It is mindboggling that in the midst of a housing crisis, in a city with a shortage of affordable housing, and at the epicenter of displacement, the $20 MILLION earmarked for Skid Row as part of the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP), has largely gone unspent. Perhaps this should not surprise those of us who have been following the news stories about how our city government is floundering beneath the weight of a Federal investigation into corruption, but in the midst of what the Mayor has described as the “Human rights issue of our time!” It is simply surreal.

Just to give a bit of background: before he left office, Governor Jerry Brown signed several bills allocating significant funds statewide to alleviate homelessness. The City of Los Angeles received $85 million of those HEAP funds to combat houselessness. 20 million of that was earmarked specifically for the ongoing emergency that is Skid Row. Sounds fantastic right? Wait until you hear how they have decided to spend the $20 million for Skid Row.

- $350 THOUSAND for a few extra beds at the Downtown Women’s Center.
- $2 million for more sidewalk sweeping.
- $1.1 million for City salaries.

Even more absurd than the priorities reflected in the spending, is that so far the other $15 million has been unspent because “they didn’t know how to spend it.” And, according to Meg Barclay of the City Administers Office they are working with Jose Huizer (who is under FBI investigation) to find ways to spend the money. Let’s be clear, down here in Skid Row, there’s not enough fresh water, restrooms or showers. The lack of public health infrastructure is egregious—in fact, the United Nations has called the circumstance a “human rights crime.”

Like we do, Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) engaged the residents of Skid Row and has come up with a list of recommendations to spend the money. LA CAN strongly recommends that upgrading public health facilities on Skid Row should be a priority. Towards that end, we are calling for a substantial investment to bring the hygiene system up to the standards of human decency. Currently, basic hygiene facilities are nearly nonexistent and water insecurity is a fact of life for residents, who, besides drinking fountains lack regular access to either hand washing stations or showers, or laundry equipment. Bathroom access in Skid Row is worse than in a Syrian refugee camp, according to a recent United Nation's report that found only nine public toilets for more than 13,000-15,000 houseless people.

In addition to funding for upgrading the public health infrastructure in Skid Row, there should be money set aside for a pilot project utilizing new technologies to deliver homeless housing cheaper and quicker. The spending plan should include a micro home pilot project, or “EcoHood” (a sustainable urban community with solar power, composting toilets, recycling, etc.), on city-owned property in Skid Row. Along with greatly reduced land and materials costs, hiring able-bodied members of the houseless community for the on-site assembly process will enable those building the units to live in them.

In summary, the additional money from the state’s HEAP program can immediately improve the lives of residents of Skid Row, as well as to provide a test case for innovative solutions to the overall homeless crisis. There is no better use for this short term windfall from Sacramento.
Ever since voters overwhelmingly passed Proposition HHH in November 2016, the Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) has been aggressively monitoring implementation of the $1.2 billion bond measure to add 10,000 units of permanent supportive housing in the city over 10 years.

On the first anniversary of HHH, the feisty Skid Row-based nonprofit issued a white paper, All Show and No Substance (ASNS), spotlighting the consistent mismanagement of the HHH rollout and recommendations for improvement.

Its introduction noted that the issues raised in the report “call into question the ability of the status quo to implement HHH for the benefit of all Angelenos and underscore the need for robust independent monitoring of how resources are being spent” (emphasis added.)

Last fall, prompted by a report from the Proposition HHH Citizens Oversight Committee on the status of the program — which revealed that one-third of the bond funds had been committed, the estimated number of units had shrunk to under 6,000 and the average construction cost per unit was more than $500,000 — LA CAN began circulating petitions and gathering letters of support for an audit of Proposition HHH finances, as required by the ballot proposal.

The letter stated:

Up to $650,000 for a unit of permanent supportive housing that won’t be completed until mid-2019, and city officials project that fewer than 6,000 units of the 10,000-unit Proposition HHH commitment will be built before the money runs out — these are just two examples of the cost overruns and mismanagement that led the Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) to circulate a petition demanding an audit of HHH finances.

