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# HOMeward

## Street Journal



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## WEAP Workshop Stresses Economic Human Rights

The Women's Economic Agenda Project (WEAP) came up to Sacramento from Oakland on April 16, 2003 to present a workshop on organizing for power not pity. The power we speak of here, is the power that sits in potential with the 90% of the US population that collectively possess less wealth than the 1% of the population that own the most wealth.

Many of you may remember WEAP when they came through Sacramento in 2000 with their Freedom Bus Tour. They stopped by at Loaves & Fishes and held a rally in Friendship Park where they documented human rights abuses and invited people to hop on the bus for the rest of the tour (SHOC's Sunshine, for one, hopped on). WEAP is one of the main hosts of the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign (PPEHRC) in California. WEAP is one of several organizations that makes up this network ded-

icated to building a movement to end poverty based in economic human rights. This campaign began with the Kensington Welfare Rights Union's March of the Americas in 1999, a march from Washington to New York that focused on The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This document was signed by every country in the United Nations in 1948, including the United States, which recognizes that everyone has the right to a job at a living wage, the right to organize, the right to housing, the right to medical care, and the right to education, to name a few. WEAP and many others throughout the country are documenting these human rights violations from the people effected by poverty. Collecting this documentation is instrumental in bringing evidence to the United Nations that the United States is drastically in non-compliance with the Declaration. The documentation will also be used to legally

remedy this non-compliance (a case is currently pending).

The workshop's presenters stressed that we must know the system we live under, a system that keeps workers fighting each other for crumbs. The system gets something out of this disconcertedness and the richest get the largest piece of the pie, and their piece keeps getting bigger. Problems for most people are: little job security; debt, health care for everyone; housing is expensive and some are without; education is becoming more expensive and receiving less funding. We are made to believe we can't get out of this bind and that it is our fault. Everyone has a right to these simple life giving necessities.

Our job, now, is to educate, teach, and take documentation. Many people feel they have no voice. With their documentation of their situation, their voice is added with all the other voices

exclaiming we do have a right to housing, healthcare, jobs with living wages, these rights afforded us for the simple fact that we are human. Organizing for Economic Human Rights gives us a platform of issues 90% of our population can attest to and could be willing to support.

You are all leaders and can help lead us towards a better world. If you would like to join this campaign, either by just filling out documentation of the human rights you have been denied, or by becoming a monitor responsible for collecting documentation from others, contact the Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee or Homeward Street Journal at (916) 442-2156 (offices located inside Loaves & Fish's Friendship Park), or contact Women's Economic Agenda Project at (510) 451-7379, ext. 233 (Location-449 15th St., 2nd Floor, Oakland, CA 94612).

## An American Epidemic: Hate Crimes Against the Homeless

Released through the Street News Service [www .streetnewsservice.org](http://www.streetnewsservice.org)

by Chance Martin

Imagine that a new recreational drug emerged on the national scene in 1999, and say it was responsible for 123 senseless and preventable deaths to date. Television newscasts and newspapers would be screaming about such a story. U.S. Representatives and Senators would bluster and blather about it for hours in special hearings (at taxpayer's expense), and the DEA would be tapping telephones, monitoring emails, and kicking in citizen's doors from coast to coast to rescue us from this menace (at taxpayer's expense).

In the four years from 1999 to 2003, two hundred and twelve separate instances of hate crimes committed against homeless people have been documented by the National Coalition

for the Homeless' (NCH) Civil Rights Work Group — a nationwide network of civil rights and homeless advocates.

The reports, as well as NCH's findings and recommendations, were recently compiled in a four year study released on April 10th, 2003. Hate, Violence, and Death on Main Street USA: A Report on Hate Crimes and Violence Against People Experiencing Homelessness in 2002.

Recognizing this disturbing American trend as a "national epidemic," NCH's Executive Director Donald Whitehead charges, "Our country is in its darkest hour. It is time that we expose these acts of cowardice against people without homes. It is time we bring this darkness to light."

### DEFINING HATE

In 1968, the U.S. Congress defined a hate crime as a crime in which the defendant intentionally selects a victim because of their race, color or national origin (Title 18 U.S.C Section 245). The first federal law to combat hate crimes, 18 USC Section 245, passed in 1968. It mandated that the government must prove both that the crime occurred because of a victim's membership in a designated group and because the victim was engaged in certain specified federally-protected activities — such as serving on a jury, voting, or attending public school.

Hate crimes are commonly called bias-motivated crimes, referring to the prejudice or partiality of the perpetrator against the victim's real or perceived grouping or circumstance. Most

hate crimes are not committed by organized hate groups, but by individual citizens who harbor strong resentments against certain groups of people. Some are "mission offenders", who believe they are on a mission "to cleanse the world of a particular evil." Others are "scapegoat offenders", who project their resentment at the growing economic power of a particular racial or ethnic group through violent actions. Still others are "thrill seekers", those who take advantage of a vulnerable and disadvantaged group in order to satisfy their own pleasures.

Thrill seekers, primarily teens and young adults, are the most common perpetrators of violence against homeless people in the United States. Experts are at a loss to explain this surge in

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# Street News Service [www.streetnewsservice.org](http://www.streetnewsservice.org)

## North American News Digest

### Molly Rhodes

To look on the bright side, it's encouraging that people wanted to give money to help the homeless. Of course, no homeless people will ever benefit from the money collected by two women who instead pocketed it all for themselves. No-one at the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless in Cleveland is sure just how much money the two managed to trick out of people, though it's believed they've been soliciting false donations for the past six years, according to the Cleveland Plain Dealer ([www.cleveland.com](http://www.cleveland.com)). Most recently, the two are believed to have duped people mere blocks from the Coalition's headquarters. The two women used to sell the Coalition's homeless street newspaper, the Homeless Grapevine, but switched to asking for charity donations – and kept those donations – when they realized how much more money they could make for themselves. "People who donate to these women will be hesitant to donate again," the Coalition's executive director Brian Davis told the Plain Dealer. "Certainly, this harms all homeless organizations."

