In 2013, LA CAN released a community-based research report entitled “The Dirty Divide in Downtown Los Angeles,” which documented the extreme shortage of restrooms in Skid Row and the critical need for hygiene facilities in the community.

The lack of adequate toilets and hygiene centers for the homeless residents in Skid Row

By Advocate Louise Mbella “Sinai” (Frenchy)

In Skid Row in Downtown Los Angeles, a place where we find the biggest concentration of homeless individuals sleeping and camping on city public sidewalk, a definite lack of adequate public toilets has become a major concern. Sidewalks in Downtown have become the designated toilets for about 2,000 homeless people categorized as unsheltered, according to the Downtown News (September 20, 2017).

Pedestrians must walk on top of feces, urine and other body fluids and waste. This can be considered a public health hazard. According to the Downtown News, about 2,000 homeless people are categorized as unsheltered, and they use the sidewalks as their toilets.

An empty lot located at the intersection of 1st St. and Lorena St. in Boyle Heights. This was planned to be the site of a housing development for formerly homeless residents until Councilmember Jose Huizar opposed moving the project forward.

Reporting on the release of the first CHS progress report, the Los Angeles Times noted that it “offers a sobering picture of the long and difficult path ahead.” The goal of Proposition HHH is to triple the annual production of PSH, to around 1,000 units from the current 300. While work has begun on a number of the homeless plan’s 64 strategies for reaching that target, the city notes that most of the initial effort “has been focused on setting up processes and deploying new resources for implementation.”

The city’s first HHH-funded PSH project is an 84-unit development in the San Fernando Valley that will receive $8 million in HHH money, the other permanent supportive housing projects receiving funding in the first full year are in South Los Angeles, downtown Los Angeles, and Hollywood: 88th Vermont, 46 units, $9.68 million; PATH Metro Villas Phase II, 90 units, $12 million; The Anita May Rosenstein Mccadden, 55 units, $3.5 million; Six Four Nine Lofts, 27 units, $9.68 million; PATH Metro Villas Phase II, 90 units, $12 million; The Pointe on Vermont, 25 units, $7.9 million. The average cost per unit of the nine developments is $430,195.

An empty lot located at the intersection of 1st St. and Lorena St. in Boyle Heights. This was planned to be the site of a housing development for formerly homeless residents until Councilmember Jose Huizar opposed moving the project forward.

Having overwhelming votes last November for a property tax increase to fund the building of up to 10,000 units of permanent supportive housing (PSH), when can Angelenos expect to see a difference in their streets? That is the question facing policy makers at City Hall about nine months into the implementation of Proposition HHH, which will raise $1.2 billion in fresh capital towards solving the city’s housing and homelessness crises.

By outward appearances, not much has changed. Tent encampments continue to proliferate across the city with the influx of 13,000 homeless countywide every month. The LAPD still conducts street sweeps, confiscates property, issues citations, and forcefully removes makeshift dwellings. Los Angeles County health officials have declared a Hepatitis A outbreak, which is fueled by poor sanitary conditions centered in the homeless community, where the lack of restrooms, wash stations, and trash pick-up persists despite years of calls for more hygiene facilities – particularly in Skid Row.

The contradiction between the goal of the city’s 300-page Comprehensive Homeless Strategy (CHS) – to reduce homelessness to “functional zero” – and the reality on the ground spotlights the need for full transparency and accountability to ensure that Proposition HHH funds (the major long-term component of the plan) are spent wisely and efficiently. Given the magnitude of the city’s housing crisis (LA’s estimated homeless population is 34,000), moving tens of thousands of people off the street and into homes is far from easy.

Based on the CHS Quarterly Performance Reports, meetings of the HHH oversight committees, press coverage, and public comments the change people are looking for may be slow in coming.

The Community Connection travels to Norway for the Homeless World Cup

In a scramble for more shovel-ready projects, eight additional city-owned parcels have been approved for adaptive reuse as affordable housing. Five of the parcels are in Lincoln Heights; the others are in Los Angeles, downtown Los Angeles, and the west side.

For Fiscal Year 2017-18, the Los Angeles City Council has approved Proposition HHH expenditures of $85 million, including $73 million for permanent supportive housing projects and $12 million for the facilities program. The nine housing developments being recommended under the 2017-18 Project Expenditure Plan will provide a total of 615 units, 416 of which will be designated as permanent supportive housing. Of the 416 PSH units, approximately 225 will be set aside for the chronically homeless.

In addition to a 43-unit development in the San Fernando Valley that will receive $8 million in HHH money, the other permanent supportive housing projects receiving funding in the first full year are in South Los Angeles, downtown Los Angeles, and Hollywood: 88th Vermont, 46 units, $9.68 million; PATH Metro Villas Phase II, 90 units, $3.5 million; Six Four Nine Lofts, 27 units, $9.68 million; The Anita May Rosenstein Mccadden, 55 units, $3.5 million; Six Four Nine Lofts, 27 units, $9.68 million; PATH Metro Villas Phase II, 90 units, $3.5 million; Six Four Nine Lofts, 27 units, $9.68 million; The Anita May Rosenstein Mccadden, 55 units, $3.5 million; Six Four Nine Lofts, 27 units, $9.68 million; PATH Metro Villas Phase II, 90 units, $3.5 million; Six Four Nine Lofts, 27 units, $9.68 million; The Anita May Rosenstein Mccadden, 55 units, $3.5 million; Six Four Nine Lofts, 27 units, $9.68 million; PATH Metro Villas Phase II, 90 units, $3.5 million; Six Four Nine Lofts, 27 units, $9.68 million; The Anita May Rosenstein Mccadden, 55 units, $3.5 million; Six Four Nine Lofts, 27 units, $9.68 million; PATH Metro Villas Phase II, 90 units, $3.5 million; Six Four Nine Lofts, 27 units, $9.68 million; The Anita May Rosenstein Mccadden, 55 units, $3.5 million; Six Four Nine Lofts, 27 units, $9.68 million; PATH Metro Villas Phase II, 90 units, $3.5 million; Six Four Nine Lofts, 24 units, $11.98 million; RSE Apartments, 56 units, $9.5 million; SP7 Apartments, 55 units, $12 million; The Pointe on Vermont, 25 units, $7.9 million. The average cost per unit of the nine developments is $430,195.