Officials hailed the $1.2 billion bond measure for homeless housing and services as the main event in the fight against homelessness. A year and a half later the HHH rollout is on the ropes. With one-third ($362.5 million) of the HHH money already committed and tent encampments continuing to proliferate citywide, voters are asking “Where did the money go?”

With the announcement of Mayor Eric Garcetti’s expensive, stop-gap shelter program it’s time that elected officials stop repurposing old strategies that have never helped people exit homelessness. And when they do that, the remaining bond authority should be invested exclusively in permanent supportive housing units.

With City Hall currently operating under the cloud of an FBI investigation into bribery, campaign funding, extortion and money laundering — not to mention the seizure of records related to Proposition HHH — we are doubly concerned about the ability of those in charge to implement the bond authority’s promise “to provide safe, clean, affordable housing for the homeless and for those in danger of becoming homeless.”

The office of City Controller Ron Galperin, whose office is responsible for conducting an annual audit of Proposition HHH for release to the public, sent the following email in response to our telephone and written communications about the status of the audit:

Thank you so much for your inquiry. Our office is concurrently working on a stand-alone compliance audit of HHH and our CAFR (Comprehensive Annual Finance Report). We expect the HHH audit to be release-ready around the same time as the CAFR, approximately the end of January 2019.

LA CAN and Councilmember O’Farrell were also joined by the Los Angeles City Controller’s office in calling for an audit. City Controller Ron Galperin, the city’s chief accountant, stated that the city must find a way to use HHH funds in a more expeditious and efficient manner. He expressed concern over the lack of housing units built in the last two years and said that the funding could be used more effectively in addressing the housing crisis.

Galperin has started the process of auditing the use of HHH voter-approved money for the homeless and expects to complete the audit later this year. He stated that the priority must be to find a way to get the homeless off the street and to relieve some of the suffering we see in Los Angeles.
GOVERNOR RELEASES 2019 PROPOSED BUDGET

by Todd Cunningham

California’s new Governor, Gavin Newsom, released his first official proposed budget on January 10th and is making the rounds across the state for input, debate and final approval by June 15th. Projecting the largest surplus in more than 20 years, the massive $21.5 billion budget has been well-received by both Democrats and Republicans for the level of anticipated resources to be allocated for families, food justice and housing. A small minority of voices are expressing concern that the budget lacks enough to prepare for an inevitable recession. Our partners at the Western Center on Law and Poverty have reviewed the full budget and have provided an in-depth review. Here are a few highlights in bite-sized form:

SSI Cashout:

The Governor proposes to make permanent what had previously been a temporary program to backfill the total or partial loss of SNAP benefits that almost 40,000 SSI recipient families would potentially lose. This is one of the highest priorities for SSI advocates in the budget in 2019.

Housing:

Pledging $1.75 billion toward the affordable housing crisis, Governor Newsom is incentivizing communities to build more homeless shelters and housing while he is threatening to withhold transportation money if local governments don’t meet their goals. Also, the Governor is proposing $300 million in one-time funds to expand or develop emergency shelters and navigation centers capped off by $200 million for continuums of care.

Affordable Housing:

Gov. Newsom is proud of his self-proclaimed single-handed efforts to form the largest source of funding for affordable housing in the state. The budget proposes increasing the state’s low-income housing tax credit program by $500 million annually and pairing with federal low-income housing tax credits. To incentivize the production of housing, the budget includes $250 million for grants to local governments for re-zoning to higher densities, conducting environmental reviews, and revamping local approval processes.

Ending Deep Poverty:

The budget from Gov. Newsom proposes to end deep poverty for families in the CalWORKs program. The proposal would increase CalWORKs grants beginning this October from $785 a month to $888 a month for a family of three.

If you would like to review the in-depth review from WCLP, please email Todd Cunningham at toddc@cangress.org.