After three years of federal funds reforming and supporting hundreds of homeless shelters and related projects across the country, the Canadian government has now placed its focus – and \$405 million Canadian dollars – on the next layer of the struggle to get out of homelessness: transitional housing. What's more, provinces like British Columbia have decided to match the money from the national homelessness initiative with their own funds, according to the Vancouver Sun ([www.canada.com/vancouver](http://www.canada.com/vancouver)). The Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative has already helped 216 projects in British Columbia and the Yukon with \$52 million in funding that has gone to creating new shelter beds, renovating crumbling shelters, and improved support services like food banks and soup kitchens. "The communities said to me, we have enough shelter beds, what we need is transitional houses," B.C. Labour Minister Claudette Bradshaw told the Vancouver Sun. "We are going to save these kids." The announcement about money for transitional housing comes as housing advocates have been gearing up for a big battle over Vancouver's bid for the 2010 Winter Olympics. The advocates fear a repeat of the scene during the 1986 Expo, when low-income, long-term tenants were booted out of single-room-occupancy hotels to make room for short-term tourists.

Wary that the stereotypical image of homeless is a single male, the Salvation Army launched a new cam-

paign in Tucson, Ariz., to highlight the plight of homeless children. Posters with pictures of local homeless children, statistics about homelessness, and ways for the local community to get involved can be found on everything from buses to businesses. The Salvation Army estimates over one-third of the approximately 5,500 homeless people in Tucson or 2,000 people in Arizona are children, according to the Tucson Citizen ([www.tucsoncitizen.com](http://www.tucsoncitizen.com)). The campaign is not just to raise awareness but also money for housing for homeless families with children. The charity is currently looking at sites located near services and public transportation, but is already facing opposition from local officials and the greater community. The charity hopes educating the public on who really suffers from homelessness will alleviate their concerns about helping them in their own backyard.

While services for homeless and poor people are being cut back across the nation, Portland, Oregon's only street newspaper, Street Roots ([www.streetroots.org](http://www.streetroots.org)), is expanding from a monthly paper to a bimonthly. The volunteer-run, four year old paper had looked to double its publication schedule for at least a couple years; it has only recently amassed the volunteer base needed to increase production. Sadly, the decision to expand is also a response to the need for the true voice of homeless people to be heard. Said the paper's creative director, Israel Bayer, "With the current economic crisis, and dramatic growth in numbers of homeless, it only makes sense to make that move now."

It may not look like much to the untrained eye, but Dr. Randy Christensen's roving camper can be a literal lifesaver for homeless teens in Arizona. Inside the camper, known as the Crews'n Healthmobile Mobile Medical Unit, is equipped like a doctor's office, with all the basics from prescription medicine and antidepressants to anti-fungal sprays and even room for minor surgery. The biggest disease Dr. Christensen is unable to treat is mental health illness. A study conducted among his patients reveals that 40 percent admit to feeling depressed, while only half those took some kind of medication for this condition. More than 78 percent of homeless teens receive no counseling at all, even though it is available to them. Dr. Christensen makes screening for mental health issues part of his first treatment for any new patient. Yet neither he nor any of the other Arizona homeless advocates can force teens to seek the care they need to survive.

A small but important victory for homeless advocates was won in San Francisco, where Supervisor Chris Daly managed to convince social service officials not to require every person seeking shelter in the city to be fingerprinted. The fingerprint plan was part of Proposition N, which stopped the flow of money directly to homeless people and instead will funnel that money into new social service programs, according to the San Francisco Chronicle ([www.sfgate.com](http://www.sfgate.com)). The fingerprinting was designed to be a way to track who uses the new services, particularly new shelter beds and food sources, to make sure the people who need the services are getting them. Yet such an invasion into privacy would only scare off homeless people who are illegal immigrants or do not want to be so closely tracked. Those who had been receiving checks from the city will continue to be tracked – about 2,500 people out of the city's estimate of anywhere from 8,500 to 15,000 homeless people.

Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates didn't want to be called chicken. So, as part of a campaign "dare" he agreed to last year, he spent 24 hours on the street of his fair city last month, getting to know the life of a homeless person. Stops along his journey included meals at the Trinity United Methodist Church, a tour of services along Telegraph Avenue, a sleep out in the Civic Center Park, and visits to homeless advocacy centers, all followed by a weblog, from [www.NewsBerkeley.com](http://www.NewsBerkeley.com). While Mayor Bates did get a taste of life on the streets, he still would have no idea what it would be like to survive without a home while also battling addictions and/or mental illness. At the end of his day, when Mayor Bates had heard dozens of stories from homeless people, his first thought to share with [www.NewsBerkeley.com](http://www.NewsBerkeley.com) was, "It's overwhelming." And with a state budget that's desperately short of funds, it's only going to get worse. As Mayor Bates told the reporters shadowing him for the day, "If we can rebuild Iraq, we can rebuild our cities."

On a note of good Easter cheer, All Saints' Kingsway Church in Toronto hosted its annual Easter sale of art by homeless people. Nine homeless artists created 177 pieces of work for this year's sale, each of which was offered for \$25, according to the Toronto Star ([www.thestar.com](http://www.thestar.com)). Last year, the church made \$1,700, all of which went back to the homeless artists themselves. "These artists express themselves in vibrant ways, and you don't see a sense of angst, a sense of poverty and a sense of depression in them," Elisabeth Gibson, the co-coordinator of the art sale, told

the Toronto Star. "They portray a sense of joy."

If things are bad in Berkeley, they're worse in San Antonio, Texas, which ranked 14th out of 17 big cities surveyed for the services and help the cities offer for homeless people. Local money given to helping homeless people ranked 16th N \$26,810 a year, or two cents a person N only better than Cleveland, which uses no local money for homeless services, according to the Houston Chronicle ([www.houstonchronicle.com](http://www.houstonchronicle.com)). The city's total spending of about \$5.3 million a year, including federal funds, is about \$4.64 per capita, less than one-fifth of the national big city average of \$21.86. On top of that, the city has no large-scale job program for homeless people, and no public shelters for families. What shelter for families do exist are turning away people every night.

