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*"California Homeless Civil Rights
Organizing Project"
Meets and Calls For
Action*

Staff Report

Santa Cruz, CA. - On Sunday, May 5, 2002, the California Homeless Civil Rights Organizing Project (CHCROP) held their quarterly meeting following the Right-to-Sleep Summit at the same location (see story this page). On the agenda, aside from routine business, were two issues important to the civil rights of California's homeless citizens. The first was the California Governor's Homeless Summit, and the other was the movement to have separate homeless courts for campers.

As part of the routine business, CHCROP decided to continue collecting their incident report forms, and to find ways and means to increase collection. The group feels that collecting these forms, which allows individuals to tell their side of confrontations with authorities, circumstances involving losing property, and if they feel they were mistreated, will generate a mass of data showing patterns of abuse that can be used legally in court, on a State or National level, to challenge local ordinances.

see **Action** page 6

Fast at County Board of Supervisors Continues.

The daily fast begun by housing and shelter advocates on March 18th is still on going. Participants are fasting for one day or up to three days, sitting in the waiting room of the County Board of Supervisors, as a daily reminder of Sacramento's growing homeless problem and the lack of shelter beds for women and children. There have been sufficient volunteers for two or three individuals to be in the waiting room every weekday, and the advocates plan to fast as long as it takes, even until after the winter overflow shelter reopens again next winter, until there is a year-round shelter.

On Wednesday, May 21st, after a long weekend of unseasonable cold, rain and

thunderstorms, 5 women and 11 children from Mary's House went to the Board of Supervisor's office to directly ask them for shelter. The Supervisor's staff contacted the County Department of Human Assistance to try and locate shelter. At 3 pm social workers from the department came personally to tell the women that they were unable to locate shelter for even one woman. The County Supervisors seemed caught off balance by the fact that, contrary to their beliefs, there was no shelter at all.

Anyone interested in participating in the fast is encouraged to contact Joan Burke at Loaves & Fishes. Call 446-0874

Governor Gray Davis Establishes Interagency Task Force on Homelessness

Staff Report

On March 21, 2002, Governor Davis signed Executive Order D-53-02 creating a Interagency Task Force on the issue of homelessness. Made up of around ten different California bureaucracies from the Secretary of Health and Human Services to the Department of Corrections, this new conglomerate was assigned the task of "ways to incorporate at-risk assessment tools into existing program services to assist in identifying individuals at-risk of

homelessness, and develop recommendations to provide services to the homeless in an integrated manner." [from executive order]

The executive order resulted from a study requested by the Governor in January of 2002 to analyze the available data as to the effectiveness of existing homeless programs, and to make recommendations about ways to improve services.

see **Task Force** page 2

Right-to-sleep Summit Brings Tent City Activists to Santa Cruz

Staff Report

On Saturday, May 4th, several dozen homeless activists from three states; California, Washington, and Oregon, gathered together in Santa Cruz to discuss how to promote and preserve protective encampments for homeless people, as well as overcoming sleeping and camping bans used by local authorities to persecute people without housing.



Tent Villagers & Advocates from California, Oregon and Washington State pose for group photo - HSJphoto

Representatives from Santa Cruz's Camp Paradise, Portland, Oregon's Dignity Village, Seattle, Washington's Tent City 3, the new Isla Vista's Camp Home Sweet Home, and Santa Barbara's Homes on Wheels, all gathered at the meeting to exchange experiences. The summit also included workshops on the Echhorn defense, based on necessity, the State anti-lodging law, (647), networking between camps, and camps as tools for social transformation.

Tent City 3 is a part of SHARE, which has been running self-managed shelters for twelve years in the Seattle area. Using space donated by churches, veterans and other social halls, men, women and families

have been able to find shelter when all the "official" facilities are full. According to their literature, SHARE currently runs 12 shelter areas and storage lockers, as well as Tent City 3, which itself is providing safe camping for about 100 men and women. The "city" moves from church parking lot to church parking lot, staying as little as one week to as long as six months.

Dignity Village began in Portland, Oregon on December 16th, 2000, when eight men and women pitched five tents on public land shortly after Portland's strict anti-camping ordinance was found unconstitutional

see **Right-to-sleep** page 3

Task Force cont. from page 1

As far as the current situation goes, the report stated that there were approx. 75 existing programs funded by the state, that California spends about \$20 billion a year on social service programs, and most of those programs do not regard preventing homelessness as part of their program description. The study also reported that most programs and funding are not integrated, and both program administrators and the homeless must obtain assistance or funding from several different sources.

The study recommended that preventing homelessness should be made a State priority. That a special State agency should be established to identify long term goals, design an aggressive outreach component to homeless services, integrate various services, such as mental health and substance abuse treatment, into a more streamlined continuum of care, and to develop specific goals to build long term supportive care housing by 2010 (that is not plain affordable housing - but housing with supervision).

On April 22, 2002, Governor Davis held a state-wide Summit to discuss the results of the initial study with service providers and homeless advocates. Members of various organizations who were on different committees met in the morning at a pre-summit to finalize their own reports on the Governor's report.

In the afternoon was the actual Summit (by invitation) at the Alkali Flats Boys & Girls Club, where various people were allowed to give testimony before a panel.

Paula Lomazzi of SHOC, who got into the conference because the representative of the Coalition for the Homeless, San Francisco, couldn't attend, was at that second meeting.

"What tickled me the most," Paula reported, "Was the testimony from recipients of homeless services. Now model citizens that went through one program or another, testified to their betterment, yada yada. Then when asked, 'Well, how did the program help you to become so successful, one lady answered, 'actually they set up barriers, trying to force me to take a minimum wage job. I had to fight them to get the education I needed to secure a living wage job.' A teen did his testimony and when the questions came, he answered about the corruption and dysfunctionality of the workers. A recovered alcoholic or drug user did the testimony, and then answered a question with 'the transitional housing was full of drug users.'"