PROTECTING TENANTS AGAINST HARASSMENT AND DISPLACEMENT

by Paula Escobar

Communities of color throughout Los Angeles are experiencing growing rates of gentrification and displacement, with long-time tenants being pushed out of their homes. Why? Because greedy landlords know someone out there will pay more, and they’ll do whatever it takes to bring them in. Now, there are two important ordinances moving through the City of Los Angeles that could increase protections for tenants throughout Los Angeles.

The first is the Anti-Tenant Harassment Ordinance, introduced by Councilmember Jose Huizar in 2017. When the motion passed, the Housing Community Investment Department (HCID) was instructed to come up with recommendations based on other cities’ programs. One year later, they sent their report to the City’s Housing Committee. Aimed at protecting tenants from harassment and intimidation from landlords, as it stands, this ordinance immediately leaves out a group of renters: renters in single-family homes. That means there is more work to do on our end to make sure that all tenants are protected under this ordinance.

The second is the Tenants Right to Counsel Ordinance, introduced by Councilmember Paul Koretz in 2018. This motion seeks to create a program that would provide legal counsel and representation to tenants in the city facing eviction. A coalition of tenant rights organizations and legal service providers have been working for months to design a comprehensive program to help tenants fight displacement both in the pre-eviction and eviction stages. So many tenants are pushed out of their housing by harassment, intimidation, and through illegal evictions before ever seeing the courts. If our goal is to keep folks housed, then we need to be defending against the illegal evictions, too. As usual, the big question is: where will we find the money to cover the need of every tenant in Los Angeles?

Join our efforts to pass these ordinances and increase tenant protections citywide!
Black Women for Wellness, a 21-year old organization is committed to healing, supporting and educating Black women and girls through health education, empowerment and advocacy. As a reproductive justice organization, the work we do encompasses whatever needs to be done in order for Black women and girls to thrive in society. We focus on Environmental Justice, Policy, Black Maternal and Infant Health, Civic Engagement, Sexual Education, Diabetes prevention and access to clean, healthy foods.

One of our continued programs, Sisters @ Eight, has been a staple in our community and our chance to engage with our constituents in an authentic manner. Sisters @ Eight is our monthly forum where we discuss new topics with an expert group of panelists. Held on the second Friday of each month, our conversations always start off with “Hot Topics” where we have the opportunity to share news with each other from the local, national, and international level.

The next Sisters @ Eight is on Friday, April 12th from 8:30am-10:30am at the Department of Water and Power, 4030 Crenshaw Blvd. Come hungry, breakfast is on us.

In January 2014, the O.V.A.S. (Overthrowing Vendidas, Authority, and the State) opened La Conxa’s doors, and for the past 5 years we work intentionally for the undocumented womn and working class families of Boyle Heights. The majority of us in this womn of color collective come from broken homes and/or have experienced abusive relationships that try to silence, isolate and belittle our existence. We firmly believe that womn of color and the land are now and have always been interchangeable. We both continue to be simultaneously exploited, occupied and raped within patriarchal societies specifically by foreign power structures.

We recognize that before the initial invasion of the European colonizers, indigenous people throughout Anahuac and Turtle Island were largely matriarchal societies in which womn and our Earth Mother were not only respected as care givers, leaders, and warriors, but most importantly, as the foundation of a thriving, balanced and holistic community. The fight against this wide-spread violence is the reason we began this project on our bikes. Our sisterhood grew from the need to reclaim our bodies, the street, and our movement. We refuse to normalize our disposability, or let our rage be diluted or co-opted by any state and/or federally funded projects that often work to create a dependency on an exploitative system. Given our reality and that of the hoods we come from, we feel a personal and collective responsibility to maintain this autonomous community of resistance. We believe that retaining autonomy is crucial for the dignity and justice of our hood. And so, we organize horizontally to decentralize power because we trust in each other’s capacity to lead. With fierce determination, we focus on centering our resiliency to build relationships based on mutual aid and solidarity with various anti-authoritarian collectives.