Yet lest you think no one cares about homeless people in San Antonio, an art school graduate has returned to his native city to embark on a pro-bono project to capture the homeless population with charcoal and easel. Seth Camm's stint in San Antonio is part of his nationwide, four-year-old project to document homeless people in Philadelphia, Bakerfield, Calif., Bellingham, Wash., San Diego, and Los Angeles. When he's finished, Camm hopes to put his discoveries and portraits into a book to be offered as a guide to the streets for anyone to use. Every homeless person who agrees to let him sketch them also gets a copy of their portrait. When asked to sum up his experience for the San Antonio Express-News ([news.mysanantonio.com](http://news.mysanantonio.com)), Camm simply said, "Throughout my travels, I've seen an enormous amount of people crying."

Sacramento homeless advocates thought they saw a lot of people being scammed when they heard about local homeless people panhandling to raise money for a battered women's shelter that may not even exist. The women have been raising money for One Nation Under God Christian Church in Los Angeles, with promises that they get to keep 20 percent of what they make. Loaves & Fishes in Sacramento counters in a complaint filed with the state attorney general's office that these women are required to pay for rent, gas money, and "pastor appreciation fees," costs that usually cancel out any money they might have earned, according to the Sacramento Bee ([www.sacbee.com](http://www.sacbee.com)). On top of that, Loaves & Fishes staff found no proof of the shelter even existing, although One Nation's pastor, Jack W. Robinson, has amassed about \$1 million in real estate property in the past four years.



# Epidemic

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violent attacks by the young and the strong on the destitute and vulnerable, often blaming violent and sensational media, bad parenting, or a lack of morals.

After teens and young adults, the next emerging identifiable group most likely to engage in hate crimes against homeless people is members of local police agencies.

LS Wilson, coordinator for the Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco's Civil Rights project and a member of NCH's Board of Directors, says he routinely sees police selectively enforcing quality of life laws with homeless people. "When law enforcement regularly targets homeless people for quality of life crimes, the public is left thinking that all homeless people are lazy, drug-addicted criminals. The fact is that homeless folks are far more likely to be victims of violent crimes than perpetrators."

## FOUR YEARS OF VIOLENCE IN REVIEW

Of violent hate crimes from 98 cities in 34 states and Puerto Rico that NCH has compiled, only 89 of the reported assaults were non-lethal, while 123 have resulted in the murders of homeless people.

2002's hate crimes resulted in 16 deaths and 21 injuries from non-lethal violence. 34 men and two women were among the victims. Eleven of these victims were age 54 and older. Of the eighteen homeless people who were reported victims of beatings last year, eleven died as a result. In four cases homeless people were set afire while they slept, two resulted in fatalities. Three reported shootings of homeless people — one these by an off-duty fireman — added two deaths and three wounded to 2002's total body count.

Many of the reported hate crimes are so horrific that they should be widely examined as case studies, such as the unsolved serial slayings of seven homeless men in Denver, Colorado's trendy lower downtown district in the fall and winter of 1999. All the victims were beaten to death, one so savagely that his skull was found in pieces, and two victims were also beheaded. The only eyewitness account pointed to several juvenile male suspects seen beating a homeless man in an alley. "It is just as important to find and bring these killers to justice as it is to find the murderer of Jon-Benet Ramsey," declared John Parvensky, director of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless.

In Los Angeles, bus driver Cruz

Vaca refused to permit a homeless citizen in that city's Koreatown district to board his eastbound bus. "You are not going to get on my bus," Vaca shouted as the man banged on the door. The homeless man then moved in front to block the bus, but the determined Vaca ran him down. Only after passengers screamed for the driver to stop was the homeless man's body was recovered from under the bus. Cruz Vaca faces a mere six years in prison if convicted.

In Tampa, Florida two witnesses watched an officer aggravating mentally disabled Luis Rafael Objio until he produced a putty knife to defend himself, and then they pleaded with the officer not to shoot. Another witness who owned a grocery store near the scene cited the incident as another example of excessive police force, saying, "Rafael wouldn't bother nobody."

Witnesses to a Fort Worth, Texas, homeless beating certainly weren't as concerned about the safety of 39 year-old Ronald Watkins. According to police accounts, after Watkins fell to the ground in a fight with someone he was seen arguing with earlier, several onlookers joined in, stomping and kicking Watkins to death.

As brutally painful as his death must have been, it was far more merciful than that of Gregory Glenn Biggs, also of Fort Worth, who died after a hit-and-run accident in October of 2001. The driver struck Biggs on her way home from a bar, continued home and parked her car in her garage with Biggs still alive, but trapped in her windshield as a result of the impact. Biggs could have still survived, because he pleaded for help for most of the two days he lay bleeding to death in the dark garage. To her credit, or her shame, the driver, 25 year old Chante Mallard, did finally summon help — only to dump Biggs' lifeless body in a nearby park.

2002's non-lethal attacks make for some of the most disturbing accounts, like the group of patriotic young men in Anchorage, Alaska who celebrated Independence Day by burning a homeless man with sparklers. Two separate reports from Tucson, Arizona and San Diego, California detailed homeless people being hunted down and pelted by paintball enthusiasts; in the San Diego case the offenders were off-duty enlisted Navy personnel.

But in all 2002's litany of shame, the report that stands out as perhaps most indicative of the larger societal problem was that

of self-styled "citizen activist" Al Gallego, age 65, of Las Vegas, Nevada. Quality of life zealot Gallego became so incensed at the sight of a homeless man with pants down and attempting to defecate against a wall that he used his pickup truck to trap this fecal offender against the wall and summoned police. Much to Mr Gallego's surprise, the officers who responded arrested this vigilante for assaulting the homeless man with a deadly weapon Gallego's charges, unfortunately, were later dropped.