"It seemed like their testimonies might have been preapproved," she concluded, "But when the question and answer sessions came along, they all blew the top off the lid."

"The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely

increases hate. So it goes.

Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only LOVE CAN DO THAT!"

-- Martin Luther King Jr.

Hate Crimes and Violence Against Homeless on the Rise.

Released by the National Coalition for the Homeless, Washington, DC

May 23, 2002, Washington, DC. The National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) has released its annual publication, HATE: a report of Hate Crimes and Violence Against Homeless People in the United States in 2001. The report found in 29 cities across the country there were 79 acts of hate crimes and/or violence committed against people experiencing homelessness, 18 of which resulted in death. The report also compiled news reports for the year 2001 and makes recommendations to ensure that one of the most vulnerable groups in our society - people without permanent housing - are protected against hate crimes and violent acts. The report aims to educate lawmakers, advocates and the public about the problem of hate crimes and violence against people who are homeless.

The June 2001 killing of Hector Robles in Paterson, NJ, by a mob of high school boys saturated front pages and evening news reports with its brutality and inexplicable motivation. Hidden from most living rooms, however, were a number of other shocking crimes committed nationwide against homeless people this past year. A 22-year-old woman was stabbed numerous times and thrown into the Charles River in Cambridge, MA. A man was drenched with gasoline and set on fire in New York City. An army veteran in Ventura, CA, was beaten to death while resting in his sleeping bag.

Shelters have received increasing reports of men, women and even children being harassed, kicked, set on fire, beaten to death, and even decapitated. Over

the last three years alone (1999 through 2001) there have been 110 murders of people experiencing homelessness - all perpetrated by non-homeless individuals, 140 victims of non-lethal violence in 82 cities from 32 states and Puerto Rico. The youngest victim was a four month-old child, the oldest was a 74 year-old man.

"These horrific acts of hate crimes and violence against people experiencing homelessness must end now. We must ensure the protection of civil rights for everyone, regardless of their economic circumstances or housing status," stated Donald Whitehead, Executive Director of NCH - the first formerly homeless, African-American in this position. "People who are forced to live and sleep on the streets for lack of an appropriate alternative are in extremely vulnerable situations. We cannot stand idly by while these unjust crimes are committed to people in economic crisis," he concluded.

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 committed not by organized hate groups, but by individual citizens who harbor a strong resentment against a certain group of people. (Department of Justice report)

NCH calls on Congress for a General Accounting Office (GAO) investigation into the nature and scope of violent acts and crimes that occur against people experiencing homelessness. NCH also is working to include housing status in the pending Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act (H.R. 1343/S 625).

GROWTH SLOWS, DIVERSITY GROWS IN CALIFORNIA'S REGIONS

Despite Some Statewide Trends, Vast Differences Between Regions in Income, Immigration, Jobs

Press release by the Public Policy Institute of California

SAN FRANCISCO, California, May 8, 2002 - The first analysis of regional populations since the release of the 2000 Census finds that during the 1990s, every region in California realized slower population growth than in the previous decade and experienced growing racial and ethnic diversity. At the same time, disparities in income between regions became even more pronounced, and the overall demographic make-up and sources of population growth varied widely, according to the study by the Public Policy Institute of California.

"When a state is so diverse that it has a population of nine people per square mile in some regions and nearly two thousand per square mile in others, it can look like a puzzle that doesn't fit together," says demographer Hans Johnson, the study's author. "However, there are common trends - such as the fact that Hispanic and Asian populations are growing faster than any other group from the Sierras to San Diego - that suggest the state can benefit from cohesive public policies." In *A State of Diversity: Demographic Trends in California's Regions*, Johnson analyzes nine regions based on geography, demography, and economic conditions: Far North, Sacramento Metro, Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley, Central Coast, Inland Empire, South Coast, and San Diego.

Major Findings

Inland Growing Faster than Coast; Births in State Key Source of Growth

• During the 1990s, all of California's regions grew more slowly than in the decade before.

• The three fastest growing regions in the state were the Inland Empire (26%), Sacramento Metro (21%), and San Joaquin Valley (20%). The three slowest growing were the South Coast (10%), Far North (11%), and Central Coast (12%).

• Natural increase (births over deaths) was the single greatest source of population growth in every region except the Sierras. The South Coast added almost

as many people through immigration as by natural increase; over half the states' immigrants settled in this region.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity Burgeoning Throughout State

• In every region during the 1990s, Hispanic and Asian or Pacific Islander populations grew faster than any other group, while the percentage of non-Hispanic whites declined.

• Three regions - the South Coast, San Joaquin Valley, and Inland Empire - no longer have any one racial or ethnic group as a majority of the population.

• Non-Hispanic whites remain a solid majority only in the Sierras (83%) and Far North (78%).

• Statewide, Hispanics out-number Asians and Pacific Islanders three to one - except in the Bay Area where the two groups are about equal.

Regional Wealth Disparities Grow, Job and Population Growth Linked

• Two of the state's fastest growing regions - the Inland Empire and San Joaquin Valley - are also two of the poorest.

• The income gap between regions grew tremendously in the 1990s: Bay Area per capita income grew from \$32,708 in 1989 to \$41,129 in 1999, while income in the San Joaquin Valley dropped from \$20,528 to \$20,384 during the same time.

• Regions with the highest population growth had the highest job growth; the Inland Empire, Sacramento Metro, and San Joaquin Valley all saw the number of jobs increase by over 18 percent, while the South Coast, with the lowest population growth, saw four percent job growth.

