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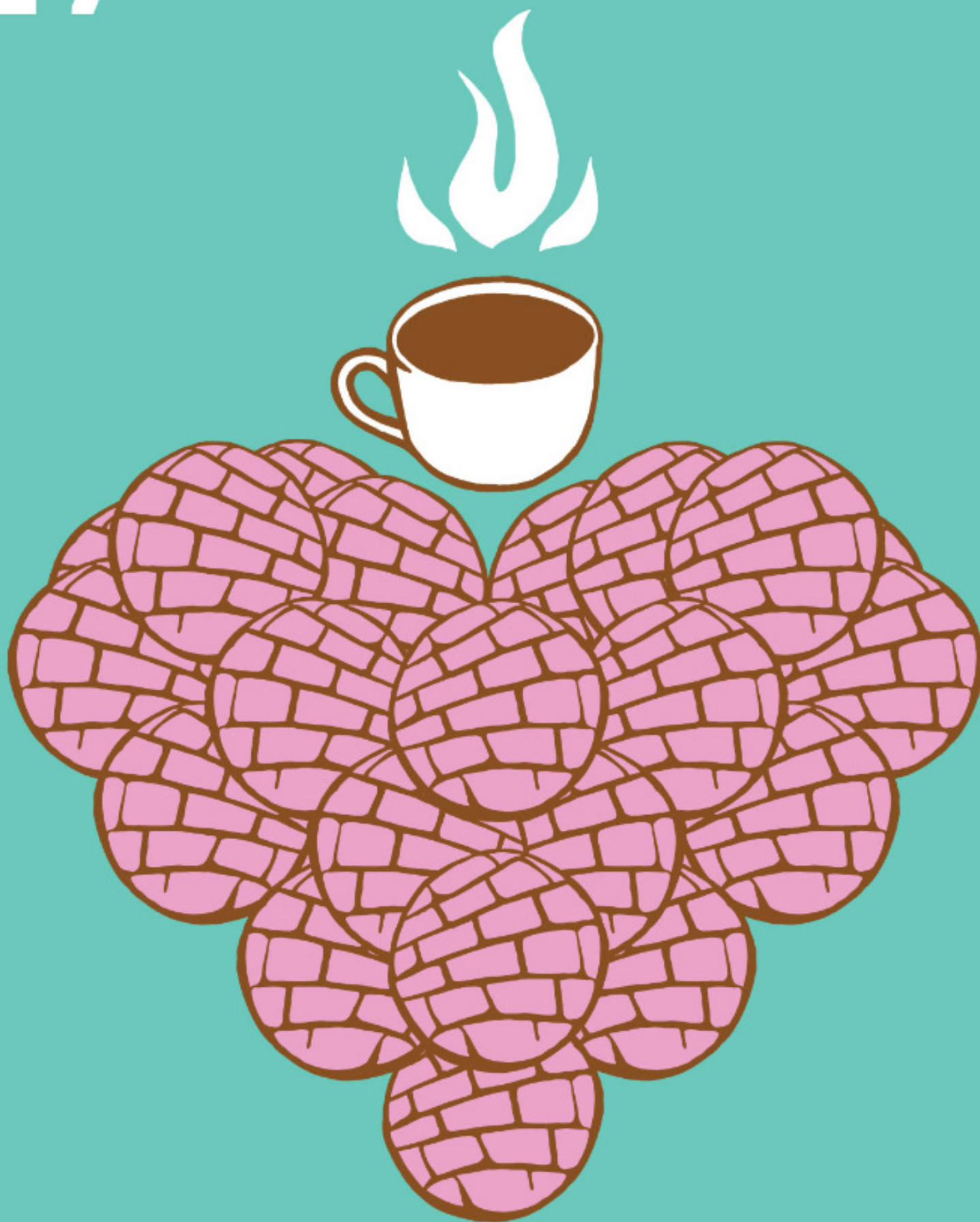
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SACRAMENTO GAVE A HOMELESS CAMP A LEASE AS AN EXPERIMENT. HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED.