## MOST DANGEROUS STATE TO BE HOMELESS: CALIFORNIA

The report cites California as the most lethal state in which to be homeless. Thirty two separate violent acts were reported in 16 of the GoldenState's cities, including six hate crimes in Santa Cruz, five in San Diego, three in Los Angeles, and two each in San Francisco, Sacramento, Modesto and Santa Ana. Reported hate crimes resulted in 20 deaths and 15 non-lethal acts of violence.

The San Francisco Coalition's LS Wilson, who was once homeless himself, says, "Officials here spend more time, money, and energy criminalizing poor and homeless people than addressing homelessness' root causes like housing, healthcare, and employment. The end result is a game of 'blame the victim', producing no real solutions for ending homelessness."

One factor that may account for the increased reporting of homeless hate crimes in California is the efforts of the California Homeless Civil Rights Organizing Project (CHCROP) — a statewide network of homeless and civil rights advocates (including the Coalition on Homelessness) and service providers that was organized in 1999 as a response to awful record of civil rights abuses against homeless Californians.

"California homeless advocates know what's going on. CHCROP has done a great job of documenting civil rights abuses and hate crimes. They're advocating for the civil rights of homeless people, and poor and homeless people in California are learning how to fight back," reported NCH's Stoops.

Paula Lomazzi is writer with Homeward Street Journal - Sacramento, California's local street newspaper, and works with the Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee (SHOC), a CHCROP reporting agency. She reports that two homeless

campers have been found murdered along the Sacramento River's banks already this year.

Sacramento currently has only 350 shelter beds for men and 153 beds for women, families and youth year-round, adding an additional 228 "overflow" beds during the winter months. The estimated "official" homeless population for the state capitol totals about 1600, but Lomazzi dismisses this as a "low-ball" figure.

Joan Burke, Advocacy Director of Sacramento's local homeless service provider Loaves and Fishes, paints a darker picture. "Sacramento doesn't have enough housing, or even the will to create it, so homeless hate crimes here are crimes of vulnerability."

Burke cites factors such as shelter beds reserved for specific homeless sub-populations (AKA "case-managed beds"), as well as the entire Sacramento shelter system's lack of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as major factors in what she describes as "a game of musical beds."

According to Burke, most of the homeless people competing for scarce beds in Sacramento's shelter system have mental illnesses and other disabilities, and many of them are older. "The least-functional homeless people are always losing this game," she explains, "So they are at increased risk of victimization."

Burke also reports that Sacramento's District Attorney wasn't prosecuting homeless people's camping citations aggressively enough to suit local business interests. Sacramento's City Attorney Sam Jackson then hopped on the pro-development bandwagon, taking on the persecution of Sacramento's homeless campers as a campaign to increase his public name recognition.

After a homeless camper there successfully defeated a camping citation last year, City Attorney Jackson took on the prosecution himself, enlisting the assistance of at least five deputy city attorneys to the task of convicting the now-hapless camper.

"Based on the correspondence in discovery I received in that trial, it was clear that there were also several additional staff such as paralegals and investigators assisting on that case," according to defense attorney Kelly Tanalepy. "At the time we made jokes, calling them the city attorney's 'Dream Team'."

Part of the process of displacing and criminalizing Sacramento's homeless was the familiar campaign of portraying homeless people in the commercial media and public forums as dangerous, dirty, diseased, "service resistant" transients, creating negative public perceptions, fear, and ultimately hate for homeless people.

"There's a big attitude in this community is that these homeless people are out there because they're doing something wrong to begin with, while police are universally portrayed as nice guys doing a difficult job. The public then thinks, 'Oh they're doing a good job, and so what if a few homeless people get roughed up in the process?'" Tanalepy explained.

Joan Burke summed it up like this: "Public perception is ultimately dependent on the spin that our elected officials put on these issues."

## SEEDS OF HATE: SENSATIONALIST MEDIA

Discrimination against people experiencing homelessness is becoming commonly accepted in today's society. For instance, shock-jock Michael Savage, the popular host of the radio talk show "Savage Nation," said on April 23, 2002 that, "In a sane society, they [bums] would be beaten up, thrown in a van, and thrown in a work camp."

Statements like this reinforce negative stereotypes of homelessness, and often serve to ferment violent acts against homeless individuals. "People like Mr. Savage think their portrayals of homelessness are entertainment, but their words help inform a growing public fear and hate of homeless people," NCH Director Donald Whitehead told STREET SHEET.

April of 2002 saw the release of "Bumfights: A Cause For Concern" — a parade of gratuitous violence and gore depicting the worst imaginable behavior of homeless people in Las Vegas and Southern California. This un-rated video, promoted by radio shock jock Howard Stern and denounced on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, is available for sale on the internet. It consists of street brawls, scary stunts, even a parody of "Crocodile Hunter," called "Bum Hunter," who dons safari attire and startles sleeping homeless men by tackling them and binding their ankles, wrists, mouths with duct

see **Epidemic** page 5



# COME IN BONI FRAM TORONTO

## Jack Tafari

Greetings Portland and Seattle and Osaka and Toronto, Sacramento and San Francisco and Santa Cruz and can't forget Santa Babylon, all poor people in Huntington and New Hampshire and Hamilton, Ontario, too, greetings to ev'ry ev'ryone of you and you. This is Tafari come in from the cold, brought back into the fold and writing once again for Street Roots, one of North America's up-and-coming street newspapers. And this week's guest inna disya brand new column name Tent City News & World Report is the one Boni from Tent City Toronto. But before Boni who is a friend and strong supporter of Dignity Village come in, here is a likkle background infamashan.