• In most regions, the rate of job growth outpaced that of population growth.

• Housing growth has not kept pace with population growth in any region except the Far North.

The Public Policy Institute of California, located in San Francisco, CA, is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to objective, nonpartisan research on economic, social, and political issues that affect the lives of Californians. The Institute was established in 1994 with an endowment from William R. Hewlett.

Right-to-Sleep

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The Summit was held outside, making everybody more comfortable. HSJ photo



on two counts. Since its inception, Dignity Village has been in constant conflict with the city, who keeps trying to break up the villagers. But when forced out of one location, most of the villagers, often numbering around 70, stayed together and set up somewhere else. This radical determination eventually compelled the city of Portland to "legalize" the camp, but not without ending the city's attempt to put them somewhere out-of-sight, out-of-mind.

Most recently, Santa Cruz's Camp Paradise has also been staying in a church parking lot, after having been flooded out of their river camp last winter. The site of the original camp was under a HWY 1 bridge on the south bank of the San Lorenzo River. Located behind a cemetery in an old industrial area, the site had long been a hangout for drunks and drug users, and had been totally ignored by city cleanup crews for over a decade. In the fall of 2000, a homeless man and a few friends took over the area and set up house keeping. By the spring of 2001, about 20 people lived there, over 24 tons of trash had been hauled out, trails along the river were maintained. Those who refused to quit drinking and drugging had moved on, vandalism at the cemetery had stopped, and local housed residents felt safe enough to walk along the river again. That's when the trouble started. Santa Cruz's Homeless Service Center started sending people to the camp because they were usually full, the population rose to around 40. The local politicians heard about this wonderful camp by the river and began coming around. Despite friendly words by the mayor and other city council members, it wasn't long before the cops showed up and started threatening and bullying the residents. Camping tickets followed, along with innumerable meetings with city council and trials before administrative judges who seemed to be deaf to any defense the campers presented. But the campers stuck together, and rallying support from local residents thwarted any effort by the police to physically evict the camp until early December, 2001, when flood waters washed them out. Since that time a small group has held together despite continuing resistance by the city, moving from spot to spot and holding on.

Chris Fredrickson, a Camp Paradise graduate and an attorney, spoke briefly about the camp. "I lived in camp for about seven months, until the day before the city of Santa Cruz opened the flood waters and got rid of it. The essence of the camp is that it saved a lot of lives, and mine included. ... The one thing that I learned from the camp was that I got my human dignity back. I got it back through meeting some people who came into camp and taught us about holding the ground. Even when we were in eminent danger of being arrested, even under constant police pressure, we did hold the ground along the river. It gave a lot of us a real sense of purpose, a sense of what this struggle was about. ... The camp did a lot, through the media, to further the cause of ending the sleeping ban. Though yet to be seen, I have a lot of faith that this is true, regardless of the problems. They [the camp residents] are not ones for politics, but just by their presence here, I guess that the camp is making a political statement, and by the fact it still does exist in some form."

The newest encampment, located in Isla Vista, an unincorporated area north of Santa Barbara, began last winter when local authorities ignored homeless people dying outside, and in frustration several homeless gathered together and set up a camp in a county park. Expecting to be ticketed or arrested, a shocking discovery was made - for 15 years homeless people were being fined and sent to jail under a law which did not exist - there was no county law forbidding sleeping in a county park. Naturally, that county government hastily convened and passed such a law, but the campers are holding on despite being subjected to repeated \$20 tickets for infractions.

Chris from Alta Vista talked about some of the difficulties they were having keeping the camp going, both internally and externally. Dealing with the local authorities he said, "When we go into these board room meetings, people say that we are unrealistic, that we are over simplistic. We could break it down for them in terms that are speaking their language, but it is that doubt - do we want to speak their lan-

guage? - Or do we want to keep it pretty much how it is. When we're speaking this language it's a little bit difficult when heads turn, because we're speaking from the heart, we're speaking from people's personal experiences. And they don't want to hear it, they want concrete proposals, concrete resolutions."

Santa Barbara's Homes on Wheels evolved out of several "rubber tramps" who began sticking together to find safe places to park their vehicles. They would play a cat and mouse game with the police. Since that time, a former Santa Barbara public defender has successfully challenged the city's sleeping ban and vehicular camping ban, overturning those laws. Homes on Wheels is working on becoming an incorporated non-profit and things look hopeful that they will be able to acquire land for a RV park for vehicle-housed people.

Nancy of Santa Barbara said, "The city freaked out when they lost the sleeping ban, so they were putting out more ideas to criminalize us ... I took the mayor to coffee, I said you can't do this. If you start giving out parking tickets instead of camping tickets, then five tickets down the road people are going to have their homes taken away and put more people back out on the street. So this is why the task force got started, another committee to work on it. Which I feel is OK, because it is prolonging the agony of the criminalization that the city wants to do. So as we have time to organize around that, we are working with the motor home community to get the motor homes off the street."

The summit began on Saturday morning with a keynote address by Terry Messman of Street Spirit in San Francisco. Mr. Messman began by thanking all the activists for coming, and remarked to the group from Oregon how he thought of Oregon as an "utopia", though it probably was not, but homeless people in California are "victims of an increasing level of discrimination and civil rights abuses that should blow all our minds". He said that California cities, known for being some of the most liberal in the nation, are passing reactionary anti-homeless laws as discriminatory as former race laws in the Southern United States.

He talked about how these repressive laws spread like a bad virus. Several years ago Santa Monica created a so-called model law on how to ban camping in the community, and last December, 2001, Richmond, CA, known as a progressive working class city, copied the Santa Monica law and passed it.