An empty lot located at the intersection of 1st St. and Lorena St. in Boyle Heights. This was planned to be the site of a housing development for formerly homeless residents until Councilmember Jose Huizar opposed moving the project forward.

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The cultivation of organic foods in public housing

By Lucia Sanchez and Translated by Ariana Alcaraz and Shardey Fields

Residents of public housing in the city of Los Angeles want to maintain organic gardens in their homes and want Housing to stop cutting down their gardens every year. Why do they want organic gardens?

Organic plants in their own gardens are more resourceful and healthy for the family. As human beings, we have the right to cultivate healthy vegetables and fruits. The fact that these families are of low-income does not disqualify them from the right to live a healthy and peaceful life. Many residents have commented that they worry every year when the inspections get close because they have to cut their plants even though they are foods or flowers!

Why? The plants are not harming anyone; they are life, health, and happiness for these families’ homes. Also, every season HACLA sprays the gardens and plants with pesticide and burn many plants. For example, Mrs. Maria M from Pueblo Del Rio stated at a community meeting that three weeks prior HACLA had sprayed pesticide and burned various plants in her garden. Her plants were not tall or damaging to the community and do not violate rules set in the complex. Her plants were medicinal and potted.

The residents of Pueblo Del Rio have clean and organized gardens that comply with housing regulations. The gardens contain organic plants in good conditions and are healthy for their families, gardens that do not affect HACLA. It is time that HACLA accepts that we are bettering the community and do not violate rules set in the complex.

Our right as residents of our community is to protect our families and to have access to organic food.

DACA and the fight for immigrant rights

Written by Kei Utsumi

From September 1 through September 10 Dreamers fought for their Human Rights with press conferences, rallies, and marches against the Trump Administration’s white nationalist policy rescinding President Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, which allows about 800,000 undocumented immigrants to reside and work in the United States.

On September 1, there was a press conference/protest at the Edward Rroyaldowntown Federal Building Plaza sponsored by CHIRLA (Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights L.A.) - www.chirla.org. A thousand Dreamers and supporters gathered in front of a large contingent of social and corporate media against Trump’s anti-DACA, anti-Mexican, and Anti-Muslim agenda.

One speaker stated, “These children were brought to this country for a better life. Escaping poverty and violence is not a crime.” Another pointed out, “Small businesses, restaurants, hotels all depend on immigrant workers for their success.”

After the press conference, Dreamers and supporters marched within the Plaza, chanting “Aqui estamos y no nos vamos (translated as “we’re here and we’re not leaving”), while carrying a variety of pro-DACA signs to show it is a human rights issue for undocumented immigrants.

On Labor Day September 4, hundreds of pro-DACA activists, together with several thousand low wage service workers gathered and marched from a downtown high school to City Hall with signs such as “The Worker’s Struggle Has No Borders,” and “Fight for $15 and a Union.” After the rally, they marched to the Federal Building against ICE’s (Immigration Custom Enforcement) raids, detention and deportation of Latino/a migrant workers.

The next day, hundreds of low wage SEIU service workers held a press conference at the LA County Board of Supervisors. Two of the five Board of Supervisors, Janet Hahn and Hilda Solis, spoke in full support of the Dreamers and DACA. Hilda Solis stated that Trump’s spokesmen Jeff Sessions’ announcement about ending the DACA program filled her with “disgust.” Another speaker stated, “We are a nation of immigrants. Immigrant labor [and Black slave labor] built this country.”

At the conclusion of the press conference, they marched to the nearby L.A. County Sheriff’s office and protested against Sheriff James McDonnell because he committed to cooperation with Trump and ICE raids against DACA immigrants.

The 10 days of protests climax on September 10 as 15,000 to 20,000 mostly Latino/a and white activists gathered at MacArthur Park. Speakers spoke of the contributions of undocumented immigrant workers and against Trump’s proposed wall between the US and Mexico. After a procession of Indigenous American Indians joined the protest, they marched several miles to La Placita Olvera adjacent to the civic center and a tourist center of Mexican festivals, vendors and restaurants. It is also the historic settlement by 44 Africans, Aztec, and Spanish subjects in 1781 that established the City of Los Angeles.

They marched, chanting “No Hate, No Fear, Immigrants are Welcome Here.” Their signs read “From Charlottesville to the White House, Dismantle White Supremacy,” “No More Family Separation,” and “Build Bridges, Not Walls.”

It is not DACA Dreamers and undocumented Mexican migrants that take jobs away from U.S. middle class workers, as Trump asserts, but decades of U.S. corporations closing their factories and moving them to underdeveloped countries where very low wages are legal, in order to raise their rate for profit. Automation has eliminated millions of U.S. jobs as well. Criminalization, imprisonment, and deportation of undocumented immigrants and building a massive wall increases profits for private prisons and developers.