Here at Dignity Village inna town name Portland, Oregon, we became aware of some other people in Toronto, Ontario, who were doing much the same thing there as we were here. They were poor people fed up with the lack of what they call social housing — we call it "affordable housing" — and for one reason or another couldn't or wouldn't go into the crowded and dirty missions. What they did was set up some tents on a piece of fallow ground owned by a multi-national corporation popularly called Homeless Depot in these times in Toronto.

We became aware of Toronto's Tent City (TCTO) as the weather started to turn cold in Portland in the Autumn of '01 mainly through what we'd seen in the New York Times and other newspapers. The papers at that time were full of pictures of refugees

in Afghanistan with snow on their tents and out here at Sunderland Yard at this town's leaf composting facility where we'd more or less just been swept like leaves, the wind can be ferocious in Winter as it whips down through the Columbia Gorge. We were struggling with winterization and keeping warm at the same time the people in Afghanistan and Toronto were who we saw in the papers. Tent City News & World Report

Dignity Village is the nation's longest running officially-sanctioned tent city. Now many of us out here at Dignity Village don't put a lot of stock in what we read in the papers. We've learned a lot about yellow journalism and the kept press and spin doctoring and mean-spirited editorials and see how the papers that focus on personalities set individuals up and then tear them down and the village with them. We had computers by then at Dignity Village and through a friend at the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee who was helping our brother and sister tentcityites winterize, we got in touch with a woman at TCTO named Boni.

Boni presently runs the Hamilton Coalition Against Poverty & Squatters Rights Web site but back in '01 she'd spent nine months living in TCTO including "one Canadian Winter", she says, "with snow up to my frofrou." Boni's been an activist for social justice including Native Rights, Adoption Rights, Assaulted Women's Rights, Harm Reduction and Squatter's Rights for over twenty years. Boni says that unless we're housed, we're all squatters regardless of condition.

TCTO was swept last September and as Boni was there, I asked her about that. What, I asked, became of TCTO? Boni replied, "Tent City Toronto residents were violently evicted by a huge force of Toronto police and a private security force provided by Home Depot with no prior notice to evict. This was in direct violation of Canada's agreement with the United Nations. The international backlash of support for the residents resulted in a subsidy offer from the Ontario government which allowed the residents to then be securely housed in privately owned abodes at a rate that is 25-75% cheaper than housing them in shelters."

What became of the land the people lived on I wondered. Boni says that site, as far as they are able to discern, will be turned into a parking lot for a waterfront entertainment centre. "All of the wildlife has been driven out," she says, "and every tree and blade of grass plowed into pavement. There are huge barb-wire fences around the site and 24 hour security to ensure no one squats there again." And the people? Well, we know that 106 people of the community that was Toronto's Tent City now live scattered all over that big city but are coming together again in a celebration of their newly-won housing.

"What it really comes down to," Boni says, "is an old-fashioned peasant land fight. The powers-that-be have unused land and money and those who live in poverty have need of those resources to survive. It's sur-

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## A Book Review: The Civil Disobedience Handbook

by Paula

The Civil Disobedience Handbook: A Brief History and Practical Advice for the Politically Disenchanted  
James Tracy Editor  
Manic D Press, San Francisco  
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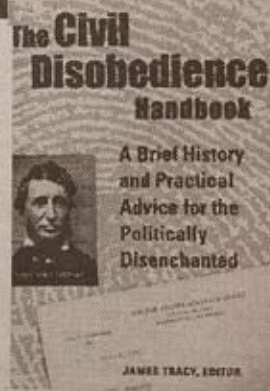
From the Boston Tea Party of 1773 through the Suffragettes Movement, the Labor Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, the Anti-Vietnam War Movement, a woman's Right to Choose, Housing Takeovers, to the WTO protests in Seattle, James Tracy summarizes the many instances in history where civil disobedience became necessary to affect major political change.

One chapter is actually written by Henry David Thoreau, On the Duty of Civil Disobedience. Though written in the strange style most likely prevalent in 1849, Thoreau speaks to us today with ideals many have strayed from and should pay heed to. He says, "What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn." And sometimes, to follow

that morality, can require breaking a law, and without that morality-what could be won?

One chapter is dedicated to the Bill of Rights, a document we can refer to often in defense of our Constitutional Rights. Another chapter is a summary of the US Patriot Act, a document that injures our Constitutional Rights. Though the handbook as a whole is very informative and good reading, this chapter on the US Patriot Act was gruelingly boring. I resented having to read it. But then, I realized half way into the chapter that we should all read it. And, if only all the Congressmen that voted it in would have read it first, we might not be in the fix we're in.

Much of the handbook focuses on planning a protest action. Proper planning and strategy insure you get your point across. If you expect to go to jail, then thorough planning is essential. He includes tips on how to get the best media coverage, avoid and recognize disruption, legal considerations and detailed step by step planning schedules are outlined.



This book is a must read for activists interested in bringing about political and social changes in the tradition of non-violent democracy at its best.

James Tracy is a long-time organizer active in anti-poverty work. He is coordinator of Right to a Roof, a part of San Francisco's Coalition on Homelessness. You can order this book through: Manic D Press, Box 410804, San Francisco, CA 94141.

## Welcome to HOMEWARD:

Please help us make a difference!



Homeward Street Journal has been publishing since 1997 as a non-profit project of the Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee, which is a part of the Sacramento Housing Alliance. The paper's mission is to alleviate miscommunication between communities by educating the public about housing and poverty issues, and by giving the homeless a voice in the public forum. Homeward also informs the homeless of shelter and occupational assistance, and acts as a creative self-help opportunity for those individuals who wish to participate.

The opinions expressed in Homeward are those of the authors, and not necessarily the Sacramento Housing Alliance or SHOC or Homeward.

### Submissions and Editorial Policy

We welcome any participation or contributions: Articles, poems and other writing can be submitted at our office in the Leaves & Fishes complex, or mailed to the address below.

All writing submitted for publication will be edited as necessary, with due respect for the authors' intent. The editors will attempt to consult with an author if changes are necessary, however, the paper will go to print with the story as edited if the author is unavailable.