"Richmond is a predominately minority city, and now African-Americans and Latinos are being told by the city that they are criminals simply because they are homeless," he said. Messman went on to make the point that if any racial or ethnic minority were subjected to such laws there would be protests and lawsuits from the national and international community, but for even so-called liberal California cities it seems to be safe to attack homeless people.



Activists do an impromptu protest at Santa Cruz's Clock Tower - HSJ photo

Messman said that there are two faces of repression, one is gentrification, and the other is criminalization, and they work hand in glove with each other.

He described gentrification as wealthy people coming into an area, buying up the housing that poor people used to dwell in, jacking up the rents, and then asking the city council to give the bum's rush to homeless people and to poor tenants of SROs (Single Room Occupancy, i.e., hotels).

"When they want to bring the rich in the first thing they do is demolish the SROs, and the other thing they do is start driving homeless shelters out of the area, and have the police crack down and do, not racial profiling, but the same thing: its ugly twin brother - economic profiling, to cleanse the area of homeless people," he said.

He went on to say that that is what is happening in Oakland, and the reason is because rents got so high in San Francisco, people began migrating to Oakland, and the rents went up there. Now it is happening in Richmond. Richmond has been a very poor community for decades, but rents have gone sky high, and that is why, right before Christmas 2001, the city council voted in their anti-camping law - and it was all driven by gentrification.

"We say it is not just about homeless people being criminalized, it is about communities being gentrified, and this is an attack of the wealthy against the poor," Messman said, and continued: "Yes, we have to protest sleeping bans, protest camping bans, protest criminalization of the homeless, we have to protest that as the worst kind of bigotry in this new millennium. It is the worst human rights abuse we are facing in American, no other minority is being so openly persecuted. We have to fight back. But there is another thing we have to fight - we have to fight gentrification. We have to make common cause with tenant groups fighting the demolition of public housing by HUD in the Hope 6 Program, we have to join with anti-eviction groups who are fighting to get a just cause for eviction, with those fighting for rent control, and fighting to keep big business from dictating who lives in our communities. ... In the bigger cities, and now even in places like Richmond, people are aware that their rents are becoming unaffordable. We have to find these people and make common cause."

He described how in Richmond a small group of activists is not just camping out somewhere. They are going into the halls of power and making people accountable. How this small group of Richmond activists has made common cause with Richmond Vision 2000, which is composed of 60 labor unions, religious groups, and neighborhood councils.

He concluded his opening statement by asking the participants to look long term and ask themselves something - is this the end of it?

"Is a camp ground, where we raise our children in sleeping bags and tents, all we're going to settle for?" said Messman. "Don't get me wrong, I'm all for homeless camp grounds. They make poverty visible, they confront the system, they give a legal and safe place to sleep, and for some people they are the best solution. But I want more than camp grounds, I want those camp grounds to be launching pads for common campaigns with tenants to fight back and get affordable housing back in this country - so our children can live in homes, not just a camp."

Struggle For Mandella Community Garden Continues

by Paula

Before I attended the rally to Save the Mandella Community Gardens on May 10th, I had thought the cause had been lost to CADA's bulldozing plans and schemes. I was wrong. The garden I visited that day is too remarkable an asset to Sacramento, nurturing not only the growth of delicious, nutritious vegetables and fruits, but also nurturing community. The support showed that day by friends of Mandella Gardens, Sacramentans, the gardeners, Julia "Butterfly" Hill, herself, and I, reinforces the fact that the "Garden Stays!" (Julia says so).

I toured the garden, lush and productive with plots of organic edibles, flowers, trees, sitting areas, compost piles, signs of life, large sustainable life. Food Not Bombs (they have a plot, of course) served a garden grown meal. Then I received my education.

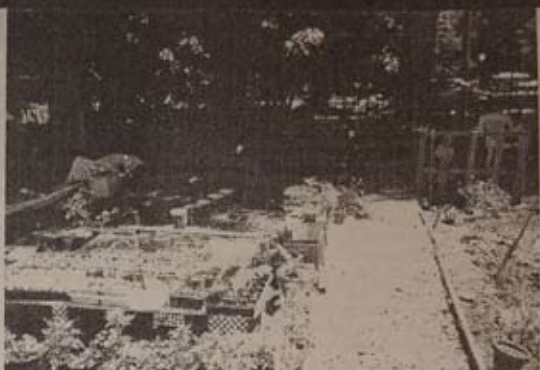
There were many great speakers from different organizations, but Rachael Eskow, Director of Sacramento Mutual Housing Association (SMHA) needs your attention, right now. SMHA is a non-profit housing organization that originally asked to submit a proposal to build rental units for low-low income residents on the parking lot adjacent to the garden, leaving the garden 100% intact. CADA told them not to bother to submit a proposal because they had plans for mixed income property, not targeted to low-income residents. CADA stated months later that since no alternate plans were submitted, they were choosing the Fremont Mews project.

The Fremont Mews project would build 118 units, only 5 units for low income. 90% would rent to people making "moderate income", which they consider to be \$68,000 a

year. H. Williams, the developer, would receive 4.4 million dollars in grant money and a \$1,235,000 low interest loan. The grant money would come from the Sacramento Housing Redevelopment Agency, grant money set aside to build low-income housing. The plan states that 37% of the garden would stay intact-a lie. The garden would be completely demolished, most likely, the project built, leaving the specified amount of bare ground to start another garden on, but this time a garden completely controlled by the developer, not the community. Meanwhile, the ecosystem, the fertile soil that took 30 years to form, would have been destroyed. 60% of the garden would have been relocated to various locations, on location to highly toxic land near a freeway interchange.