Monthly programs include the Luna Rides for womn of color and femme-identified folks to reclaim space using our bikes; Letters to the Homegirls/Homies for relatives who are currently held captive by the State; Clinica Legal (every 4th Saturday of the month from 1-5PM) in which folks may obtain support with expungements/tenant rights/preparing for parole hearings and referral to legal aid; Clinical Popular in which indigenous/non-western medicinal practices are provided (1st Saturdays of each month from 10 AM- 4PM); and FTP Studies in which we learn about the police state we live in (every 4th Wednesday of the month from 7-9pm).

We invite you to join us in the struggle, as we continue to unapologetically confront the state and the patriarchy because our lives truly depend on winning this battle. We are many. We are brave and we are not alone. This fight is getting bigger and we are not going to stop until all of our sisters are free.

With love and fury, the O.V.A.S. AKA one very angry squad
"OPERATION LASER" SHUT IT DOWN!

By Jamie Garcia

"Shut it Down! Shut it Down!" were the chants from community members that gathered outside Los Angeles Police Department’s Central Station in Skid Row on December 20th, 2018. As the crowd grew around the station, folks began setting up tables to break bread with everyone in attendance, lit a fire in a pit, and built an altar for those who lost their lives to police violence. Musicians gathered to create healing rhythms. A group of community members from the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition, Jewish Voices for Peace, the Psyocbrigade of La Conxa, White People 4 Black Lives, students from UCLA, and Los Angeles Community Action Network, walked into the Central Station with the intent to expose and demand the closing of LAPD’s Community Safety Operation Center (CSOC).

CSOCs are like mini fusion centers that operate as command centers that gather and analyze data from automatic license plate readers, closed circuit televisions (CCTV), field interview cards and other surveillance equipment. CSOCs are also in charge of creating lists of chronic offenders to track and trace as well as creating LASER Zones (hotspots) for LAPD to patrol. At Mayor Garcetti’s State of the City address he made a very clear statement that he wanted a CSOC located in every LAPD bureau throughout the City of Los Angeles -- essentially pushing for the expansion of the LAPD’s predictive policing operations.

On Dec 20th when Coalition members entered the Central Station demanding to speak to the commanding officer of the CSOC no one would admit that the CSOC existed. It took countless officers and the strong persistence of the community to bring out commanding officer McMahon -- he finally admitted that the CSOC existed in Central station. Demanding that he face the community outside, he was brought out of the station to answer questions. McMahon downplayed the significance of a CSOC and denied that chronic offender bulletins existed (blatantly lying). It’s important to note that the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition is currently suing LAPD for the release of all chronic offender bulletins.

Knowing that LAPD would continue to lie and justify its murders the community dismissed the commander and continued its program. Story after story was told by the community about the realities of police violence and oppression. LAPD even went to the extent of calling the fire department to shut us down but they left as soon as they saw our protest. We ate together, listened to music, stayed warm by the fire, talked about resistance, rejoiced and built community deeming LAPD irrelevant. The fight to close down the CSOC along with the predictive policing programs LASER and Predpol is not over. The Inspector General of LAPD is due to release their audit of these programs and the community will not rest until there is a complete rejection and dismantlement of these programs. For more information about the fight please email stoplapspying@gmail.com or join us every 4th Tuesday of the month at 6pm at LA CAN where we discuss, learn, and strategize to end predictive policing programs.

In the meantime, we intend to raise the HHH audit issue with LA’s elected leaders at every opportunity, in particular at all Proposition HHH oversight committee meetings and as part of a multi-platform communications campaign including videos, social media, delegation visits and press interviews.

Voters who agreed to raise their taxes to help the homeless deserve to know how their tax dollars are being spent, and unhoused Angelenos desperately need the housing and services their fellow residents have stepped up to provide.