All Letters to the Editor must be signed to be published. If the writer wishes to remain anonymous s/he should so state, but the letter must still be signed.

Poetry and graphics will not be edited, either the paper will publish the submission or not.

In submitting articles to the paper, authors give their permission to print their submissions in accordance with the above stipulations, as well as publishing excerpts on Homeward's webpage and possible reprinting in NASNA member papers, with our byline. Any requests for stories outside the above three will be referred to the author.

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## A Special Thanks to Our Volunteers:

Paula, Ed, Lec, Art,  
Elizabeth,  
Tim, Ethan



# Epidemic

continued from page 3

tape. Besides fighting, footage also includes several "Jackass"-inspired stunts, like a homeless man ripping out his front teeth with pliers, and a man identified as "Rufus the Stunt Bum" careening down a flight of concrete steps in a shopping cart.

The film's producers, Las Vegas natives Ray Letcia and Ty Beeson, sold 250,000 copies of Bumfights by July of that year at about \$22 apiece, and are estimated to have earned more than \$2 million since the video's initial release, turning the two 24-year-olds into sudden millionaires.

The pair claimed in interviews that they were graduates of film schools at University of Southern California and University of California at Los Angeles. UCLA's records show Beeson applying and never attending school there, and USC has no record of either man. Letcia first claimed that they instructed those schools not to reveal that they attended, but when pressed he curtly answered, "We attended film schools in L.A. That's all we'll say."

Judge Lannie Brainard, saddled with deciding whether enough evidence exists to proceed to criminal and civil trials, watched openmouthed as scenes from the Bumfights tape were played in her courtroom, like the one where a homeless man named Donald Brennan is shown having sex with a woman described as a drug-addicted prostitute, after the filmmakers paid him \$100 to have "Bumfight" tattooed on his forehead. Since then, Brennan has claimed the tattoo is a mark of shame and the filmmakers took advantage of his alcohol dependence to get him to agree.

"The real bums are the bums behind the camera, not the ones in front of the camera," asserted Browne Greene, attorney for Mr. Brennan and Mr. Hannah. "And those are the ones we're going after."

## NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO STOP HATE

Enlisting support from over 400 organizations, including the National League of Cities, the National Organization of Women (NOW), and Volunteers of America, NCH aims to use their report to make lawmakers and the public aware of this grave issue, and recommend proactive measures to instigate change and ensure protection of civil rights for everyone, regardless of their economic circumstances or housing status.

NCH has put forth several recommendations to take action to stop hate crimes against people experiencing homelessness. Among these steps, the National Coalition is calling for a public statement from the U.S. Dept. of Justice acknowledging that hate crimes and violence against homeless people is a serious national trend, and they are also asking that agency to maintain a national database to track these crimes. NCH is also actively working Capitol Hill to have housing status included in pending federal hate crimes legislation.

The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act (HR 1343, S. 625), introduced in the 107th Congress, enjoys broad bipartisan support, with 250 co-sponsors in the House and 51 co-sponsors in the Senate. This Act would strengthen existing hate crime law enforcement by expanding the current laws to reach all cases where victims are killed or injured due to their religion, color, national origin or race and widening the U.S. Department of Justice's ability to prosecute those who commit violent crimes against others because of their gender, disability, or sexual orientation.

NCH's goal is to have housing status included among classes of people protected by the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act, and all future legislation. Because homeless people are forced to live outdoors they are extremely vul-

nerable to attacks and retaliation. Often, homeless people will not report crimes committed against them because of mental illness, substance abuse, fear of retaliation, past incidents, or frustration with police. NCH reasons that if homeless people know that they're protected by law, and a system is in place to prosecute such crimes, they will be far more likely to come forward and report hate crimes committed against them.

NCH is also calling on Congress for a General Accounting Office (GAO) investigation into the nature and scope of hate crimes and violent acts that occur against people experiencing homelessness. This request has been endorsed by over 400 local and national organizations.

Currently, NCH relies on news reports and information relayed to them by advocates, shelters, and other homeless service agencies around the country to compile their data on hate crimes against homeless people. The National Coalition acts as the nationwide repository of hate crimes and violence against homeless people, but there is no systematic method of collecting and documenting such reports. Some cases from 2002 were also omitted because the victims were found beaten to death, but no suspects could be identified. Additionally, the report does not take into account the large number of sexual assaults on homeless women.

For more information, including a listing of all the cities and states cited in the report, a list of all the organizations endorsing NCH's recommendations, and sample letters of endorsement as well as sample letters to elected officials, please see [www.nationalhomeless.org/hatecrimes](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/hatecrimes).

Reprinted courtesy of "Street Sheet", San Francisco.

# Update on Billy McMannis

By Art Clay

The name Billy McMannis probably won't mean much to the average person but to many homeless he is a hero. For twenty years Billy lived in peace on the American River, but now he is fighting for every American citizen that has become homeless over the past few years, as well as for those that have been homeless for decades now.

Even with many former middle class becoming homeless at an alarming rate, most California cities are refusing to update their policies on homelessness. Sacramento has a so-called camping ordinance that makes illegal behaviors necessary to sleep outside. In a 2002 report, the National Coalition on Homelessness in Washington, D. C., named California as the meanest state to be unhoused in.

When you become homeless in Sacramento and are caught sleeping in the only shelter left for you, your vehicle, you have a good chance of being arrested, put in jail and your vehicle towed away. Chances are you will not have the \$500 to \$900 dollars to get your vehicle back when you get out of jail, so now you are truly on the streets. Many young families are afraid for their children because C.P.S., Child Protective Services, can take their children from them. You can be ticketed or jailed at any moment. This is what is happening in many of our cities.