MARISA KENDALL, CALMATTERS

When Sacramento changed its plan to demolish a homeless encampment on a vacant lot on Colfax Street, instead offering the homeless occupants a lease, activists and camp residents celebrated it as a win.

The first-of-its-kind deal, which allows the camp to remain in place and govern itself without city interference, was held up as a model Sacramento could replicate at future sites. Other cities, including San Jose, have said they're considering similar models, putting the success or failure of this encampment under the microscope.

A year later, Sacramento has not managed to reproduce the concept and has no plans to. Residents of the camp, who lack electricity or running water, complain they feel forgotten. And the county district attorney, claiming the site threatens public safety, has demanded the city clear the camp or risk prosecution.

Those troubles highlight the logistical and ethical dilemmas that come with setting aside outdoor spaces for homeless residents to go when there aren't enough beds indoors. And it comes at a time when officials across the state increasingly are turning to this last-ditch solution as they face mounting pressure to clear encampments away from sidewalks, parks, schools and other high-traffic public areas.

"The fact that people have a place where they can legally exist and not be threatened with arrest, not be run off and have to lose their belongings, where they can go to the bathroom with dignity, where there's trash pickup so they don't have to live in a place

where there's trash all over, where service providers can find them regularly and they aren't going to lose contact with people as they work their way to housing — those are all good things," said Eric Tars, senior policy director of the National Homelessness Law Center. "But it would be even better if they were doing them indoors."

THEY GOT A LEASE, AND THEY MAKE THEIR OWN RULES

Camp Resolution, as the Sacramento camp is known, was started in 2022 by Sharon and Joyce Jones — a married couple in their 50s who found themselves homeless for the first time late in life. More than four-dozen people now live there, some in new-looking Bullet trailers provided by the city, and others in cars, tents and more dilapidated trailers and RVs.

Some residents have taken pains to make it more homey: Two potted plants hang from the hitch of one trailer, chickens roam the lot, and Sharon and Joyce are putting in a garden, using pallets to make raised planter beds.

"We try to make it as comfortable as possible," Joyce said, "but sometimes it's impossible."

Shortly after Joyce and her community occupied the city-owned, formerly vacant lot in 2022, city workers determined the camp was unsafe and needed to be demolished — as often happens in Sacramento and throughout California. But that's where the story takes an unusual turn. Residents of the camp, and their

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COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

The STREET SHEET is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition's work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: they bring their agendas to us.

STREET SHEET STAFF

The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

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Street Sheet is published and distributed on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone peoples. We recognize and honor the ongoing presence and stewardship of the original people of this land. We recognize that homelessness can not truly be ended until this land is returned to its original stewards.

ORGANIZE WITH US

HOUSING JUSTICE WORKING GROUP TUESDAYS @ NOON

The Housing Justice Workgroup is working toward a San Francisco in which every human being can have and maintain decent, habitable, safe, and secure housing. This meeting is in English and Spanish and open to everyone! Email mcarrera@cohsf.org to get involved!

HUMAN RIGHTS WORKING GROUP WEDNESDAYS @12:30

The Human Rights Workgroup has been doing some serious heavy lifting on these issues: conducting direct research, outreach to people on the streets, running multiple campaigns, developing policy, staging direct actions, capturing media attention, and so much more. All those down for the cause are welcome to join! Email lpierce@cohsf.org

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO JOIN OUR WORKING GROUP MEETINGS!



MEND HOUSING FIRST, DON'T END IT

JORDAN DAVIS

My name is Jordan. I have purple hair, a nose piercing, I sometimes curse off the Board of Supervisors, and I've flirted with cocaine use (though I never purchased it, never used it in my unit, and don't do it anymore). I am also a Housing First success story, and it saved my life.