Stand with LA CAN: Tell the Mayor and council members to immediately conduct a thorough forensic audit of Proposition HHH finances.
Hassan Hajjaj creates portraits to support LA’s Skid Row [LA CAN]

Introducing the Heroes and Sheroes postcard campaign

by Lucia Knell
Reprinted from Good Magazine, 2019

Best known for his ability to transform his subjects using custom made garments and his relationship to re-imagining contemporary Moroccan culture, artist Hassan Hajjaj has been dubbed the ‘Andy Warhol of Marrakech.” And for good reason. Hajjaj’s gorgeous portraits feature vibrant colors and unexpected subjects that are accessorized and magnified through outfits and styling ranging from faux-luxury jumpsuits to bright socks and plastic shades.

As seen in his inaugural exhibition at LACMA, aptly named “My Rock Stars,” Hajjaj uses his portraits as a platform to illuminate a diverse group of people, all of whom are “rockstars” in their own ways – from the street musicians and henna women of Marrakech to the Gnawa music masters of Morocco. At this year’s Summit LA festival, a gathering of entrepreneurs, leaders, innovators and creatives from all over the world, Hajjaj transformed and photographed event participants in a pop-up photobooth experience reminiscent of his home studio in Marrakech.

From loading suitcases of bespoke outfits on his international flight to then snagging local blankets and plastic accessories from the shops in the Fabric District blocks away, Hajjaj’s artistic process was, and always has been, quite renegade. Popping up in an alleyway in DTLA, Hassan then constructed makeshift photo studios, transporting subjects into his world by playing new, unreleased Moroccan music from a Bluetooth speaker while styling and photographing his guests.

--However, upon arriving in Downtown Los Angeles from northern Africa, Hajjaj quickly felt the unsettling contrast between the wealth concentration of Summit guests and the surrounding poverty of Downtown Los Angeles

Since a core part of the Summit experience is about connection and community, Hajjaj decided to focus and use his artwork as a tool to raise awareness of this dichotomy by handpicking a few select Summit participants that embodied activism, ingenuity, or leadership to be featured in his newest series

Heroes and Sheroes.
From the co-founder of Black Lives Matter and CEO of Conservation International to the creative director of March For Our Lives, Summit’s Art Director, Alex Zhang, noted that “these portraits are meant to shed light on the activists and entrepreneurs that use their talent and creative energy to push the world forward.”

In order to drive further awareness to these select projects, Hassan Hajjaj, in partnership with Summit and GOOD, released Heroes and Sheroes in a limited edition set (200) of fine art postcards that was made available for purchase with all profits supporting The Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN). Priced at $100, each limited edition postcard set costs roughly $30 to produce -- enabling Summit and GOOD to raise upwards of $15,000 for LA CAN.
On November 10, 2018, Wesley Walker, Jr. passed away suddenly at his home in Los Angeles, California. Born on January 23, 1951, in Quincy, Florida, Wesley came to California after he joined the Navy in 1970. Wesley’s journey with Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) began around 2007. He was a tenant at the Huntington Hotel when LA CAN began organizing the group to improve building conditions. His involvement with LA CAN grew quickly as he emerged as a pivotal leader in facilitating tenant involvement. Naturally, much of Wesley’s involvement in the early years was centered on housing issues. He was a critical part of two successful lawsuits involving the Huntington Hotel; and in recognition of his work in that area, was asked to join the Client Board of Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA) in 2011. Notably, he became the chairperson for that board!

Wesley’s imprint can be felt in every area of LA CAN’s work. In fact, when you look at the building diagrams for this space, his picture is in every frame! Around 2011, he joined the LA CAN Board of Directors as Treasurer. He loved ‘Community Watch’ and was fantastic at voter engagement, both in phone-
banking and door-knocking. Wesley was a motivated and disciplined learner who always looked for opportunities to improve his skill set.

In 2013, he completed the ‘Community Organizing’ program at LA Trade Tech. The combination of discipline and desire for continuous self-improvement made him an incredibly successful organizer. For example, in the recent campaign to gather support for Prop 10, Wesley was THE biggest petition gatherer for LA CAN by far! Of the 1,000 signatures gathered, Wesley collected at least half!

