our voices heard. We are the experts of our experiences - not the Mayor and City Council, Commissioners, Board of Supervisors, or LAPD. We will recognize the end of SCI as a victory that the community has demanded for years and harness our celebratory energy into the ongoing fight of stripping LAPD of all resources that could and should be going to the Safer Cities Initiative (SCI).
Challenges Unhoused Women Face in the Midst of Homelessness

Written by Louise “Frenchy” Mbella

The Downtown Women’s Action Coalition (DWAC), a coalition which advocates for the rights of women, has been interviewing unhoused women regarding the challenges they are facing in shelter programs. Most emergency homeless shelters provide only an overnight bed, often for just a few hours of the day. To get inside some shelters, people have to catch a shuttle bus that picks up clients at remote locations and be transported to the shelter in the evening and back early in the morning. One such shelter is operated by Volunteers of America (VOA), which picks up women at 5th and San Pedro Streets near the Downtown Women’s Center every day and transports them to sleep at 88th and Broadway Streets.

Shelters are often not a feasible option for unhoused women because of the lack of available beds, poor service, the food is not very healthy, safety concerns, and other issues. An emergency overnight bed in a shelter is not a solution to homelessness, instead we need low income permanent supportive housing. The City must invest in its resources and people are resources, including unhoused women. A home means better health, better self-care and a safer environment rather than the sidewalk or shelters. However, until we have housing for everyone, our government must also ensure that existing shelters provide a healthy and safe environment and provide services in a respectful and effective manner.

As long as permanent supportive housing remains in such scarce supply, every minute counts for unhoused women. They must survive, protect themselves from harm and danger, and ensure that their basic needs are met. For these reasons, DWAC is leading a campaign to ensure that women’s shelters are operated at high quality, starting with the VOA shelter described above. On September 18th, more than a dozen women presented the problems that at that shelter to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Author- ity (LAHSA) Board of Commissioners’ Finance, Contracts and Grants Committee. In this meeting, unhoused women and their supporters in DWAC shared their testimonies with LAHSA officials about how life in the shelter is challenging and sometimes unbearable because of the many violations, including habitability concerns and abusive treatment by staff. The Commissioners responded by requesting an investigation into the shelter and a report back to them by staff (see article below for more on this development). DWAC members will continue to attend meetings and monitor the investigation until this shelter program operates in an acceptable way.

DWAC will continue to explore shelter programs and demand accountability as needed. An unhoused person should not be subject to substandard living conditions or mistreated while they are receiving services for their basic needs. Shelters are supposed to help people gain stability. Yet, often, a simple shower, wearing clean clothes or a business attire becomes a challenging task, and carrying your belongings with you all day is a challenge. The quest to access basic needs becomes as a social enterprise. It almost as if a person is running their own company.

Even making a phone call requires vigilance and steadiness – you have to go to service providers where phone and computer services are provided. But your name on the list and wait until your name is called so that you can use the phone or access the computer. Given all of these challenges, the very least shelter programs must do is provide a safe and welcoming space at the end of the day.

So next time you see or think about an unhoused woman, ask yourself, where is this woman going to lay her head for the night? Is she going to be safe? Where is she going to store her luggage and bags? Can she access showers that are clean and safe? Are there public restrooms that she can access when needed? Everyone must focus on permanent housing for the unhoused, but also in the meantime we need to ensure that service providers that are directly assisting the unhoused women with their basic needs do so with compassion, dignity and respect, not just on paper but in conduct and proper resources as well.

DWAC Demands Accountability from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

Written by Ariana Alcaraz

On September 18, representatives of the Downtown Women’s Action Coalition (DWAC), including women who currently stay at the Volunteers of America (VOA) Pathways homeless shelter, went to a Los Angeles Homeless Services Agency (LAHSA) committee meeting to raise the unacceptable living conditions women are facing in this shelter program. The goal was to get the LAHSA Finance, Contracts and Grants Committee, which is in charge of reviewing the various organizations like VOA that they fund, to learn about these issues in the hope that they pressure Pathways to fix a number of the issues that women stay at their shelter experience.