What is Housing First? It's the idea that homeless people can best recover if they are rehoused with wraparound supportive services, instead of having to "earn" it. I spent only five months in a Navigation Center before I was placed into housing, after which I was appointed to a commission, got gender confirmation surgery, was able to go vegan, led an activism campaign for permanent supportive housing, and got to recapture parts of my youth, such as going to shows. While there are many people who have done a lot more than I have done, engaged with more services, and even gotten gainfully employed, the primary metric of Housing First success is staying housed—and that is what most of the approximately 10,000 tenants in supportive housing in San Francisco do every night.

But, I get upset every time I doom scroll on X, formerly Twitter, and I see so many ugly trolls, some of whom are influencers or candidates for elected office, saying that we should end Housing First because of the fentanyl crisis or certain horror stories about tenants that get amplified. In reality, despite the many issues in the City's permanent supportive housing, there are success stories that have been ignored—even if they're just stories about remaining housed. Sometimes, in these debates, we have to be grateful about how many people are not on the streets.

I find it dissonant that in a city that votes overwhelmingly for Democrats, a party that believes in trusting science in challenging climate change and developing vaccines, there are a group of Democrats and independents who are willing to reject sound social science in favor of gut feelings and repeat exceptional horror stories. Often this is done to push a "treatment first" or "shelter first" modality, often known as the staircase model.

Let's say that the City decides to implement a staircase model,

where homeless providers conduct gatekeeping for permanent supportive housing. What will be required of homeless people to get housing? Who decides who is worthy of housing? Will gatekeeping exacerbate disparities based on race, gender, and disability? How can we trust the policy makers not to move the goalposts? Would providers add extraneous requirements that are irrelevant to housing success? Would someone in a congregate setting be refused housing based on issues that arise only in congregate settings? Will shelters allow clients to have the relative freedom of bringing pets, partners, and possessions, as well as no curfews like the first Navigation Centers—or will they impose all sorts of restrictions on people? How will the City regulate and hold nonprofits running the shelters accountable?

As a neurodivergent person, I know that I would never survive a staircase model-based setting;. The gatekeepers would do anything to prevent my success.

Study after study has shown that Housing First works. Even when there are shortcomings, there are

better approaches than the staircase model, such as increasing wraparound services, like Delivering Innovation in Supportive Housing does. Also there might be independent variables, such as housing costs or limitations on rent control. As for addiction, well, if one had to sleep in the rough or deal with restrictive congregate settings, I wouldn't blame them for doing drugs; I'd worry about how they can access treatment after being rehoused.

I know I've criticized how San Francisco runs permanent supportive housing, but I certainly do not want to end Housing First. I say, "mend it, don't end it." Houston substantially cut its homeless population by streamlining its homelessness response system and holding nonprofits accountable for delivering results. In addition, Houston did not rely on run-down hotels in economically disadvantaged parts of town. If we continue to make sure that housing includes culturally competent services and use existing resources to ensure dignified settings for residents, then our city can create a system that continues to improve housing outcomes. ■

30 ANIVERSARIO DE MIGUEL RECAUDACIÓN DE FONDOS!



¡Únase a nosotros para celebrar tres décadas de la incansable defensa de Miguel Carrera con la Coalición contra las Personas sin Hogar! La fiesta de aniversario de Miguel será un evento familiar con comida, baile y los muchos camaradas de Miguel de los últimos 30 años. En honor a su aniversario, Miguel pide a los asistentes hacer una donación modesta a la Coalición sobre Personas sin Hogar

Cuándo: jueves 25 de abril a las 4:00 p. m. a 7:00 p. m.

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MIGUEL'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY FUNDRAISER!



Join us in celebrating three decades of Miguel Carrera's tireless advocacy with the Coalition on Homelessness! Miguel's anniversary party will be a family friendly affair with food, dancing, and Miguel's many comrades from the past 30 years. In honor of his anniversary, Miguel asks that attendees make a modest donation to the Coalition on Homelessness

When: Thursday, April 25th -- 4pm-7pm

Where: Valencia Gardens Community Room

390 Valencia St.

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For more information, Email Carlos at cwadkins@cohsf.org

CAMP RESOLUTION

continued from page 2...

supporters, showed up in force to a city council meeting and persuaded council members to delay the sweep. About six months later, the city signed a lease allowing the camp to remain in place.