Wesley was loved and admired by all of us for his dedication and commitment to the struggle for justice. He was also widely admired for his incredible sense of personal style and that famous STROLL with his cane. Wesley Walker, Jr., in addition to being admired, was beloved. His dignity, humor and humility were an important part of our collective lives and he will be sorely missed.

We are naming the LA CAN courtyard in front of our headquarters at 838 East 6th Street in honor of Wesley, our loving brother and comrade. May he rest in power!
Yes, We Can Leave Our Oppressors: Honduras' Human Caravan in Mexico

By Silvia Hernandez

In December 2018, after an inner struggle, I decided to cross the border line to Tijuana, Mexico, to support the human caravan. Honestly, my concern was of being detained when crossing back across the border into the U.S. I went to see and confirm for myself the reality that the country that I live in has created. I witnessed and listened to stories of some of the most amazing people I could ever meet.

I met members of the caravan who left their homeland because of the unsafe chaotic politics and the violence of organized crime. These treacherous conditions also exist at the Mexican border line and are a worry for the caravan organizers and advocates.

I met with immigrant advocates from San Diego and Tijuana and members of our partner organizations -- the League of Revolutionaries and The People’s Tribune. While sitting in a parked vehicle, I noticed families living in encampments along the border and thought of the communities in Skid Row that are facing similar challenges. A woman with her son in a stroller passed by and we immediately made eye contact. I got out of the car and she stopped and asked if I had something to eat, because her son was hungry. I asked the woman if she knew of a place to buy food. She took me a couple of blocks from the encampment.

While walking together she told me that her son had just been released from the hospital. He became ill after he got wet from the rain -- even though they were inside a tent. She knew it would keep raining and she didn’t know what to do to keep her son healthy. She, 21 years old, and her son had joined the caravan in Honduras, leaving poverty and violence.

We walked to a small restaurant where a woman was frying chicken and serving it with rice and beans. I noticed the restaurant was full of black families dining. They had come from Haiti and settled in Tijuana. We got some food and the young mother from Honduras was happy. When we arrived back at the encampment more families were outside their tents, and they asked if we had food. I told them that our group of volunteers only had clothes and hygiene items.

I learned by talking to three families that the people in the encampment were eating only one daily meal, which was provided by the caravan organizers and a French volunteer who joined the caravan when it crossed into Mexico. I was also informed that the local police didn’t allow “good Samaritans” to bring food into the encampment.

I learned that this particular encampment was created by people from the caravan who resisted going to a militarized shelter. One of the families expressed worry because one of the resisters was taken to jail where he was being kept unless and until someone could pay his bail.

Despite the challenges, the members of the caravan were smiling and happy to know that they had almost achieved their goal of crossing into the USA. I couldn’t resist telling them that I was proud to meet them and that they should be proud too, because they were an example for humanity -- they were making history. I told this to a woman with children specifically, and tears started running down her face. She said that nobody had told them this before.

I went to walk through the encampment and some of the teenager members told me that they were very thankful to the Mexican people -- even though in one town they were pressured to move out quickly. They said they had been helped by local people who gave them food and clothes. The locals had also given them rides in trucks and buses to the next town and away from harm.

Mexico's government granted asylum to the people from the caravan and allowed them to live and work in any state they wanted.

I am so thankful for the donations given with very short notice. I am thankful for the advocates in Tijuana; Estela, Sam Slovick for being present before the caravan arrived in Tijuana and all their support and documentation of the conditions of the people. I am thankful to LA CAN for giving me the platform to meet the right people and to do the right things. I am also grateful to Chris Van and Maria Helena Martinez for inviting me to meet the people from the caravan.

I cannot deny that I saw happiness and a lot of hope. I saw young people with open and bright spirits, and everyone living as the circumstances allowed, but happy. I was humbled by my admiration for each of them for having the courage to leave their oppressors behind and start a journey seeking for opportunities and a better life.
BAJI Calls for Hearing on Abuse of Migrant Children in US Custody

February 27, 2019 – According to Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) documents released yesterday, thousands of complaints of sexual abuse and harassment of migrant children in US custody have been filed over the past four years. The allegations range from adult staff members sexually assaulting minors, the showing of pornographic videos, forcible touching, etc.