Un ejemplo de un jardín pequeño que los líderes de vivienda pública quieren ser capaz de crecer.
U.S. District Judge denies City of LA motion in a lawsuit that stops the LA from seizing homeless people’s property

Written by Eric Ares

On September 25, U.S. District Judge S. James Otero denied a request from the City of Los Angeles to modify his April 26, 2016 injunction against the City, which prevents it from seizing and destroying of homeless people’s property.

The preliminary injunction stemmed from a lawsuit, Mitchell, et al. v. City of Los Angeles et al., filed last year by Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, The Law Office of Carol A. Sobel, Schonbrun Seplow Harris & Hoffman LLP on behalf of homeless individuals, the Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN), and the Los Angeles Catholic Worker, also known as Hippie Kitchen.

The City had asked the Court to modify the injunction to allow the City to more easily seize property from homeless people without a warrant. In ruling for the plaintiffs, the Court acknowledged that issues related to warrantless seizures disproportionately affect people who are homeless, “because, unlike those with homes in which to store their belongings, the homeless are more likely to carry the majority of their personal belongings with them at any given time.” The Court also refused to give the City the approval it sought to seize and destroy property it defines as “bulky items” under an ordinance passed last year by the City.

According to the injunction, the City is allowed to confiscate property only in limited circumstances, including if the item “preserves an immediate threat to public health or safety.” In the order, U.S. Judge S. James Otero stated that this limitation also applies to these “bulky items.”

“There is no additional exception for bulky items nor is one necessary,” states Judge Otero. “If a bulky item ‘preserves an immediate threat to public health or safety’ then it may be seized by the City and stored for the period of time designated in the Order. If a bulky item does not pose such a threat, then it must not be seized.”

Plaintiffs and their attorneys applauded the ruling. “With this ruling, the court reaffirmed that the property of homeless individuals is protected by the Constitution,” said Catherine Sobel, staff attorney with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, “the Court has made it clear once again that limits the City has proposed about the constitutional rights of the homeless are wrong.”

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and other city agencies have had longstanding practices of seizing and destroying homeless people’s property, despite the fact that Courts have repeatedly held that this violates their constitutional rights. Even items critical for survival like medication, wheelchairs, tents, and tarps, have been subject to these seizures over the years.

“This ruling should once again send a signal to City Council and Mayor that we are not going to criminalize our way out of the homeless crisis,” stated Pete White, Executive Director of LA CAN, a plaintiff in the lawsuit. “This decision, like this lawsuit, won’t end homelessness. But neither will repeatedly and illegally seizing and often destroying the property of homeless folks. Actually, this practice only makes it harder to get off the streets. We applaud Judge Otero for uplifting the constitutional rights of homeless individuals, and urge the city to do so as well so that we can place all of our focus on ending homelessness, not policing and criminalizing it.”

Groundbreaking legislation to honor transgender prisoner’s dignity is signed into law by Governor Brown

State legislation to reduce recidivism and honor the dignity of transgender prisoners while incarcerated was signed into law on October 15, 2017 after passing through the California State Legislature.

For the first time in California history, legislation written by currently and formerly incarcerated transgender people was signed into law. Senate Bill 310 (the Name and Dignity Act), authored by Senator Toni Atkins of San Diego and co-authored by Senator Beall, Senator Wiener, Assemblymember Chiu, Assemblymember Garcia, Assemblymember Gloria and Assemblymember Stone, makes it possible for transgender people currently in custody to petition the superior court for a legal name and gender marker change.

This legislation allows transgender people to have their chosen names respected while incarcerated and eases the re-entry process for transgender people by ensuring that they have legal documents that match their gender presentation upon release. This breaks down barriers in accessing housing, employment and healthcare.

“Transgender people are disproportionately impacted by recidivism due to being pushed out of traditional economies, housing and healthcare,” said Janetta Johnson, Executive Director of the TGI Justice Project. “A person exiting prison with identification documents that actually match who they are has an exponential impact on their ability to access life-giving services without some of the discrimination that comes with having identification documents that don’t match their gender presentation.”

Current law allows transgender prisoners to apply for a legal name and gender marker change. However, according to proponents of the measure, prisoners must petition several different departments in CDCR, including the warden, and requests are regularly either sent through endless bureaucratic loops or denied. Since 1994, only 4 transgender prisoners have legally changed their name and gender marker through this process and 2 of those cases were a result of litigation. SB 310 will now allow transgender prisoners the same direct access to the superior courts that non-incarcerated transgender people have.

“We applaud the State of California and Governor Brown for signing SB 310 into law. This legislation comes directly from currently incarcerated transgender people and was run by an almost entirely transgender cohort. This is absolutely innovatory and shows that California can be a leader in protecting the rights and honoring the dignity of transgender people, especially incarcerated transgender people,” said Aria Sa’id, Policy and Development Director of the St. James Infirmary. As President Donald Trump continues to chip away at gains around transgender people’s rights at the federal level, it is timely that California shows such a leading edge and deep investment in transgender people’s safety and well-being. Advocates across the state are celebrating the signing of SB 310, the Name and Dignity Act, into law.

This bill is co-sponsored by the Transgender Gendervariant Intersex Justice Project, the St. James Infirmary, the Western Regional Advocacy Project, the Transgender Law Center, the Women’s Foundation of California and Equality California.
The Downtown Women’s Needs Assessment is a community-based research project that is led by the Downtown Women’s Action Coalition (DWAC). Founded in April of 2001, DWAC brought together women who live and work in downtown to address the lack of emergency services for women experiencing homelessness in Skid Row. Members of the coalition have included service providers, organizers, residents, and others who felt that homeless services were not meeting the needs of the growing population of women. To truly identify what those needs were, DWAC conducted its first needs assessment in 2001 and has continued to conduct one every 3 years since then.