The lease, which advocacy group Safe Ground Sacramento signed on behalf of the Camp Resolution residents, was an experiment. Generally, similar programs are run by nonprofits contracted by a city. They often impose curfews, no-guest policies, sobriety

requirements and other rules on residents. In exchange, they offer social services such as counseling or help finding permanent housing, and amenities such as showers and bathrooms.

“They don’t think people experiencing homelessness are capable of governing themselves,” Tars said.

Camp Resolution is different. Safe Ground Sacramento, which leases the property from the city for free, takes a hands-off approach that lets residents run the camp and write their own rules. The city

gave the residents a handful of residential trailers, set up portable toilets and a hand-washing station, and provided dumpsters and ongoing trash pickup. But that’s it.

Many activist groups laud that model as a best practice, saying it’s important to let the residents run, or at least help run, their own camp.

“When individuals in these encampments have a sense of ownership, then it can really lead to the camp being a place that they take pride in and that they are

trying to keep in as good condition as possible,” Tars said. “It gives a sense of responsibility to others in that community.”

It also means minimal overhead for the city: The trailers provided to Camp Resolution residents came from the Federal Emergency Management Agency at no cost to the city of Sacramento, and adding the camp to the city’s existing contract for trash pickup didn’t add any additional expense.

But in the case of Camp Resolution, it also means residents are left to fend for themselves. The city doesn’t provide electricity or running water. Community members donate food, some residents have generators, and a nonprofit used to bring a trailer with showers every other Sunday — but they recently stopped.

“It’s not going very well,” Joyce said. “I think that (the city) should do a little bit more.”

The Camp Resolution lease says the city would provide up to 33 trailers. Residents ended up receiving just 16. But 51 people live at the camp, meaning some people sleep in tents, in their cars or in dilapidated trailers and RVs that leak in the rain and have sprouted mold.

The city wouldn’t comment on the trailers — or anything else — citing a pending threat of prosecution from the county District Attorney’s Office. City officials recently sent 40 trailers to a new safe sleeping site they opened on Roseville Road, which also has plumbed toilets and showers.

Several of the Camp Resolution residents are elderly, and some have serious medical issues that make living without reliable power and water difficult. One woman,



Top: Joyce and Sharon Jones poke holes in a water bottle to water their garden next to their trailer at Camp Resolution on Feb. 28, 2024. The camp has no running water, so residents must rely on bottled water for all their needs. Photo by Fred Greaves for CalMatters

Bottom: Jeanne Gillis cooks ground turkey over a wood fire beside her trailer at Camp Resolution on Feb. 28, 2024. Residents must rely on bottled water, generators, and wood fires because no utilities are provided at the camp. Photo by Fred Greaves for CalMatters

who recently turned 60, is on dialysis and gets around on an electric mobility scooter that she leaves parked outside her trailer.

Most of the residents are women, some of whom wouldn't feel safe on the streets by themselves. Jeanne Gillis, 53, was cooking ground turkey over an open flame outside her trailer on a recent Wednesday. Gillis, who used to work as a medical patients' advocate, lost her housing two years ago when she got sick with lupus and could no longer work. She'd never been homeless before and didn't know what to do — so Sharon and Joyce took her under their wing. Now she's part of their tight-knit community.

"Thank God for everybody. Because it's hard," she said, tearing up. "I don't think I'd be here if it wasn't for everybody."

CAMP RESOLUTION FACES LEGAL THREAT

Camp Resolution also faces an outside threat — Sacramento County District Attorney Thien Ho has demanded that the city close the camp. His office sent a letter to the city and Safe Ground Sacramento in November labeling the site a public health hazard. The site is contaminated by toxic chemicals left over from when it was used as a vehicle maintenance yard and held underground storage tanks for diesel and gasoline, he said. It's not safe to camp on the contaminated soil, according to his letter. But only half of the site is paved, while the other half is bare dirt — and people live on both sides.