In the spring of 2015, as temperatures were beginning to get hotter, DWAC member Katherine McNenny began to notice that there were large numbers of women waiting on the sidewalk outside the Downtown Women’s Center (DWC) almost every afternoon with no place to sit or protect themselves from the elements. After some initial investigating and talking to some of the women, it was found that these ladies were just waiting to board a bus that would transport them to a shelter in South LA. What was most alarming was that these women were waiting out in the hot sun with no water and many of them were also concerned about their safety.

DWAC immediately put together an outreach team and began making trips over to DWC, which is where the women spend their days before getting picked up, and talked to some of the women who were staying in the shelter. It turned out that waiting out in the hot sun was the least of their worries! Aside from a rude and disrespectful staff, the maintenance and cleanliness of the shelter was substandard to say the least. Bed bugs, dirty blankets, and insufficient meals accompanied by a prison-like environment was making it almost unbearable to stay there. “It is unacceptable, we are humans and they treat us like we are nothing,” said Consuelo, a woman who stays at the VOA shelter. “That’s not fair to us and it’s definitely not fair to the older women who really need to be off the streets, but this is all we have.” It was decided that something must be done to support these women who wanted to change these conditions. DWAC members, new and old, decided strategically that the best way to create change was expose VOA to their funders, LAHSA.

So on September 18, DWAC members showed up and spoke the truth to the LAHSA Finance, Contracts and Grants Committee during public comment. Some focused on staff, others focused on habitability concerns, but all of them brought it back to this: LAHSA has to do a better job at monitoring and holding accountable the groups they fund. After public comment, Committee Chair Mike Neely called for an investigation into the Pathways Shelter, which had now moved its location for women even further away, near 88th and Broadway. At a subsequent LAHSA meeting, Committee members reiterated their support for the women staying at this shelter and DWAC members will not stop their efforts until all human rights are upheld by this shelter program and LAHSA ensures that all of their funded programs operate at high-quality.

“Just because it is a shelter it does not mean it isn’t a home for the time being,” said DWAC Co-Chair Frenchy. “People who live at shelters have a right to feel safe and clean.” So look out y’all, there may be some more organizing happening in a shelter near you!

Join us for our next DWAC meeting, the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 1 pm at LA CAN.
Arts, Culture, and Community

Casey Horan Remembered

In August, Skid Row community residents learned of the passing of Casey Horan, former Executive Director of Lamp Community, and lifelong freedom fighter. Below are just a few reflections on the passing of our beloved friend and ally.

“Casey was one of the most passionate people I’ve ever met, and her commitment to changing failed policies on homelessness, challenging the status quo, and standing firm as one of few outspoken critics of the criminalization of homelessness and poverty changed the Skid Row community substantially and for the better.

Personally, I will miss her smile, her warmth, her unwavering support, her fist in the air at protests – but the things she shared with me and taught me about people, relationships, organizations and activism will stay with me forever.” – Becky Dennison

“Casey Horan was passionate about social justice, a very bright and caring person. I do remember her smile vividly. The commitment she had towards working to make lives better for the most marginalized communities in LA was truly admirable. I met her while working with her over 10 years ago at a women’s shelter in North Hollywood.

I am sad to hear about her passing, and am that much more committed to lifting up the work, each other, solidifying our interconnections, and mental health advocacy and fighting to make LA, for the most marginalized, a better place. I wish Casey has met with the solace she so fought for in this world, a world that can oftentimes seem very cold.” – Fabiola Sandoval

“No one who worked with Casey will forget her. She combined a gentleness of spirit with fearless resolve, kindness and concern with a burning anger at injustice. She was one of the better angels of our nature, who did not serve from above, but by walking alongside people most thought of as the least of us.

Through her example she made everyone around her, including me, a better person. I am grateful to have known her and to have had a chance to allow my students to learn from her. She deserved a rich, long and happy life. Her loss is so terribly sad and gravely unjust.” – Gary Blasi

“Casey was one of the most fierce and principled people I’ve ever met. Her thirst for justice was insatiable and her love for people unending –the world will be a bit lonely without Casey Horan.” – Pete White

“Frankenstein”
Written by Carolyn Irene Schaugaard

Frankenstein - my beloved Frankenstein
I remember in the movie a long time ago, Boris Karloff, the blind man called you friend,
Fred Gwynne.