Not only does each needs assessment include data, each needs assessment includes a set of recommendations or action agendas that lay out the organizing and advocacy work that must happen once the report is released. The most recent needs assessment surveyed 371 women, was released in 2016 with an action agenda that covered housing, shelters, health, community resources, and violence against women. Fast-forward to one year later, DWAC members have made large strides to ensure that these recommendations don’t just sit on the pages of the report but that they are seen and felt on the streets of our community.

In 2016, the City of Los Angeles passed 3 laws that further criminalized homelessness. DWAC members felt the need to prioritize our recommendation around decriminalization efforts and respond to the city with our data and analysis that shows criminalization does nothing to help women overcome homelessness and poverty and adds further barriers when accessing housing and employment. When the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority formed its Ad Hoc Committee on Women and Homelessness in the beginning of 2017, DWAC pushed to have representation on that committee. The Ad-Hoc committee was created to push recommendations that would be presented to the County Board of Supervisors and the City of Los Angeles’ Homelessness Strategy Committee. Silvia Hernandez, co-chair of DWAC, was granted the opportunity to sit on this committee and spoke out regularly on various issues that came before the committee.

“If we are not part of the conversation at the table, the real and critical questions won’t get asked and these committees end up almost always failing at being intentional with their objectives,” says Silvia when asked about why she felt it was important for her to be there. The committee’s final recommendations included the need to decriminalize homelessness by stopping the enforcement of “quality of life” violations. The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority has also moved on requiring that all service providers receiving funding from them be trained in Trauma-Informed Care which was also in the needs assessment’s recommendations.

When it comes to addressing the need for improving our community’s public health infrastructure, community leader and former co-chair Louise “Frenchy” Mbella has been working with other community folks and the Mayor’s office to open a hygiene center in Skid Row. A much-needed resource that has been demanded by the community for decades. “It’s a matter of health and safety for women,” she explained, “personal hygiene is directly connected to improving a person’s mental health and well-being which leads to a thriving community.” The hygiene center is scheduled to open soon, and we can expect the women of DWAC to move this work forward and keep accountable the city agencies that are involved in making this happen.

Housing was identified as being the number one most needed resource in the community. Women need permanent supportive and affordable housing that is accessible to people with extremely low incomes. One recommendation from the needs assessment pointed to the need to fund the City of Los Angeles’ Affordable Housing Trust Fund with $100 million annually to build this housing. Currently, there is legislation being pushed at the city level to establish a “Linkage Fee” which would add a fee to any new developments being constructed in the city based on their size. The money generated would go directly into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

DWAC members have been following this important legislation to make sure it passes. DWAC members have also come out in opposition to a 33-story apartment complex that is set to be built at the corners of 7th St. and Maple - a structure that would bring 450 units of primarily luxury housing - none of which would be accessible to the almost 400 women who were surveyed.

The needs assessment also recommended more temporary shelter beds for women. Back in March 2017, the Midnight Mission opened up its Crisis and Bridge Housing Center, which brought an additional 42 beds for women seeking immediate shelter along with medical and mental healthcare services. Although it wasn’t nearly enough beds for all women, DWAC fully supported this program because it was a step in the right direction and serves as an example to other local shelters as to what they can be doing to address women and homelessness.

As we move into the final months of 2017, DWAC continues to use the need’s assessment as a tool to organize for a better community. They continue to meet every 2nd Wednesday at 2:30pm at the LACAN offices. In 2018 they intend to host the Women’s Day in the Park scheduled for May 11th.
Hygiene Centers

Indeed “open defecation” brings the challenge of not only dignity and equity but also safety on various levels, such as homeless women who must wait until dark to hide so they can relieve themselves. Also as mentioned by the recently released Skid Row “noplacetogo” Toilet report in which I have been a strategist/Advisor, the lack of access to public toilets for unsheltered residents increases at night between the hours of 9:00 pm and 6:00 am.

Can we do an audit on the amount of human body waste and fluids Skid Row sidewalks accumulates daily? It is not just Skid Row but other parts of the City of Los Angeles. Homeless individuals who sleep in encampments need a place to shower and use the bathroom that is safe and clean on a 24-hour basis, until new shelter beds are made available. As we know homeless shelters allow guests to stay only for a limited amount of time. After which they are asked to leave the premises even if they do not find low-income permanent supportive housing available. It is the issue of living on the streets in-between-shelters.

Furthermore, the most recent Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority homeless count reported that homelessness has increased in LA County 23% in the past year. With a shortage of subsidized housing, the need to create and build public toilets and mobile hygiene centers for people to clean themselves in privacy, safely and with dignity is not a matter of should we or should we not? It is now imperative for the wellbeing of the entire county of Los Angeles including Skid Row in Downtown Los Angeles!

We, advocates, community members, and others, in all integrity are advocating to our elected and appointed officials, as well as all related government personnel to assist the community of Skid Row Los Angeles and beyond in providing the City with new safe, clean additional public toilets and state of the art mobile hygiene infrastructures as a matter of necessity in terms of public health, public safety, public sanitation and mental health. There is a correlation between access to clean safe and private personal hygiene space that is open to the public and its psychological effect on mental well-being.

Research has shown that the United Nations refugee camps standards require “environment not littered by solid waste, including medical waste, and has the means to dispose of their domestic waste conveniently and effectively (https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/39930/wash-in-camps based on the U.N Refugee Agency Emergency Handbook).”

Skid Row residents deserve better than this. We need exponentially more restrooms and hygiene centers in Downtown LA and throughout the city, and we need them as soon as humanly possible.