SMHA's plan will not only save the garden, but will provide badly needed affordable housing to our low income residents and will require less public subsidize. Mandella Garden supporters also support fully the SMHA plan, which shows that green space and housing can exist hand in hand.

The rally participants, put on their shoes [read Julia "Butterfly" Hill's speech] and marched or danced to the beat of a drum and saxophone music, through the State Capitol Park to City Hall. A small delegation met with city officials as the rest of us remained by the front steps a visible proclamation of community support, each leaving a beautiful flower freshly picked from the Mandella Garden on the City Hall steps.



We all need this garden. It filters out smog and is the second largest oxygen-producing site in the downtown area and would take 15 years to become the smog filter and oxygen producer it is now. Downtown Sacramento is 55 acres short of green space, already, by the National Recreation and Parks Association standards. The garden is open to the public and is a wonderful place for people just to take a break from their work. It is a home to a family of owls and songbirds and butterflies. It is a downtown oasis that city dwellers need. The Mandella Garden is staying! How is this to become accomplished? By community support. Please get involved and tell your state representatives, city council members and the mayor why they must allow the garden to continue growing. Visit the Mandella Garden at 14th and Q Streets or at least visit their website at <http://www.savethegarden.org>.

Julia "Butterfly" Hill's Important Reminder

Julia "Butterfly" Hill spent 2 years and 8 days in an ancient redwood tree named Luna and was instrumental in helping to preserve the Headwaters Forest and its watershed. She began her speech at the Mandella Community Gardens' May 10th rally by asking everyone to take their shoes off, to feel the earth beneath their feet, as "the first direct action we need to do". She diagnosed CADA and other opposition as having amnesia because they were forgetting the importance of the garden. Here is an excerpt from her speech to remind us all of the importance of the Ron Mandella Community Gardens:

"All of a sudden the discussions around things like community gardens, some of them try to say, "Oh, its an issue of privilege." But you see community garden's an open space, a green space. And affordable housing. This isn't privilege. This is our

right. It is our right to have healthy communities. It is our right to be able to feel the earth underneath our feet. That is our right. And elected officials who are suppose to be representing our rights are selling off our rights to the highest bidder. And that's not acceptable to us, is it? No.

"And so we have to begin to say, "What about the profound joy of being able to feel the earth underneath our feet?" And what does that then turn into? That turns into quality of water and quality of air, doesn't it? You see our community gardens are the few areas where our watershed that's hidden underneath all this concrete and asphalt and steel have a place to pop up. Yes, indeed, when we turn on our faucet that water comes from somewhere. And where it comes from is a watershed. And the more we pave over and concrete our watershed the less water there is for people to drink and the more polluted that water becomes.



Julia Hill speaking to garden supporters - HSJ photo

"This is a living example of what the earth is meant to be as a place that houses our very souls, our hearts, our lives, our spirits. Gives us food to eat. Gives us a place to gather where all of us can come together, celebrating our diversity and seeing the magic that happens when we celebrate our diversity. What they're trying to do to people of lower income, I see, as the same thing they're trying to do to forests. And what I mean by this is they're trying to turn forests into a monoculture of a tree farm. And they say that's sustainable and they say that's healthy. But you see when you strip diversity out of nature it becomes weak and susceptible to fires, to disease, to all manners of things that make it become destroyed. Where there is a healthy ecosystem there is diversity. And they're trying to push out lower income people means they're trying to turn this city into a monoculture. And how dare they!"

Sacramento Housing Alliance Changes Executive Directors



Arlene Krause

Arlene Krause, who has been Executive Director of the Sacramento Housing Alliance for two years, resigned at the end of May in order to devote time to her new family member, May Grace, a daughter born on June 5th. A Non-profit specialist, Arlene will continue to teach part time at USCS.

Arlene took over directorship of the Housing Alliance during a difficult transitional period. With her expertise and strong work ethic, the Alliance has emerged with a strong and growing membership. Activities of the membership have expanded to involve advocating on a local level for increased shelter beds, proactively educating the community about the need for affordable housing developments such as Churchill Downs, development of comprehensive housing policies through the housing element, and weighing in on state-wide bills that could significantly impact local housing.



Ethan Evans

Arlene's presence will be missed by the members of SHOC and Homeward, with whom we have shared an office, and we wish her every blessing in her new adventure (raising a baby).

Taking over for Arlene is Ethan Evans. Ethan moved to Sacramento four years ago after graduating from Kent State University. He has since received a Master Social Worker degree from California State University, Sacramento, while doing an internship with the policy division of the State Department of Housing and Community Development. He formerly worked at the Sacramento Area Emergency Housing Center, where he was introduced to the Sacramento Housing Alliance. He has a vision of Sacramento as being a city "...where affordable housing is not a piecemeal add-in, but a staple within strong and diverse communities."

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 SHDC or Homeward.

Submissions and Editorial Policy
We welcome any participation or contributions. Articles, poems and other writing can be submitted to the Sacramento Housing Alliance or given to Birle in the library at Leaves & Fishes. 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 due byline. Any requests for stories outside the above three will be referred to the author.

Subscriptions are available with a \$15 contribution. Make checks out to SHDC.

All correspondence can be sent to Homeward Street Journal, PO Box 2430, Sacramento, CA 95812

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MAX'S VIEW

by Max Biddle

While working at the Volunteers of America (VOA) a few years ago, while monitoring the night shift, a Vietnam veteran, who also was an ex-con with mental problems, awoke in the middle of the night screaming. He was having flashbacks caused by his war experiences. I took him into the lobby so as to calm him down without disturbing the other clients in his dorm. Finally, calming a bit, he began sobbing like a child. He began pleading for someone to help free him from the system he was caught up in. He wanted never to see another doctor, social worker, parole officer, psychiatrist, or police officer again. He was locked into the County and State social programs and a parole system that was never going to leave him free ever again. In sheer desperation he had attempted suicide many times. His experiences turned out to be the experiences of a great many caught in our social systems. The question begs why do so many get caught in this revolving door?