Ho's office did not set a specific deadline for the city to clear the encampment, leaving it unclear exactly what, if anything, will come of his threat.

When asked about Ho's next steps, Sonia Martinez Satchell, a spokesperson for the District Attorney's Office, indicated prosecution is still on the table.

"To date, the City has failed to move the unhoused off this toxic waste site," she said in an emailed statement. "We will not waver from our commitment to protect public safety for all. As outlined in our letter, all available actions and recourse remain available."

But camp residents and the advocates working with them say they've heard nothing but silence from the District Attorney's Office since the November letter. That means the fate of those living at Camp Resolution is still up in the air.

Tim Swanson, spokesman for the City Manager's Office, said the city can't comment on any aspect of Camp Resolution because of the pending threat of prosecution.

Sharon and Joyce aren't concerned — they claim the camp isn't on the portion of the site that's contaminated. Ho's letter is just an excuse to try to kick them off the property, they said.

SANCTIONED HOMELESS ENCAMPMENTS IN CALIFORNIA

Faced with a massive shortage of affordable homes, desperate city officials across California are considering opening places where

unhoused people can legally set up tents. The move could give them more power to clear encampments from around parks, schools, downtown zones and other high-profile areas. That's because unless cities have somewhere for displaced unhoused residents to go, the 2018 appellate case *Martin v. Boise* limits the extent to which they can clear encampments. That could change soon, as the Supreme Court has agreed to take up the case and will hear arguments next month. But for now, cities' hands remain largely tied if they lack enough shelter beds.

San Diego recently passed an ordinance banning encampments in much of the city. As the city ramped up enforcement, it opened two sanctioned camp sites that together can hold more than 500 tents.

After the city rejected the idea three years ago, San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan recently said he's considering opening similar sites.

Safe sleeping sites take many different forms — and have a range of price tags. In August, after the city stalled in its attempts to open safe sleeping sites, Sacramento City Manager Howard Chan single-handedly tried to identify locations for the projects. He initially said Camp Resolution could be a model for future sites — because it cost the city so little to run, it would allow the city to open more sites than if they used more expensive models.

Instead, the city in January launched its next safe sleeping site, on Roseville Road, with more services, more oversight and a

greater cost — \$3.2 million per year. The site has 60 rudimentary tiny homes and 40 trailers, and is governed by a nonprofit contracted through the city.

But, due to an anticipated budget shortfall for the coming fiscal year, the city has no plans to launch additional safe sleeping sites, Swanson said. At a committee meeting last month, city staff predicted that by next year, the city's budget for homeless services would be short \$11 million. By the 2025-26 fiscal year, they expected to be short nearly \$39 million.

LIFE AT CAMP RESOLUTION

There are about 800 people on the waitlist to get into Camp Resolution, according to Sharon and Joyce. Only six people from the camp have moved out and into permanent housing, they said. Just on the other side of the gate that separates Camp Resolution from the rest of the world, a group of people live in a cluster of cars parked haphazardly on the side of the road. Across the street, someone has erected a makeshift shack. RVs that serve as stand-in homes line the road.

Inside the gate, Sharon and Joyce tend to have the ultimate say in what goes, though there's also a council that meets on Thursday evenings to discuss camp issues. Things don't always go smoothly.

Last year a neighbor's dogs attacked Sharon and sent her to the hospital with multiple bite injuries. That led to new rules at the camp about pets. But Sharon and Joyce say it's hard to actually enforce the rules they impose.

"We need more structure," Sharon said.

As they showed off the different parts of their community, Sharon and Joyce expressed disapproval of a trash pile in the middle of the camp.

"That can go in the trash can," Joyce said. It didn't take long. A few minutes later, residents could be seen picking up the garbage and carrying it to a nearby dumpster.