Community takes to the streets against LA Police Commission decision to approve LAPD Drone Program

Written by the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition

On Tuesday, October 17, community came together at LAPD Headquarters to demand No Drones for LAPD as we have been since 2014. The LA Police Commission was set to vote on proposed guidelines for a Drone program.

Despite overwhelming rejection by the community with over 94% of the people clearly saying no and over 5,500 petition signatures and 2,500 emails, as well as several community actions and hundreds of public comments, the LA Police Commission approved the LAPD Drone one year pilot program by a 3-1 vote. Shane Goldsmith, the fifth member of the Police Commission was absent from the meeting but she had already created the drone use policy and kept on moving the process forward despite intense community opposition.

As abolitionists, the significance of this issue for the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition goes beyond Drones. What’s at stake is the facade of community oversight, the false narrative of community policing, the massive amounts of monies invested by Police departments in public relations, and the role of non-profits. Ironically two of the five member police commission includes Shane Goldsmith, President of Liberty Hill Foundation and Sandra Figueroa-Villa, Executive Director of El Centro Del Pueblo, and they both claim to be progressive.

We will continue to fight the LAPD’s entire Architecture of Surveillance, part of which is their drones. We can’t let LAPD (who has been among the top murderous police departments in the US for years) to become even more militarized. We know Mission Creep is real and it will not stop with a one-year pilot program (North Dakota has weaponized drones). We do not want another tool for surveillance and data collection, and we have seen the trauma of Drones at the border and around the world and the trauma caused by police helicopters. Corporations should not profit off our trauma caused by state violence. The fight against LAPD Drones continues.

Mayor Garcetti has the authority to remove these Drones- Seattle’s mayor did it after community pressure, and so here in LA we need to keep the pressure on the Mayor.

Call Garcetti now at (213) 978-0600 to demand that he stop the LAPD Drone program!
New UCLA report reveals homeless arrests up 37% since 2011

According to a new report from the Million Dollar Hoods project, while LAPD arrests citywide have dropped 22 percent, arrests of homeless individuals are up. By 2016, there was one houseless arrest for every two houseless people in Los Angeles - representing an arrest rate 17 times that of the total population of the City.

“What’s important to think about is that also if total arrests are declining and arrests of houseless people is going up, it might indicate resources are being shifted to target that population,” said the lead author of the report Danielle Dupuy.

The report also revealed that the zip codes with the highest number arrests are in Downtown, Hollywood, and Venice. “The report lays out for all eyes to see that there is an integral relation between gentrification, development and criminalization of the poor and houseless people,” said Pete White of LA CAN.

Homelessness in Los Angeles is up 20% to about 34,000 individuals citywide. Last year, residents across LA County and City voted to support ballot measures H and HHH, opting to tax themselves to once and for all create long term funds to help end homelessness. What this report shows, however, is that the City of LA continues to worsen the situation of houseless people through policies that criminalize with citations and arrests.

“LAPD will not end homelessness. We cannot arrest ourselves out of this problem. We need house keys, not handcuffs,” said White.

Skid Row residents showcase local talent at annual artist celebration

Written by Trudy Goodwin

On October 21 and 22, Skid Row residents celebrated community, culture, and each other at the 8th Annual Festival for All Skid Row Artists. The event, held every year at Gladys Park, is an opportunity for local musicians, painters, poets, writers, and all other artists to share their passion and talent with their beloved community.

“As per usual, the Skid Row community of extraordinary artists acclimated themselves beyond measure,” said Eddie H. “They again showed the community and those outside the community how talented the people of Skid Row really are.”

In addition to performances, there were workshops and creativity stations that included interactive art, yoga, storytelling, and magic for children.

“Skid Row’s 8th annual festival was a remarkable success. What a great chance for artist all over Skid Row and local neighborhoods to come and show their artistic expertise,” said actress Sherri Walker.

Whether visual or performing, if you were an artist during the Skid Row festival you were provided with a stage for your artistic expression. It was a lovely day for the excellent talent of Skid Row artists.”
LA CAN’s Team Food is on the move with a new pop-up market and expanding rooftop garden!

Written by Yvonne Michelle Autry
Photos by Linus Shentu

Hear ye! Hear ye! Come one, come all to LA CAN’s weekly pop up market each Thursday 10am - 12pm! The market is held right here at LA CAN’s Justice and Wellness Center, 838 East 6th Street, Los Angeles.

First established in May 2016, LA CAN’s weekly pop up market is now in full swing! You name it, we got it! Weekly selections ranging from: apples, oranges, blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, bananas, garlic, pineapples, mangoes, papayas, squash, brussel sprouts, kale, cucumbers, carrots, tomatoes & so much more. Variety bags are available for only $10. Juicing is also available! We are hoping and encouraging lots of participation from the community.

When it comes to health and wellness, not only do we have our organic pop up market but we also have our most fabulous and wonderful roof top garden. I have spoken to many skid row residents and know that a great number of you have grown up on farms and have experience farming and urban gardening. So please do come thru!

Some of the highlights of team food membership are, of course the wonderful weekly pop up organic fruit & vegetable markets, seasonal health & wellness day celebrations and more.

Most rewarding for team food members is the annual hunger action and excursions to Sacramento. Team Food is given the opportunity to lobby for community related issues such as EBT acceptance at farmers markets and more support for anti-hunger programs! We have also lobbied for enabling felons to qualify for, obtain and use EBT, increased availability of healthy produce for poor people and for all people.