I think it is time to explore some of the reasons why so many get caught in this cycle and fail to emerge into a life of independence, free from programs that are supposed to help them. Why do so many opt out of these programs and prefer the life of camping out, staying homeless rather than getting embroiled in the system.

The reasons for dropping out are as varied as the individuals involved. Their backgrounds are as diverse as the so-called "normal" population. Their education spreads across the whole spectrum of accomplishments, diverse in all fields; former business men, educators, farmers, military personnel, artists. There are of course the uneducated, and the many from poor families without stable backgrounds, who are more of less condemned to the life of poverty and homelessness with very little real long term support that could make a difference in their lives.

One reason programs fail to work for a large majority of people, especially men, is the impossibility of dealing with them as individuals. When programs are defined by people and professionals who create a limited response to addictions like alcohol, drugs, etc., which fail to address each person and their individual problem - a problem that

is always unique to that individual - then their programs are hardly effective.

What are the pressures that prevent so many re-establishing a normal life? So-examples may edify.

There is the dead-beat father, who after his wife and children left him, dissipated and collapsed into drugs, alcohol, or both. Brought on by despair and hopelessness; the psychological damage suffered by these men is far more damaging than realized or admitted. Their incomes fall below their normal earning capacity. They lose the desire to continue with life, even to maintain themselves economically or to protect their health. They soon fail to pay child support and lose interest because of lost proximity with their children, missing the nurturing of family which was the core ingredient to their lives. If they were already vulnerable handling life's problems, addition of some kind is not far off. In a society with ready access to drugs and alcohol, it is the easy escape. No matter how many programs they endure to satisfy the professional criteria, the end results have little effect. These men return over and over to recycle through these programs. It is only for a break from the harsh life on the streets that they keep coming back. These programs fail to succeed for these people.

Then there is the homeless population caught up in past debts, accumulated over a lifetime of using credit cards, student loans, or unpaid taxes, unnecessary purchases that got out of hand. Unable to reach accommodation with creditors, or the tax collector, and failing to find solutions to everyday life's daunting problems, they simply opt out of the system.

Then there is the ex-con, almost the worst of the recycled population. Burdened with the zero tolerance drug and alcohol policies it is assured the vast majority will fail their attempts to regain a normal life. One young man I met a few years ago, completing his third recycling attempt, was unique among the ex-con population. He had exceptional abilities as an auto mechanic, enabling him to obtain employment easier than most. He averaged a salary around \$20.00 an hour. Within a short time he secured housing and a car. On all three occasions upon being released on parole, he

established economic security and a stable life style in an amazing short time. Eventually succumbing to the admonitions of his co-workers, he stopped and had a couple of beers after work. Timing being bad, he failed his drug test and was immediately sent back to prison. Never given time to dispense with his accumulated property, he lost all he had worked for each of his three releases from prison. The last time I saw him, on his fourth release, he had lost all desire to try again. His fear of re-incarceration weighed so heavily on his mind that he was on the verge of losing it. He decided to become a refugee from the system and broke parole, heading across country to become a permanent member of the growing homeless population determined on the creation of a society outside the system. A determined population that is growing daily.

The disaster of the zero tolerance drug and alcohol policy should be obvious. When it comes to addictions the general population falls into two categories - functional addicts and dysfunctional addicts. The most society can hope for is that the addicted population falls into the functional category, able to control their addictions so as to function in life and provide for themselves and their families. Recent studies have shown that the vast majority of addicts must live with their problems the rest of their lives.

Then there is the job referral programs the County puts the client through. A dead-end street for most because the jobs provided are usually temporary. The unwillingness of companies to employ felons is no secret. Their employment, like so many from the homeless population, is limited to the growing underground economy. Jobs with no guaranteed minimum wage, no Social Security benefits, or health care, or workman's compensation, or any of the legal protections provided for workers in the rest of the economy. These jobs are only a temporary respite, before these people are back recycling through the County's programs again.

Also the mental health programs, under funded and under staffed, usually fail to see their clients on a regular bases, and then it is to dispense drugs - drugs the clients are afraid to take because they feel worse when they take them. Again failing to address each problem unique to the individual, digging into the root causes that sent this person down the road to failure, simply means he or she will begin the recycling process for many years to come. Psychological programs put together based on a limited number of diagnoses, trying to fit the mentally disturbed with hundreds of different problems into a dozen or so solutions, will result in failure, and does.

Political Commentary on Poverty Issues

What is the solution? There is no solution as long as programs are structured to benefit the convenience of the bureaucracy and solutions are handed down by lawmakers and Ivory Tower professionals with little input from the people affected by their decisions - and by measuring the human condition by the individual's economic viability.

We are witnessing of late, in the corruption of Wall Street, the lack of morality and honesty within all aspects of our business community. Almost daily the revelation of our largest and oldest companies lying about their profitability, cheating their investors, failing to pay taxes. Of a government bought and paid for by the large corporations, a government no longer of the people, by the people, or for the people. A stolen election, where the man sitting in the White House received a half-million less votes than his opponent. As we watch this unfolding reality of so many of our American leaders failing to live up to the standards they preach at us daily, you have to wonder if the only truly incorruptible soul is the one dropping out of our society.