“The sexual abuse of these minors is directly linked to the Trump administration’s practice of detaining unaccompanied minors and a policy of separating children from their families. This is despicable and an irreparable violation of human dignity.” said Nana Gyamfi, Executive Director of the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI).

“It is urgent that Congress launch an investigation into sex abuse at the hands of immigration officials. They must also pass legislation ending the detention of minors and they must begin to require that children remain in the care of their loved ones immediately.”

Each day this and other atrocities are perpetuated against immigrants in U.S. custody. Black immigrant women, girls and transgender community members are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence and abuse. For this reason and many other reasons, we at BAJI fight to end the practice of immigrant detention and deportation.

The Black Alliance for Just Immigration is the nation’s largest Black-led organization championing racial justice and immigrant rights. Find out more at www.baji.org.

A Win for Teachers and Community

By Marcy Winograd

After a rainy week of walking the picket line in red union t-shirts and converging on downtown, chanting “Who’s schools? Our schools?” – some 34,000 teachers, librarians and counselors with the Los Angeles Unified School District ended their raucous strike—the first in 30 years —when, as members of the United Teachers of Los Angeles, they voted overwhelmingly to approve a new contract that addresses both bread and butter concerns—wages and working conditions—and social justice issues.

Under the new contract, all 1,000 District schools will have a full-time nurse; each middle and high school will be staffed with a full-time librarian; additional counselors will reduce by hundreds the numbers of students on a counselor’s roster; teacher salaries will increase by 6% without the threatened cuts in health care benefits for new teachers and class size will be reduced by seven students in English and math classes.

On the social justice front, the District agreed to establish 30 community schools with wrap-around services, such as health clinics and day care; expand a pilot program that exempts schools from random student weapons searches; create a joint task force to increase green space, removing asphalt and creating greener playgrounds—and establish a dedicated hotline to provide legal counseling for immigrant families.

Another union victory was winning agreement from the Board to vote on a resolution to support a moratorium on new charter schools within the District. Although the charter lobby came out in droves to campaign against the resolution, the Board—with the exception of Nick Melvoin—passed the resolution, sending a clear message to the legislature to stop the privatization of public education in California.

Marcy Winograd is a retired LAUSD English and history teacher who walked the picket line with her former colleagues at Venice High School.

Public Comment is a street newspaper and a member of the North American Street Newspaper Association and International Network of Street Papers. The Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) is a member 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 articles that appear in Public Comment.

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Up in the Rooftop Garden
By Matt Horns

LA CAN’s gardens still have a lot of growing to do. We have, however, made significant progress. Fall season 2018 was bountiful. Our garden produced a good variety of cool-weather crops along with vestiges of last year’s summer crops. We harvested a surplus of kale, collard greens, broccoli, and a few other crops that we provided to our Marketplace customers.

Here in the Western United States we are always either experiencing drought, or are between droughts. Our Mediterranean climate is characterized by highly variable annual precipitation. Many years we have nothing you could describe as “winter” in Southern California, but winter 2018-2019 actually happened. Temperatures were cool from late December through March. Good January and February rainfall brought our season’s precipitation total to a little above average. Plant growth slowed; still our garden produced small amounts of chard, kale, cilantro, and sage, white potatoes, sweet potatoes, and even a few eggplants.

Spring has sprung. A third of our rooftop garden space is occupied by perennial plants that were dormant during winter’s cool temperatures. As soon as the weather warmed up they sprang back into life. Multitudes of seedlings are sprouting where last year’s plants dropped seeds. We grow some of these “volunteers” in our garden. We also transplant many seedlings to pots, and contribute them to other gardenistas’ gardens.