CalMatters Capitol reporter Jeanne Kuang contributed to this story.

Originally published on calmatters.org



Camp Resolution, a "self-governed" homeless camp on city-owned land in Sacramento, on Feb. 28, 2024. Photo by Fred Greaves for CalMatters

HOMELESS AT THE PIANO

ANDY POPE

When I was homeless, I would wake up on a couple pieces of cardboard, sometimes set over dirt. Sometimes I slept on a ramp on the side of a Catholic church. I would wake when the sky was getting light, then wander into a nearby AA fellowship. There I would hit the bathroom for a quick clean-up before grabbing a cup of coffee.

Make that three cups. The coffee-maker there was a homeless lady with 30+ years of sobriety in Alcoholics Anonymous. I remember her commenting how I would sit at the meeting and appear to be calmer and calmer, the more coffee I drank.

There was a none-too-pretty picture of the self-serving homeless person, who would come into the Berkeley Fellowship, grab a cup of coffee intended for an AA member, and then leave the premises. I did not want to conform to that picture.

So I sat for an hour, listened and occasionally spoke. I heard many wise sayings in that room, from people who had effectively found recovery from alcoholism and drug abuse. Inwardly however, I knew I was mostly in it for the coffee.

There were also a few other ways for me to find a morning cup of coffee. Sometimes I would sleep in an illegal spot on campus near to a Starbucks. I'd have saved a buck and change from the previous night, and then I would get to sit in the Starbucks with a newspaper—almost looking like a “normal” person.

The Men's Shelter had excellent Peet's coffee along with oatmeal, eggs, bread, peanut butter, and all kinds of morning goodies. This was also an option. But my favorite coffee was the Kirkland Colombian they served at the North Berkeley Senior Center.

And it was only forty cents.

Some mornings, I would get myself to the Senior Center as soon as it opened at eight. On other mornings, I was already coffee'd up from other sources. In that case, I would head straight to one of their pianos.

There were three pianos at the Senior Center. A nice Yamaha console upstairs, a Hamilton clunker in a corner room, and another decent Yamaha in the main auditorium. There, coffee was available, and lunch would be served for three bucks—or free if you were strapped.

But I didn't want to play in the auditorium. There were too many people there, and I did not want to disturb them. Often, when I tried to play a piano somewhere—at a church for example—I was told to stop using their piano due to “insurance issues.” I guess the days of playing in UC dorms and practice rooms were gone, and I was generally pretty piano-starved throughout my homeless sojourn.

As for the piano upstairs, there was too much interference in the environment. Yoga classes going on, people on exercise bikes, cramped quarters. So I gravitated toward the piano in the corner of the building, which happened to be situated right next to the pool room.

Though it wasn't the best piano, I certainly got the best reaction I could have hoped for at the time. Usually there were about ten homeless guys shooting pool in the room next door. I could hear them cheering, sometimes after every tune. Sometimes they all appeared outside the door—smiling and clapping, asking for more. Once one of the guys came into the room and started snapping his fingers beside me, groovin' on the sounds (I remember it was during the song “Skylark” by Hoagy Carmichael).

So I was getting the best of both worlds—a bit of practice and a bit of positive attention. A far cry from the mostly negative attention I was receiving from elsewhere. But one day, as I approached the room with the piano, I saw a sign on the pool hall:

CLOSED FOR REPAIRS

Disturbed, I approached the lady at the front desk to complain.

“Why'd you close down the pool hall?” I asked Laurie. “Those guys were my only audience!”

“Nothing personal,” she began, “but your friends were getting drunk at eight in the morning, and kinda wreaking damage to the building. We had to kick them out to fix up the place. They can't be drinking like that on our property.”

“Well,” I retorted, “I didn't even notice they were drunk! I just thought they were an unusually appreciative audience.”

At that, Laurie didn't miss a beat.

“Well play out here then!” she suggested, pointing to the main auditorium.

rium.

“But if I do that,” I replied, “all you guys will be able to hear me.”