Street Newspapers Inaugurate North American News Service

Street newspapers, publications that offer an income to the poor and homeless while informing the public on poverty issues, have a new source of quality content with the launch of the Street News Service (SNS).

The SNS, the first ever news service for the homeless, is a program of the North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA), a 45-member network of streetpapers in the United States and Canada. The service has been developed in partnership with Aberrant, an on-line alternative news organization.

Street newspapers often publish stories that are overlooked by other media. Recent examples include a report on profits made by Citibank on bankcards at the expense of welfare recipients, the national trend toward computerized tracking of use of homeless services, and a Seattle mosque that was forced to close its homeless shelter due to threats of vandalism in the aftermath of September 11.

SNS Editor Adam Holdorf believes the news service will ultimately help the movement grow. "Streetpapers are often published by people who care about issues but are not necessarily journalists," he said. "The SNS will build the streetpaper movement by offering clear writing and accurate information."

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

Action

cont. from page 1

The discussion about homeless courts generally followed the following argument: Although the idea of having camping citations and the like taken care of in a separate hearing facility, often where homeless people congregate, superficially appears to be a convenient solution, CHCROP members are concerned that such hearings are often based on presumption of guilt, the defendant throwing him/herself on the mercy of the



right: Right-to-Sleep Walkers at Ventura
left: Right-to-Sleep Walkers at Venice
photos courtesy Homes on Wheels



court, in the belief that they will get a lenient sentence. The organization questions the very validity of so-called camping, sleeping, and other anti-homeless ordinances, which may deprive individuals, either directly or consequently, of such civil rights as due process, equal protection, property rights, and even the right to life. Enabling an overburdened court system to dispose of cases - people's lives - in a more efficient manner may be saving money, but it certainly will not be good justice. So CHCROP has voted to officially oppose any attempt to establish such a system, and if it is established, to find ways to ensure that individuals are not deprived of their civil rights by the process.

The second issue was the California Governor's Interagency Task Force on Homelessness Summit (see story page 1). A member of the Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee attended the conference as a substitute for a representative from San Francisco's Coalition for the Homeless, who was unable to attend at the last minute, and made a report to the group.

Although the conference appeared to be a serious endeavor to find ways to mitigate homelessness in California, it was almost totally oriented around housing and more shelters and more programs. Building housing will take time to reach sufficient levels to make a significant reduction in those people who live outside by necessity. Nor will programs eliminate those individuals, who for whatever reason, live outside by choice. In both cases, an individual is still entitled to his/her civil rights, and should not be discriminated against because of housing status. However, the issue of the on-going criminalization of individuals because they reside outdoors was only brought up by one group of advocates from Stanislaus County.

After some discussion, CHCROP members decided to do three things to try and get civil rights put on the Interagency Task Force's agenda:

First, the Interagency Task Force on Homelessness distributed a questionnaire to the attendees at the summit that asked for individual perspectives on what to do about the issue. Members of CHCROP took copies of the flyer to have filled out in their own localities and sent back to the Task Force.

Second, CHCROP as an organization will submit a position paper to the Task Force, detailing the group's concerns about homeless civil rights issues.

And third, many of the group felt the time was right for CHCROP to hold a rally at the California Capitol to bring public attention to the issue, especially since the Governor's attention is focused in this area at this time. The rally has been scheduled for July 10th, 2002, on the North steps of the Capitol in Sacramento between 2-5 pm.

In fact, several individuals from Santa Barbara who feel strongly about the issue decided to walk from San Diego to Sacramento for the Rally, raising public awareness and support along the way. They have already walked from San Diego and reached Santa Barbara on June 3rd. It is a difficult trip and there may be delays, but they expect to arrive in San Francisco by July 1st, and be in Sacramento for the rally on July 10th. There has already been a story about the walkers printed in the Santa Barbara News-Press, the L.A. Times, a mention on South California's Channel 3 news, and reportedly there has even been a picture, with caption, in the New York Times.

END THE SLEEPING BAN IN CALIFORNIA

Demand that Governor Davis protect us from the illegal hate ordinances committed against us by the cities of California!

Join us in Sacramento on
July 10, 2002

**STOP THE JAILINGS
THE CAMPING TICKETS
SEPARATION OF FAMILIES**

You don't have to be homeless to protest this injustice!

**PROTEST AT THE CAPITOL UNTIL THE
GOVERNOR HEARS OUR CRIES!**

Those with Motor Homes, Vans, and Cars

Support the
Right to Sleep Walk from
San Diego to Sacramento as
they walk up HWY 1 & 101



**Help us surround
the Capitol!**

**Load your vehicles with
friends and family - you
need safe camping too!**

TANF re-authorization in 2002

by Becky Johnson
Santa Cruz, CA

May 28, 2002 — So it is time for Congress to tweak and adjust the brilliant success of welfare reform begun by President Bill Clinton in 1996 ending 82 years of entitlements to poor women and children in the United States. How far we have come! Pilot welfare reform states such as Wisconsin, where Governor Tommy Thompson attracted George Dub's eye by mercilessly hacking moms and kids off the welfare rolls in his state, and claiming it to be a screaming success. He never asked the women

Thompson's dirty secret was not that the women forced off of welfare could only find low-wage jobs which suck their life force and leave them as impoverished as they were while collecting welfare. It was not that more women were forced to go back into the arms of their violent or abusive partners. It was not that women were losing their children to foster families at a much higher rate than before the reform. It was not that the statistics on homelessness among formerly housed welfare moms has steeply risen. Everyone knows this.

Thompson's dirty secret is that his reform program created a five-layered bureaucracy to oversee fewer and fewer cases. Before the reform, there was only the County's human resource department. Because, as everyone knows, bureaucrats are not cheap. The costs of welfare actually went up from \$548 million to \$710 million while the caseloads dropped like a lead balloon from 280,000 to only 20,000.