Team food is also proud to transform our rooftop garden into the main source of produce for our market and become the community’s first composting hub. The garden is currently flourishing with sage, aloe vera, corn, raspberries spinach, broccoli, kale, cauliflower, watermelon, squash, tomatoes, lemongrass, carrots, sweet potatoes, peppers, basil, thyme, and much more!!

Remember: LA CAN is above all a center for justice & wellness!

In the future, we hope to also integrate yoga & therapeutic healing, and detoxing massage sessions into our programing! These will help individuals detoxify our bodies, lose weight, strengthen immunity, calm the nervous system, and maintain a healthy regimen.

Please contact Jas Wade at (213) 228-0024 for additional information!

Longtime LA CAN Family Jas
Returns to the Community

Peace and greetings community! It is wild to me recognizing that I have been part of LA CAN family for over 10 years! I started as a student intern in 2006 documenting and dedicating my senior thesis to community members’ storytelling of the human rights crises of the Safer Cities Initiative. Later on in 2014, I came on staff to support LA CAN’s organic pop-up market and the Team Food membership committee.

I have spent the last year working and learning on organic farms. I am very excited to be returning as staff to LA CAN, supporting the development of the rooftop garden, pop-up markets, garden and wellness initiatives. What grounds me in the synergy of farming/land work and organizing is my commitment to the resiliency of our communities and the nourishment of our agency and adaptability. Hope to connect and collaborate with folks moving forward! Free the Land!

Above: A painting of the LA CAN rooftop garden by Edwin Rivera. Below: Photos of squash, spinach, sage, and flowers from the garden. All community members are welcome to participate in garden activities - no experience needed. We encourage everyone to join in and grow fresh food and medicine for our community. For more information contact Jas at (213) 228-0024.
When Colin Kaepernick, quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers "took a knee" during the playing of the national anthem he did so to acknowledge the "BLACK LIVES MATTER" movement in America. He said, "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses Black people and other people of color. To me this is bigger than football, and it would be selfish of me to look the other way."

The national anthem is a badge of honor for white folks because they have white privilege. On the other hand, the national anthem is an outrage, a shame and disgrace to people of color because we are being oppressed by the same people who are telling us to stand. The truth of the matter is; the national anthem is a war song that encourages perilous fighting, rocket's red glare, and bombs bursting in air -- a song that the U.S. government used to recruit sports fans looking for real adventure!

The first sports event where the national anthem was sang was in the 1918 World Series between the Boston Red Sox and the Chicago White Sox. The government thought it would be great to sing the anthem to promote the country's entrance into World War I. After the game, fans wondered why players were even on the ball field, as opposed to being on the battlefield. The public reaction response was to give bonuses to all ball players that stood for the playing of the anthem.

But it goes back to Blacks being oppressed and asking ourselves "Why should a person of color stand for the national anthem?" Why should we stand especially when the anathem has been a rally call for "American white folks" on a super-hyper, abnormal, sociopathic racial rampage -- kidnapping, enslaving, raping, torturing, and murdering us -- continuously for the past 500 years and we still haven't even got an apology let alone 40 acres and a mule? So are we supposed to stand to commemorate this behavior? Whites want us to stand for them, the same people who are telling us to stand. The truth of the matter is; the national anthem is in air -- a song that the U.S. government wrote by General Dogon

Written by by General Dogon

On October 1, Black Lives Matter Los Angeles held an action outside the StubHub Center before the Los Angeles Chargers and Philadelphia Eagles football game in solidarity with athletes who have been protesting police violence against Black people. Speakers also shed light on what is happening in Los Angeles, where nearly 300 residents have been killed by police in the past 5 years -- with not a single officer being charged by District Attorney Jackie LaCery.

Now NFL commissioner Roger Goodell issued a memo to all 32 NFL teams telling them that everyone should stand for the anthem, and that NFL fans expect them to. First of all it's not illegal not to stand for the anthem, and second, who is he referring to when he says "our fans?" He is talking about white Ameri-Klans, white supremacists -- because everybody else understands and respects why players are not standing and why we are "taking a knee." And third, Black NFL players should strike. Without black players the NFL would be reduced to only centers, right guards, and kickers. And this would be the greatest time to tell the NFL to kiss your black ass, and then we bring back the "NEGRO LEAGUE!!"

The moral of this story: America still has some deeply cut race issues "he" (patriarchal system) has never addressed. Until white America recognizes their history and privilege in America, and sits down at the table to make amends for their sins, racism will continue to fuel America's racist dirty divide.....until then the NFL can kiss my black ass too. I'll also be "taking a Knee" while waiting on the Negro league!

GENERAL DOGON, ON DUTY!
ALL POWER 2 THE PEOPLE
Permanent supportive housing is more expensive and takes longer to build than comparable market-rate housing. Space set aside for case managers and clinical staff is one factor. The requirements of public funding sources – including pre-vailing wage, high-energy efficiency and oversize bathrooms for handicapped accessibility – also raise the cost.

Therefore, in order to finance the building of 10,000 PSH units, the city and developers are banking on being able to leverage HHH funds with other capital resources from county, state, and federal governments, as well as philanthropy and private investment. Noting that HHH funds only cover one-third of the PSH construction cost, nonprofit affordable housing developer Dora Leona Gallo was speaking earlier this year at the League of Women Voters Los Angeles Homeless Forum and warned, “Without this money, we won’t be able to fulfill the promise of HHH.”

The mayor’s proposal for charging a fee on construction and using those funds to build affordable housing is stalled in the City Council. A so-called “linkage” fee in Los Angeles could raise tens of millions of dollars every year and help fill the funding gap.