“We WANT to hear you!!” she shouted, as though trying to jolt me out of a delusion.

“Oh,” I said, sorta shuffling in my shoes. “Well, in that case, I guess you can be my audience.”

The sense of identity crisis that went through my head at that moment was quite profound. Why on earth would I only want to play the piano for other homeless people?

I think it was this. I had gotten so used to only being accepted by people who were outside, and being looked down upon by people who lived inside, I couldn't imagine them doing anything other than to look down on me, even as I played the piano.

After all, my piano playing is not appreciated by all people at all times. Many people like it, but others don't. Inside me, however, it was seen as something that gave me a sense of value. It separated me from the picture of the burned out homeless person, having lost all incentive, having lost all hope.

I did not want to hear the cries of derision and mockery from people who lived indoors—I heard them too often on the streets, and I had not permitted them to touch my musicianship.

Until now.

For now, I started playing every morning in the main auditorium, and was actually very surprised at the reception. Even a fellow from the Catholic church on whose ramp I slept stopped by, quizzacally enjoying the music. I occasionally received tips from homeless people who hung out all day in the computer room.

It wasn't long before I was doing a full-on concert at the North Berkeley Senior Center. People filmed me on their smartphones, using those



big tripods. I still have footage from the concert, to this day.

I remember it was a momentous occasion. I even delayed an opportunity to rent a room on the Russian River from a Facebook friend-of-a-friend. I remember Jonathan, one of the men who helped run the Senior Center, trying to persuade me to take the room instead. He thought I should have jumped at the chance to grab a rental far away from the scene of my chronic homelessness, on the beautiful Russian River.

“No way!” I told him. “That room can wait!”

Needless to say, I lost the opportunity to get the room due to my unusual set of priorities. I did however show up for the show—in as fine a form as ever. How I enjoyed the discussion, the smiles—all the applause from people in my age group, people who appreciated music just like me, and who just happened to live indoors.

After the last song, which I believe was “Bridge Over Troubled Water,” I was so happy I crossed over to the other side of the auditorium to grab another cup of coffee.

There, I was denied my coffee—for I did not have forty cents. ■

*Andy Pope is a freelance writer who lives in the Pacific Northwest. He is the author of *Eden in Babylon*, a musical about youth homelessness in urban America.*

JUDGMENT CALLS: MAKING DECISIONS WHEN YOU HAVE A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

JACK BRAGEN

There are many reasons people lose their housing. Much of the time it is not caused by anything the tenant is doing wrong. The landlord may believe they can get more rent money from someone else. They may want to sell their property or refurbish the building. They may have a personal dislike for the tenant not based on anything the tenant does wrong: People can be fickle.

Property owners have a lot of power over other people. They generally have the power to evict, which can mean life or death for the tenant. Or sometimes a tenant makes a poorly conceived decision or a decision they did not think through enough. And this can also cause loss of housing.

My diagnosis for at least the past ten years has been “schizoaffective disorder.” In the distant past, the diagnosis was “schizophrenia: paranoid-type.” Whatever way you want to define it, I have mood problems, I have paranoid thinking, I have delusions, and I even get hallucinations, maybe.

Periodically, I have episodes where I lack judgment. This trait or disorder or what have you has caused me to create many problems for myself. Some of these problems have been life-changing, and not in a good way.

Some types of decisions I’m good with, like split-second decisions in dangerous situations that have helped me survive. But I’ve made some doozies when it comes to life paths. I’m still here, but why that is is a mystery to me.

Certain decisions can be made with gut-level instinct. But if I’m intellectually certain that the gut is quite wrong, I have to go against instinct, and this can be difficult.

In some instances, I have to roll the dice and take action without having all the facts.

The above is a description of life. The saying “if I knew then what I know now,” is the applicable cliché. I’m trying to learn more. I’ll make observations concerning the outcomes of my decisions, and what data and what factors went into them. When I study my mind and learn more about how it produces mistakes, I have more ability to stop myself from doing something really dumb.