Once on the streets forget what you have always been taught. The streets are safer than you may have been led to believe. Most of the homeless folks will help you out by giving you a blanket, food and help you avoid law enforcement, which is the real danger. That's right! What were mentioned above are not only a fact, but also an American disgrace.

with Billy McMannis? Well the City of Sacramento is prosecuting him on three "camping" tickets. At his jury trial Billy was found innocent on one charge and had a hung jury on the other two. I have it on good authority that the city has spent around two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, at this point in time, to prosecute Billy. Billy still waits for retrial on the other two tickets.

In the mean time, judging from what city authorities are doing to him, Sacramento must have a lot invested in keeping it illegal to be homeless in this city. Over the past few months the police have harassed Billy to the point that the other day he told me he was going leave town and let the city win.

Anybody that knows Billy knows that his dogs (he refers to them as his children) mean everything to him. From February of this year to May, Billy has paid out \$200 dollars three times for the times the police took his dogs to the pound, adding up to a total of six hundred dollars. The third time Billy didn't have the money to get his children out, so a friend paid the bill, only one day before the dogs were to be put to death.

The stress the police are putting on Bill is more than any man should have to endure. I can't blame Bill for quitting, everyone has his or her breaking point. But this would mean that the city would win by default and all those that are forced out on the streets would remain hunted and abused. The city would consider this a big win for their campaign against the homeless.

Well, some kind of a miracle happened. The next day Billy told me that he has decided to stay and slick it out. "It's a God thing," he said, so lets all pray for him.



What's all this got to do



### Joining SHA

The Sacramento Housing Alliance is a network of concerned citizens which promotes decent affordable housing for low income households and homeless people through advocacy and participation in public discourse.

The SHA does not itself provide or manage housing.

You may call for info: (916) 442-1198

Annual Membership dues: Standard, \$35, Low-income, \$15

Organizations: Full, 0-1% agency budget, Associate, \$100

Send donations to: Sacramento Housing Alliance PO Box 2430 Sacramento, CA 95812



## Homelessness and the Importance of Cigarettes

by Timot

Ah!—Tobacco. Where do I begin? Tobacco the Friend, Tobacco the Enemy, Tobacco the Warrior, Tobacco the Healer.

As our country becomes more and more "tobacco-challenged", let us remember to smoke each cigarette like it were our last. If current trends continue, it is likely that most of us will on many occasions have to choose between the ever growing expense of tobacco and the expense of other necessities such as coffee and beer. Remember the times when a good panhandle could afford all three? No longer.

To get through this crisis, we seem to be doing a pretty good job helping each other out with the occasional "short" or "rollie". Sometimes we are even so fortunate to see someone pull out a pack of "tailors" and beat the other ten people in line to get one. Of course, it's always polite to offer someone a little change if you have it, but not always necessary. The current price for a rollie is 15 cents and a tailor is a quarter. "Snipes" are usually free, as the guys and gals who smoke 'em are usually some of the saltiest and warm-hearted among us.

(Smoke-break)

"Big Tobacco" companies have been taking a lot of flack in recent years and have paid a huge price for their mistakes. They have also spawned a passionate anti-smoking movement in America that has in turn created a whole new industry of stop-smoking products. I wonder if any of the workers that make these products smoke? Although there are not any formal laws (yet) against hiring smokers, there is definitely a subtle and sometimes NOT so subtle discrimination towards us in many facets of the modern workplace. I would like to think that employers do this because they love us as human beings and sincerely care about our health, but if that were the case, I guess there wouldn't be millions of hard-working Americans with NO HEALTH-CARE BENEFITS!

Smokers are as different and unique as all the brands of cigarettes we smoke. Some buy certain packs for their flavor, some buy for a certain image, while others will buy anything just to burn one and get out of "Haven't had a smoke for several hours now super nicotineca indirectly.

I've heard that homegrown tobacco tastes better and is better for you. Some say that the filters on tailor-mades are worse for you than the tobacco itself. I don't know if it's legal or even possible to grow tobacco in your backyard in the city (for those of you that have forgotten, a "backyard" is the space behind your house or apartment that is often used for gardening and other forms of recreation...), but I know that indigenous Americans do on their lands and it is sacred to them.

There's a good chance that tobacco comes from the same place as coffee (?), and I guess I STILL don't care. It's good. There aren't any logical arguments to defend smoking, but I can accept that. Logic is what created nuclear weapons to create "peace". When confronted I rarely get to enjoy that. About the only legal indoor places to still smoke are one's apartment or car. Since most of have neither and California no longer allows smoking in bars, the homeless seem to be the "face" of public smoking.



Doug and Lillian are dancing to the cool sounds of Stacie Eakes & the Superfreaks at the free Friday night summer concerts in Cesar Chavez Plaza.



Photo of an incredible home bicycle. Taken at Whole Earth Festival, UC Davis on May 10, 2003

Brian Campbell lives in his bicycle. He has never had to pay rent or utilities in his whole life. The extensively geared vehicle allows him to peddle up to highway speeds, while retaining the integrity of its styrofoam (I assume salvaged) insulation covering. Weighs 600 lbs. Can carry 400 lbs. more. Brian's been building these for 25 years and has had this current 2-wheeler house for 8 years. He has not only found a sustainable and eco-friendly way to live and travel (a way to step lightly on the earth), he is also able to wear white pants (a problem that often accompanies homelessness) and stays warm and dry in his self-heating sleeping unit.

More remarkable is Brian himself. He is eager to answer any questions the many curious "strangers?" ask and enlightens them also on the importance of finding a way to live more independent of fossil fuels and other non-renewable resources. He offers other wisdoms of social importance, as the "stranger" quickly becomes "friend".

Time can be as important as location when smoking, too. There's nothing like a good smoke with morning coffee (or beer) or after the evening meal, especially when it's beef. Tobacco and beef just seem to go together for some reason. Maybe someday the tobacco companies will market "Beef Flavored" cigarettes and save us poor folk some money! The "middle of the night" cigarette deserves to be mentioned, too. What's the point in getting up at 3:00 a.m. in the cold without a cigarette to warm you by a non-smoker, or worse yet, an EX-SMOKER. I simply tell them that smoking is good for the Soul and I walk on. If that doesn't work I sometimes fart, and ask them how bad the second-hand smoke is NOW.