So now these same, pompous, overpaid, overfed, wheeler-dealer congressmen and senators, pick and choose how to redesign welfare so that even less money winds up in the pockets of the people who need it most.

H.R. 3113 sponsored by Patsy Mink, D-HI, would have increased spending to the states by \$2 billion per year, but there was no provision the money would be spent on recipients. The funding would have been spent on the salaries of upper level administrators who by successfully reducing caseloads, usually through bureaucratic requirements which can be met by fewer and fewer recipients, would be rewarded with higher salaries. Currently, only 43% of spending under TANF is used for cash assistance.

Pat Gowens, editor of Welfare Mothers Voice in Milwaukee, WI, deplors this trend. "Welfare dollars are supposed to go into

the hands of the women who need it most. Instead, it goes to the fabled two: two cars, two kids, two homes. People forget that this is just another way to put money into the pockets of the middle class by allocating funds to professionals who will "counsel" welfare moms."

Kevin Asianian, Executive Director of the California Coalition of Welfare Rights Organizations condemned all of the bills by saying "Time limits imposed on children continue undeterred without shame by the same people who rant and rave about 'leaving no child behind'."

The Bush Plan (HR 4090), which Gowens claims is "the worst of the six" passed by the House of Representatives on May 18th, froze funding at the current level. Congressman displayed charts which dramatically showed both the precipitous drop in cases since 1996 and a corresponding drop in poverty. Since TANF was based on the Wisconsin W-2 program, it's helpful to look at what has happened in Wisconsin since 1996. The number of families living in extreme poverty (incomes below 50% of the Federal Poverty Line) has increased. Only one third of those who have left welfare have incomes over the Federal Poverty Line. The use of food pantries, and meal programs has increased.

"And the use of sanctions is way up," Gowens reported. "If a welfare mom has not worked enough hours or failed to go to a meeting because of staying home with a sick child, her check will be sanctioned, or cut for 'not cooperating.' In Milwaukee this is most insidious because the welfare departments have been privatized. And the rules say that any money the private agency can take away from the moms with sanctions, can be kept by the agency.

"The YWCA opened a for-profit branch to administer welfare. They have sanctioned 48% of their cases so far. That's taking money out of the pockets of poor, welfare mothers."

The long-sought COLA's, or cost of living allowances, appeared in none of the six bills proposed by Republicans and Democrats. While every other business both public and private, adjusts for the cost of living, welfare mothers are expected to house, feed, clothe, and equip for school their children on a budget that last worked in 1995.

Both the Cardin bill (H.R. 3625 Cardin, D-MD) and the Mink bill provided for "poverty reduction bonuses" which would have paid

the administrators even more money if they can somehow reduce their roles. Whether that mother and kids move into gainful employment and a better life or into homelessness would not have affected the bonus. But the House voted to reject any increase in spending for any reason.

The Bush Proposal, which passed, gives states \$100 million annually to establish research programs to promote the formation of two-parent families. This is Bush and his conservative think tank's mentality that if only those welfare mothers would stay married, they would not need welfare. "This is just another way to put welfare mothers down for not being married," Gowens lamented. Yet not paying poor women with children to help them with minimum levels of support, is misogyny on a grand scale. We will be living with this legacy of having abandoned of a large swath of our children for years to come.

"Having Congress telling women who are already struggling to survive that they must marry in order to get any assistance for their families, is a deadly interference in the sanctity of the family," challenged Linda Lemaster, Chair of the Commission for the Prevention of Violence Against Women in Santa Cruz. "Domestic violence is increasing among poor women. Of people who are newly seeking public benefits in California, 84% of them are coming out of an abusive or violent relationship. Cut-offs and work requirements they can't meet will only force them right back into those dangerous relationships."

The Bush plan would increase the work requirements from 30 hours per week to 40 hours as a way of "helping" women out of poverty.

The legislative ball has rolled into the Senate chambers now. A final vote is expected in late June unless it is held over for another year. Gowens summed it up "This is the time to contact your Senators and tell them that we need welfare legislation that provides real education for welfare moms, for child-care to count as work, the elimination of time limits, and the end of sanctions."

Visit the Welfare Mothers Voice website
www.execpc.com/~wmvoice

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Obituary

True hope dwells on the possible, even when life seems to be a plot written by someone who wants to see how much adversity we can overcome.
- Walter Anderson

No Names This Time

Amerikan Refugee

by Peter S. Lopez

An Amerikan refugee in the country of his native birth
Feeling lost in the homeless nightmare without worth.

Yes, he once had a family with children, pets and a favorite tree.
But it was all lost to the past when he spun out into street misery.

He has nowhere to hide, nowhere to flee, and nowhere where he can just 'be'.
He wanders cold urban streets in search of what he forgot behind.

An outsider abandoned by all in these worst of times,
Drowning his dreams in cheap booze from begged dimes.

Yet he once had a safe home, a warm bed, and a place to lay his head.
Now he keeps his home in his backpack, his shelter is his ragged coat.

He exists without ID as a social outcast among 'the invisible ones'
Who remain on the tattered outer edges of a false civilization.

He is old news north, east, west and south.
He merely survives day-and-night living hand-to-mouth.

He is an alien outsider and stranger to all.
Enduring seasons of winter, spring, summer and fall.

There but for the amazing grace of God go I...
Then maybe he is a fallen God.

The Rich will always be Rich -
The Poor will always be Poor-
Bombs are better than bread
in a world without change -
The best world
of all



Emperor Elephant Sings as the World Burns