Poor judgment, poor assessment, and not thinking through your actions can produce homelessness, which in turn can cause death on the streets. This is only one of many scenarios in which people become homeless. We must not blame the victim. The victim is an individual who has found they abruptly don’t have housing.

A victim of psychotic illness does not usually have a life of stellar success.

And you can be a victim of your disease without having a human being to blame for it.

However, I have noticed that here in Contra Costa County, there is no acceptable, safe place to go if you are having a mental health crisis. This is so twisted, because we’ve had a series of laws passed

purportedly for the purpose of helping mentally ill people. What happened?

Because of my life circumstances and because I’ve written for street papers for well over two decades, I am close to the heartbeat of those in danger of being displaced, as described in the street papers. And this can be terrifying.

I had recently had a thought of checking into a psych emergency ward because of the severity of mental illness symptoms I was experiencing. But no one would take over my responsibilities as a tenant if I were put under an involuntary hold for two weeks. Just getting help for psychotic or emotional symptoms could render me homeless. If there is no one here to pay utilities and rent, no one here to respond to inquiries, and if the premises seem abandoned, what is a property manager going to think?

Poor judgment means you might not understand how everything is going to work when you carry out an action or set of actions. It is hard for me to give specific examples of this at the moment because I’m in the middle of dealing with life circumstances brought about by having low-level psychosis and taking foolish actions as a result. I’ve had delusional thinking, and this has caused me to make substantial mistakes that have affected the course my life is taking.

No one has a crystal ball. Some of my actions have been right on target, but that doesn’t guarantee that the results will be easy. You could choose a course of life for yourself that makes the

most sense, yet you might not be considering certain things, such as how a course of action will make you feel emotionally. Or you might not understand the level

of discipline that will be needed if you do something that seems correct and choose that over something that seems idiotic. The idiotic course of action might be more practicable.

The truism is: “You reap what you sow.” Or “You’ve made your bed, now lie in it.” And that’s where I am at.

But if I can come through the circumstances I’ve embarked on, things could really be good. However, if I’m unable to successfully jump through the flaming hoops, I might crash.

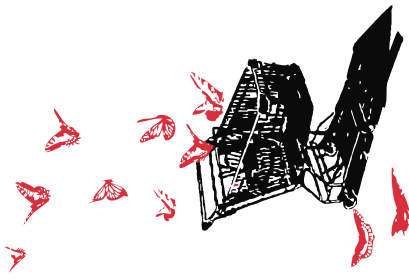
It would be nice if the systems that run our society were more forgiving, but they are not. Neurodivergent people are not always forgiven for, or protected from, our own ill decisions, or our words, or our actions. For neurodivergent people who have troubles in the executive areas of the brain, society is not very user-friendly. And if we want to be independent and live under decent conditions, we generally must meet certain expectations. And sometimes this is a tall order. ■

Jack Bragen lives in the East Bay and has written for numerous publications. He has his indie books for sale on Amazon.

Because of my life circumstances and because I’ve written for street papers for well over two decades, I am close to the heartbeat of those in danger of being displaced, as described in the street papers. And this can be terrifying.

Coalition On Homelessness
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415.346.3740
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To sign up, visit our office at 280 Turk St from 10AM-4PM on Monday-Thursday and 10AM-noon on Friday

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WRITING: Write about your experience of homelessness in San Francisco, about policies you think the City should put in place or change, your opinion on local issues, or about something newsworthy happening in your neighborhood!

ARTWORK: Help transform ART into ACTION by designing artwork for STREET SHEET! We especially love art that uplifts homeless people, celebrates the power of community organizing, or calls out abuses of power!

PHOTOGRAPHY: Have a keen eye for beauty? Love capturing powerful moments at events? Have a photo of a Street Sheet vendor you'd like to share? We would love to run your photos in Street Sheet!

VISIT WWW.STREETSHEET.ORG/SUBMIT-YOUR-WRITING/

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