I think it's kind of sad that you can't smoke at a lot of rock concerts these days. If you do, you can be kicked off the property in the middle of the show with no refund. I had to wear "the patch" to a Bruce Springsteen concert! Sadder still is the fact that a lot of rockers no longer even smoke themselves (& or drink & or get high & or bed the opposite gender & or ROCK!). Old-timers have told me of the days when you could smoke almost anywhere: banks, movie theatres, trains, planes. The only place I've ever been that is even remotely smoker-friendly is Las Vegas. I smoked so many trigg'n' cigarettes there I started to think about quitting (again)! I've also heard Los Angeles is a good place to quit smoking. Somebody told me that the smog is so bad there, it's actually too painful in your lungs to THINK about lightin' up. Thank God for the refreshing, clean, blue skies of Sacramento!

So enjoy your smokes by the River, in the alleys, on the church steps or wherever you may be. For all you brothers and sisters that are incarcerated, we look forward to you getting out and making little clouds with you again.

(Next Issue: Homelessness and the Importance of Booze)



# COSENASE

by Elizabeth Halloway

Why do men want to destroy the beautiful?  
 Why do they want to rip out that which is freely given?  
 Why are they so afraid of love  
 that they become emotionally brutal cowards?  
 Why do they jeopardize their own freedom  
 by denying women theirs?  
 Why are women beautiful?  
 Why do they give so after such a rape?  
 Why are they loving in the face of jealousy and contempt?  
 Why can't women be their inherent freedom?  
 Why are children confused, untrusting, fearful and rebellious?  
 Why do governments lie?  
 What are governments?  
 Who are they made of?  
 Do they now have a life of their own?  
 Why do people who can't get their own house together  
 interfere with yours?  
 Why is Nature tortured?  
 Will She stop us?  
 Our culture defines our family.

A leaf below my feet  
 blows down the street beside me,  
 just like an elf or angel,  
 a spirit there to guide me.  
 The Mother Ship is cruising  
 thru pain and fear and doubt,  
 so with all my musing,  
 don't know the moon  
 'til stars come out.  
 I must believe in beauty  
 and watch as it evolves,  
 when men acknowledge duty  
 and all that it involves.  
 Love will be the healing  
 and light will show the way  
 and freedom is the kiss of God  
 which starts that clear, new day.

# Whispers

by Ray Hillestad

Mercy was a visiting whisper in thought.  
 A soft sort of pretty that can not be bought  
 like the beautiful feeling one might feel when they pray  
 I pray in this whisper and I whisper have mercy .

Living is the knowing of now that I find to be  
 a whisper in life to the roar of eternity  
 and death is certain, the eternity is uncertainty  
 and I certainly whisper and I whisper have mercy .

If you whisper an echo it will whisper right back.  
 An echo's your critic and your minds sound track  
 with a personality that's you, he's for you to see  
 and I echo a whisper and I whispered, have mercy .

A field of flowers whispers its fragrance to me  
 I whisper I love you, but the flowers are free  
 to whisper their presence, their peace and serenity  
 to all they whisper and they whisper , have mercy .

A child also whispers but with a curious wonder  
 about you and me and why God made the thunder .  
 The children whisper of life not unnecessary responsibility  
 The children whisper of unselfish love, They whisper have mercy .

"Am I you in my body" I hear the golden rule whisper .  
 I whisper "relate" and I find unity the answer  
 to a question that visits to whisper in me  
 about whispering free, free to have mercy .

Mercy is the truth that I feel in my head  
 like the beautiful feeling I hope to feel when I'm dead  
 so I whisper to you to whisper to mercy  
 and mercy will whisper and he'll whisper , have mercy .

# BONI continued from page 4

vival vs. greed \*

Finally I asked Boni if any of the three reasons usually used to justify shutting a tent city down, that they're unsightly, unsafe or unsanitary, came into play in TCTO's demise. "Frankly," Boni says, "those are all red herrings used to shut tent cities down."

"What shuts them down is the popularity factor. The more popular and visible any squat is, the more likely the popular attention will draw in a negative response from institutional systems. Large squats prove there is a housing crisis and also show that people who are self-motivated do not need nor want social service agencies that treat them as recalcitrant children one step up from a prison environment. What squatters want is an independent living arrangement which, due to corporate greed, they can't afford."

"There is no 'drug free' zone in any major city. Again it's a double standard. You can do drugs and alcohol in Hollywood and it makes you an 'in' guy/gal but if you do it somewhere that doesn't have a lawn the size of a football field, suddenly that's the scapegoat reason you live

in poverty. Unhoused people are just obvious in their choices because they don't have a home to hide in."

"There are huge unsightly messes in differing parts of any major city and no one really cares what sanitation facilities exist or not when a squat is quiet and unobtrusive. All these 'issues' are only 'issues' when squatters become obvious."

"The government doesn't give a damn about evicting the one lonely guy who sleeps in a dumpster. He isn't a threat to the system and they don't care if he drinks publicly, uses drugs or urinates on the pavement outside his elected abode. And they don't care about his personal safety, either."

"I have news for everyone," Boni concludes. "Tent City Toronto wasn't a one-shot deal. With the critical housing shortage in this city there are and were hundreds of unobtrusive squats all over."

And 'history denied is bound to repeat itself.' \*

# REMINDING EYES

by Earth/Janet Pickering McMannus

When you criticize  
 with mocking, despise,  
 I'll be here to  
 remind your eyes.  
 Your mocking won't stop me,  
 Your hate or rebuke,  
 I'm on a mission, not a fluke!  
 What will you do without me?  
 Who will get your coffee?  
 May your spirit bounce off me,  
 for without demise,  
 I'll be here to  
 remind your eyes.

**FYI:**

Information for the Obituary was not available for this issue. Any names will be carried over to the next issue.