Since it takes years to build PSH, 20% of HHH funds are designated for facilities programs to improve the conditions for people living on the street or in their cars.

However, the city has not made addressing the needs of its most vulnerable residents a priority. Despite their rhetoric to the contrary, the mayor and council have not provided such critical public hygiene resources as restrooms, drinking fountains, mobile showers and laundromat, storage space, even trash cans. Such neglect can have unintended consequences, demonstrated by the current Hepatitis A outbreak.

Although the LAPD is the beneficiary of HHH funds for its generally ineffective outreach programs, law enforcement activities have been impeding the facilities program. Besides the usual street sweeps, property confiscation (which can result in the loss of one’s ID, medications and other essential personal items), and harassment of female bicycle riders in Skid Row, officers recently were filmed handing out citations at Gladys Park – and ticketing the Lava Mae mobile shower truck the city paid for!

A growing chorus of voices both inside and outside of City Hall has come out against homeless criminalization, calling law enforcement involvement in HHH implementation counterproductive. Nevertheless, beat cops continue to operate as if it is business as usual.

Ironically, the CHS program’s storage facility expansion strategy could pave the way for more homeless criminalization. Enforcement of Municipal Code 56.11, which allows for the seizure and dispossession of personal property larger than 60 gallons, currently is on hold pending the availability of storage space in each council district.

As the city begins the transition from managing to ending homelessness, community opposition has been the major challenge to the HHH rollout. From the placing of homeless storage facilities in Venice and San Pedro to the building of affordable housing in Boyle Heights, neighborhood residents have been reluctant to get with the city’s program – a phenomenon known as NIMBYism (“not in my backyard”).

Many, including City Councilman Marqueece Harris-Dawson, who sits on the Council’s Homeless and Poverty Committee, believe public education is the answer. “People don’t understand permanent supportive housing, and we need to educate them,” he said at a recent public forum on homelessness.

Proceeds from the sale of HHH bonds cannot be used for public relations efforts to combat NIMBY, leaving developers responsible for community outreach. Help could soon be on the way as the United Way has committed to a countywide PSH awareness campaign, including PR, town hall meetings, social media, PSH tours and possible paid advertising.

Until the United Way campaign launches next year, however, look for the City to step up its self-congratulatory rhetoric and optics in an attempt to show that meaningful progress is being made as HHH implementation gets underway.

In addition to trying to sugarcoat the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority’s (LAHSA) latest annual homeless count by highlighting the number of persons placed in housing over the past 12 months – instead of the fact that overall homelessness actually increased by more than 20 percent – the City is courting various feel-good sounding programs including SMART teams and a partnership between the LAPD, LAHSA and the Sanitation Department dubbed HOPE (Homeless Outreach and Proactive Engagement). So-called “safe city” initiatives like these and others are simply another form of criminalization and serve only to divert much-needed homeless funds to law enforcement.

Los Angeles has more money than ever before to combat homelessness, which begs another question for our elected leaders: “Can we trust you to implement HHH in the best interests of all Angelinos?”

Earlier this year controversy swirled around City Hall when the Fair Political Practices Commission, the state agency that enforces campaign finance laws, launched an investigation into political donations connected to the developer of a Harbor Gateway apartment project.

Donors connected to the developer gave more than $600,000 in campaign funds to members of the City Council and an independent campaign committee that supported Mayor Garcetti. The donations were made over several years when the developer was seeking approval for his 352-unit complex. Garcetti and the City Council overruled planning commission officials in changing zoning rules to allow the project to move forward. Some argue that City Hall is beholden to the money and clout of the real estate industry.

The Los Angeles Times, which broke the story of the controversial development, called it a “case study in the myriad ways money can flow to City Hall when developers seek changes to local planning laws.”

Austin Beutner and Mickey Kantor, co-chairs of the L.A. 2020 Commission, charged in a Times Op-ed that “the process is morally corrupt; it’s wrong.”

No one would deny the political and bureaucratic challenges inherent in tackling chronic homelessness. But after decades of failed policy decisions administered by the entrenched homeless bureaucracy, the mayor and council are steadfastly committed to the status quo: a discredited trifecta of gentrification, criminalization, and obfuscation.

What is needed instead is a policy based on how Los Angeles solved its smog problem – through sacrifice, innovation, and public pressure.

Perhaps then Angelenos will finally see they got what they paid for with their Yes on HHH votes.

Commuter Connection

Continued from Page 1

Proposition HHH

The Citizen’s Oversight Committee (whose 7 members include 4 selected by the Mayor and 5 chosen by the City Council) provides input, reviews plans, and makes recommendations on bond proceed expenditures and proposed projects to the Administrative Oversight Committee.

The Administrative Oversight Committee is comprised of members of Offices of the Mayor, the City Administrative Officer, and the City Legislative Analyst and directs the Citizen’s Oversight Committee’s recommendations to the City Council Homelessness and poverty Committee.

The Homeless Strategy Committee includes the city’s first-ever Homeless Coordinator and is responsible for monitoring and overseeing the implementation of the Comprehensive Homeless Strategy.

Three committees are charged with overseeing the implementation of Proposition HHH

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Here Rise
Written by mariella saba

Roots Seeds
Water Fruit
Trees Earth memories
Teachings Healing
Love from the roots Freedom lovers
Working hard Touching universal hearts
Weaving songs Dancing with fire
Breaking chains Freeing breaths
Ancient relief
Moving with moon and ocean waves
Honoring our ancestors
Here present
In our shared existence Sacred resistance
We offer these gifts Medicines
Flowers for the soul Kisses in the wind
We are unstoppable movements Rebirthing stars
In deep waters To touch our highest powers
Reminding us

We all got this We one
In this We won
In this Our Lives
Love Land
& Liberation
We heard it
In the ancient waters of our children’s laughter
Thank you
To all our relations For being
Healing Justice

Let’s Get Free!
Skid Row celebrates Labor Day

Los Angeles Skid Row community and the Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) spent Labor Day 2017 honoring the innovation and resilience of local workers with a day-long celebration. The 18th Annual Community Labor Day Gala, titled Let’s Get Free, was, by all accounts, a great success with hundreds of residents strolling and listening to live music on 6th Street.