Our garden ecology continues to improve. Ladybugs are reproducing like crazy on our milkweed plants and spread throughout our garden where they help control insect pests. Giant swallowtail butterflies are reproducing on our rue plant. Anna’s hummingbirds routinely visit our hummingbird feeder and our blooming salvia plants. House sparrows have started their nesting season. They like to tear shreds from leaves and use them to line their nests, but that doesn’t significantly injure our plants. When fledglings start flying, they flock to our garden and scour the plants for yummy insects. Sparrows nest repeatedly from late winter through early summer, so several generations of fledglings patrol our garden during the entire peak growing season. They are a huge part of our pest control.

We are expanding our garden to large planter beds at ground level around the front courtyard. There is also a number of donated large pots that we can plant and set around the front courtyard and the back alley. More people are bringing their energy, expertise, and resources to our garden programs. This spring our gardens promise to begin to reach their full potential. We will grow LA CAN’s gardens into oasis of life. It will take a lot of work. We can use your help.
In solidarity with the International Women's Day Strike, hundreds of women activists and their supporters rallied and marched downtown Los Angeles on March 8th. Carrying banners and placards calling for more equality for women, the crowd expressed their demands for equality, respect and empowerment. The women gathered in front of the Federal Building downtown Los Angeles and marched pass the ICE Detention Center and the VA Clinic chanting "No Pay, Low Pay, No Way" and "Stop Wars on Women, Children, Migrants and Mother Earth."

The International Women's Day Strike -- Los Angeles was part of a larger international campaign to support the rights and contributions of all women. Dolores Huerta of the Farm Workers Union was given the "Warrior Woman Award" for her dedication to women rights, migrant workers and their families. "Today we rally and march," she said, "but tomorrow we begin the work."

In addition to Huerta, speakers included Margaret Prescod of Sojourner Truth Radio; Sister Helen Jones, mother of John Horton who was murdered by sheriff deputies at the Men’s Central Jail in Los Angeles; Nancy Berlin of Alexandria House; Arlene Inouye, chair of the UTLA bargaining team; Thandiwie Abdullah, 15 year old founder of the Black Lives Matter Youth Vanguard; and DJ Daisy O’Dell.

LA CAN participants in the rally and march included Trudy Goodwin, General Dogon, Ray Lewis, Paula Escobar, Lydia Trejo, Rachel Wells, JoJo Smith, Steve Diaz, Adam Rice, Todd Cunningham, Elliot Katz and Rebecca Molinere.

Initiated by women in Poland and Argentina and joined by women all over the world, the International Women’s Strike is held in solidarity with the global movement. The IWS-LA Planning group included: Alexandria House, Black Lives Matter/LA, DCFS Give Us Back Our Children, Every Mother is a Working Mother Network, Justice Warriors 4 Black Lives, Los Angeles Community Action Network, Military Families Speak Out – SoCal, Veterans for Peace-LA, Women's March LA Foundation, Global Women's Strike/LA, Women of Color in the Global Women’s Strike and other individuals. Here are pictures from the day's event.

Photos by the International Women's Strike - Los Angeles
Lisa Pedersen, Sidney Ross-Risden and Wayne Marchysen
The State of California allocated $85 million to the City of Los Angeles to address emergency housing -- $20 million of which was designated for Skid Row. The City decided to spend $350,000 for emergency beds at the Downtown Women’s Center, and another $2 million for sidewalk sweeping and now the City is wringing its hands unsure of how to spend the other $15 million. So we asked the residents in Skid Row, "how would you spend $20 million of emergency money dedicated to Skid Row?"

Tiny houses, housing containers, mobile water trucks, solar panels, inflatable toilets and an organic food chain! -- Stephanie

How would you spend $20 million dollars of emergency money dedicated to Skid Row?
Tiny Houses, Housing Containers, Mobile Water Trucks, Solar Panels, Inflatable Toilets, Organic Food Chain!
-- Sean Paul
Sean Paul's Rib House

House the homeless, training, job listings, resources, bus passes, get us out of this situation -- Pink