The Voice and Heartbeat of Our Community

Rest in Power Theodore McBride
a.k.a. Ted
1938 - 2015

Theodore McBride, or Ted, as he liked to be called, was born in 1938 in Connecticut, where he played varsity basketball for Weaver High. In the 1960s, he moved to Los Angeles where he landed a job in Downtown at Adam’s Printing Press at 830 S. Broadway. He later worked at the King Eddy’s Saloon right in Skid Row. He never left Downtown.

He loved hanging out on Main Street, drinking Canadian whiskey with his long time buddies, the Trojans. This is the group of older brothers who have been in Downtown for the better part of six decades - many of whom worked as managers and workers at all the old, classic ballrooms, nightclubs, movie theaters, and pool halls. He was always dressed sharp and was one of the neatest people you’ll ever meet. He would also show up on Main Street before everyone else just to clean up the sidewalk for everyone. Sadly, he passed away recently in his apartment in the Alexandria Hotel. He will truly be missed.

“The Hero in Me”
Written by Tabia Salimu

If a hero ain’t nuthin more a sandwich
Then I am a six foot long veggie supreme.

To be heroic is to be flexible, resilient and optimistic.

The hero in me humbly recalls the days in which I planned, and successfully executed 5 home births. The mission I took on to surrender my body as a vessel to nurture and bring forth life is heroic without embracing fear, judgement or failure. I successfully gave birth at home and without interference.

Surrogacy has been a heroic venture in my life. Surrendering my parental rights in order to give someone else a chance to raise a child has been a real selfless and heroic endeavor.

I do not regret my choices - then or now.

And I pray that all my children will know that it was an act of selfless love and humility. I honor the ones who have stepped up to the plate and committed their lives to nurture and guide my birth children.

As an artist, motherhood, surrogacy and parenting has been a heroic part of who I am.
The Community Connection is a street newspaper and a member of the North American Street Newspaper Association and the International Network of Street Papers. The Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) is a membership organization comprised of low-income, homeless, and formerly homeless residents living in Downtown and South Los Angeles, and surrounding communities. LA CAN’s staff and core members write many articles that appear in the Community Connection. Articles by contributors who are not LA CAN core members and/or personal opinion/experience articles receive a byline. These articles do not necessarily represent the views, opinions, and perspectives of the Los Angeles Community Action Network.

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LA CAN Meeting Schedule

- Resident Organizing Committee Meetings
  First and Third Friday of Every Month at 6pm at LA CAN
- Civil Rights Committee Meetings
  Every Monday at 1 pm at LA CAN
- Housing Committee Meetings
  Every Monday at 10:30 am at LA CAN
- Downtown Women’s Action Coalition Meetings
  Second Tuesday of every month at 1 pm at LA CAN.
- Team Food and Garden Meetings
  1st and 3rd Thursdays at 10:00 am at LA CAN
- Pueblo Del Rio Tenant Meetings
  Every Second Thursday at 5:30 pm at James Slauson Park Recreation Center

November/December
Community Connection Team
Ariana Alcaraz
Eric Ares
Chella Coleman
Becky Dennison
Steve Diaz
General Dogon
Sean Gregory
Ashleigh Hall
Louise Mbella
Thelmy Perez
Al Sabo
Tabia Salimu
Carolyn Irene
Schaugaard
Karl Scott
Alan Sutton
Wesley Walker
Pete White

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www.cangress.org
WEBSITE
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BLOG
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SEND US A TWEET
@LACANetwork

Help LA CAN Build the Justice & Wellness Center!

LA CAN Begins Construction on the Justice & Wellness Center!

LA CAN is about to begin construction on the Justice & Wellness Center. But, don’t worry, while our building is under work we will remain fully operational.

Once completed, the LA CAN Justice & Wellness Center will create:
- An expanded legal clinic that includes confidential meeting spaces and sufficient group space
- A full-scale rooftop garden that will allow us to increase our homegrown produce production 10-fold and triple our garden and produce micro-enterprise training space
- An empowerment Training and Conference Center with enough space for multiple large group meetings

However, we still need your help to complete our Capital Campaign and build our permanent home!

Please visit www.cangress.org and consider making a donation TODAY!

Editorial Policy:
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