Young and old filled the street and danced to the lively rock, blues, and hip-hop music by local musicians, including Ase, Ashe, Frank’s Melting Pot and Darryl Fields & Purple Haze. Visitors strolled along the street and stopped to enjoy a free barbeque lunch and socialized with their neighbors and friends. They visited information booths set up by LA CAN’s Team Food and the Housing Committee and learned about ongoing campaigns to bring healthy food to Skid Row and to address the housing crisis.

LA CAN Food Team members Lydia Trejo and Mr. Pancake, dressed as a tomato and cucumber and provided an entertaining reminder of the importance of healthy eating. A special attraction that gained audience attention was the juice-producing exercise bike constructed by Hunger Action of Los Angeles. Residents enjoyed making their own vegetable and fruit juices and simultaneous getting in their exercise by pedaling the juice-producing stationary bike.

Each year the highlight of the Labor Day Gala is the vibrant and lively performances of local residents who sign up to participate in “Apollo West” — an onstage exhibition of singing, dancing, and spoken word. It’s a masterful and fun display of blues, hip-hop, R & B and gospel music and dance by talented Skid Row residents. The show’s crowning moment was the performance by 10 year old Jameel who brought the crowd to its feet with his soulful rendition of the 1967 gospel hit, “Oh Happy Day.”

“The Gala always gives us renewed energy to secure more victories for the homeless,” says Wesley Walker Jr. board member of LA CAN and the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles. He added that the Labor Day celebration brings together neighbors and friends that have worked to ensure current residents have the ability to stay in their own community and prevent the gentrification of Skid Row. Going on nearly 20 years, the Labor Day Gala has truly become an institution and an annual celebration looked forward to by all!
The Community Connection travels to Oslo, Norway for the Homeless World Cup

Written by Gerardo Gomez

During the week of August 29 - September 5, over 500 players from more than 50 countries participated in the 15th annual Homeless World Cup in Oslo, Norway.

The Homeless World Cup is an annual event that brings homeless awareness thru soccer. The first one was held in Austria in 2003. Since then different countries have played host to the world cup, countries like South Africa, Italy, Australia, Chile, Brazil and Mexico to name a few. The games are fast-paced and played 4 on 4, street-soccer style, with two 7-minute halves and one-minute break.

To kick off the week-long tournament, a parade was held where all teams walked thru downtown Oslo towards Radhusplassen Square, which is located between Oslo’s City Hall and the Oslo Fjord.

The Homeless World Cup is a life-changing experience for all of the players. Individuals are treated like professional athletes and they take pride in representing their country. For many traveling to Oslo was the first time they had traveled outside their country.

In the World Cup tradition, when teams finish playing against each other, at the end of the game they hold hands and run towards the crowd and give thanks to them for seeing them play. One of the highlights of the tournament was when Zimbabwe played against South Africa. At the end of that game, instead of running towards the crowd and thanking them, both teams grabbed each other’s hands and started taking dancing steps toward the crowd while singing Shosholoza (a popular traditional song in South Africa and Zimbabwe). It was one of the most powerful experiences as the African spirit was in full display. The crowd reacted by giving them a loud standing ovation.

Players from different walks of lives were transformed during this tournament. Players like Dulce Valente from the Women’s Team in Mexico. She is a single mother of a four-year-old daughter who overcame a lot of battles in her childhood to be where she is. Soccer became her sanctuary and her way to move forward in life. She has enjoyed making friends with people from different parts of the world. Maria Fuentes, from the U.S. women’s soccer team has overcome depression and credits soccer and her church’s youth program for allowing her to discover her purpose in life. She is the youngest on her team and feels blessed to be able to meet different women from around the world.

The Men’s World Cup final was played between Mexico and Brazil, who both were trying to become the first 3-time Homeless World Cup Champion. Mexico was undefeated throughout the tournament but couldn’t overcome Brazil’s early lead of the game and ended up losing the game, 4-3 to hand Brazil its 3rd championship trophy. On the Women’s side, Mexico beat Chile 4-2 to win the championship for the 5th time. The Mexican team finished the tournament undefeated and was led by two of their great players, Cinthya Peraza and Dulce Valente.

The beauty of the Homeless World Cup is that it creates an atmosphere where you can enjoy great soccer games but at the same time see people’s lives transformed. For many it is the first time being in the spotlight and dealing with the pressure of the game and the noise of the fans. Some live for moments like this and are able to shine. Others, it becomes too much to bear and they are hard on themselves. But at the end, the players are able to smile when they feel the support of their teammates as well as players from other countries. The love that is displayed is genuine. A true sense of kinship is fostered here. Bridges are built. Barriers get shattered. Compassion is restored. Hope is embraced. Fears are faced. Friendships get established. Dreams are achieved. And dignity gets uplifted.

Aviwe Ganyathi from Western Cape in South Africa, who has been clean from drugs since March, states that this experience, “changed my life. Even though we don’t speak each other’s language, we manage to build relationships.” This is at the heart of the World Cup; a soccer ball is able to break language barriers and bring people together.
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