Los Ángeles es una ciudad sufriendo por la falta de viviendas económicas. Una reciente encuesta encargada por el New York Times realizada mediante el mega-sitio de bienes raíces, Zillow, reveló que la renta mediana para un apartamento en Los Ángeles cuesta 47% del ingreso medio. En general, un apartamento se considera “económico” cuando no se pasa del 30% de los ingresos familiares. Aunque la encuesta de Zillow clasificó noventa ciudades por encima de este umbral del 30%, Los Ángeles estaba arriba de la lista.

Ahora, en lugar de abordar el problema de la vivienda, los funcionarios de la ciudad de nuevo están activamente promoviendo políticas fallidas para reemplazar, viviendas públicas con proyectos de viviendas privadas, a precio del mercado. Tales políticas desplazan familias y fomentan la gentrificación, que agravan aún más la crisis de Los Ángeles con la falta de vivienda, que aumentó un 15% entre 2011 y 2013 solamente. De acuerdo con el Departamento de Vivienda y Desarrollo Urbano (HUD), California es el hogar de más de 1 de cada 5 personas sin hogar en los Estados Unidos (o 20.7 por ciento).

En 2013, en una noche cualquiera en Los Ángeles, hasta 58.000 personas duermen en las calles. Las personas que viven sin techo normalmente citan la falta de vivienda económica como la razón principal por vivir sin techo. Como la segunda ciudad más poblada de los EE.UU., Los Ángeles tiene mucho que perder en permitir la eliminación de las viviendas públicas.

La necesidad por la vivienda pública en Los Angeles.

En una reunión comunitaria de marzo 2014 en Jordan Downs, John King, Director de Planificación y Asuntos Intergubernamentales para la Autoridad de Vivienda de la Ciudad de Los Ángeles (HACLA), enfrentó a una sala de más de 100 residentes, mientras que llevaba puesta una camiseta que leía “Watts is Worth It (Watts vale la pena)”. El mensaje de la camiseta, al parecer uno de apoyo a la comunidad, se perdió en un mar de esperanzas falsas y verdades a medias envasados en trucos, tarjetas de regalo y premios entregados a los residentes. Watts puede valer la pena, pero ¿cuánto y para quién?
Housing Watch

WRITTEN BY STEVE DIAZ

Madison Hotel

In 2013 the Madison Hotel was sold to a new owner, the Bellaire Investments Group. Since then there have been many issues reported by tenants in the building. For example, earlier this year, numerous “notices to quit” (pre-eviction notices) were issued to tenants on non-valid grounds. Recently it has been reported by tenants that there is a lack of safety and security in the building, bed bugs in common areas, and several other issues related to building management that may violate tenants’ legal rights. LA CAN has helped organize a committee of Madison tenants working together to improve conditions and uphold all tenants rights; the first meeting was held on June 6th and tenants continue to meet regularly. If you are a tenant of the Madison Hotel, come to LA CAN to find out more about joining other tenants who are taking a stand and demanding changes. For more information, contact Ari at 213-228-0024.

Oviatt Hotel

The South Park community of Downtown LA is experiencing another substantial increase in development - all upscale and out of reach for longtime Downtown residents. The Oviatt Hotel - located near California Hospital, the Pico Metro train station and the Staples Center - is home to over 100 low-income and working class tenants who are feeling the squeeze from the development around them. LA CAN and the LA Human Right to Housing Collective have been engaging in outreach and tenant education throughout South Park to prevent illegal and unfair displacement that often occurs in gentrifying neighborhoods. Armed with information, tenant organizers began knocking on doors, informing people of their rights, and inviting people to a tenant meeting. The first meeting was attended by over 30 tenants from the building. One of the topics was the City’s Rent Escrow Account Program (REAP), which the building just entered. REAP is a City program that punishes irresponsible landlords who fail to make repairs in a timely manner, and it gives tenants a rent reduction until repairs are made. The Oviatt tenants are due a 15% rent reduction, but most were unaware of this and could not benefit from it because they did not receive the City’s mailing in time to pay their June rent. There were some reports that the manager had “misplaced” these letters, or even intentionally withheld them from tenants. Tenants of the Oviatt will continue meeting on a monthly basis to ensure that the correct repairs are done and that no other tenant rights are violated. For more information, contact Thelmy or Steve at 213-228-0024.

Alexandria Hotel

In February 2014, Councilmember Jose Huizar introduced a motion to allocate $4 million in City funding to Pacific Investments, the owner of the Alexandria Hotel, and fast-tracked its approval without full public input. This money was intended for systems upgrades in the building, but there were no details or contract when the funding was approved and tenants recently found out that the contract between the City and the owner doesn’t have any definition for residential upgrades. Tenants of the Alexandria already endured faulty “upgrades” by the old owner and the public funds they were granted, and now the City has no transparency or accountability to tenants to ensure this recent funding will finally resolve the issues with plumbing, electrical and other major systems. Tenants will continue to organize to ensure the long history of poor maintenance and misuse of public funds in this building does not repeat itself. Contact Steve at LA CAN for more information.

Know Your Rights

This year’s rent increase is, unfortunately, effective July 1st. Every year tenants living in Rent Stabilized properties face the same dilemma: “Is the increase fair and justified?” This year, your rent increase cannot exceed 3% if you pay your own utilities (i.e. electrical and gas) and if the owner pays your utilities, the maximum rent increase is 5%. If you feel that your increase is not correct you should contact LA CAN or file a complaint with the Housing and Community Investment Department (HCID) by calling 1-866-557-RENT. LA CAN is working with LA Human Right to Housing Collective partners to make the annual rent increases more fair (lower!) and make other improvements to the Rent Stabilization Ordinance. Contact LA CAN to get involved.

La Vivienda En Vela

ESCRITO POR STEVE DIAZ | TRADUCIDO POR THELMY PEREZ

El Hotel Madison

En 2013, el Hotel Madison fue vendido a un nuevo propietario, el Grupo Bellaire Investments. Desde entonces se han producido muchos problemas reportados por los inquilinos del edificio. Por ejemplo, por lo que se propone en este año, numerosos “avisos para parar” (avisos pre-desalojo) se repartieron a los inquilinos por motivos que no eran válidos. Hace poco los inquilinos reportaron que hay una falta de seguridad en el edificio, chirros en las áreas comunes, y varios otros problemas relacionados con la gerencia que puedan violar los derechos legales de los inquilinos. LA CAN ha ayudado a organizar un comité de inquilinos del Madison para trabajar juntos para mejorar las condiciones y defender todos los derechos de los inquilinos. La primera reunión se celebró el 06 de junio y los inquilinos siguen reuniéndose regularmente. Si usted es un inquilino del Hotel Madison, venga a LA CAN para saber más acerca de como unirse a otros inquilinos que están tomando liderazgo y exigiendo cambios. Para obtener más información, póngase en contacto con Ari en el 213-228-0024.

El Hotel Oviatt

La comunidad de South Park del centro de Los Ángeles está experimentando un otro aumento sustancial en el desarrollo - todo de lujo y fuera del alcance de los residentes de este barrio. El Hotel Oviatt - ubicado cerca del Hospital California, la estación de tren Pico Metro y el Staples Center - es el hogar de más de 100 inquilinos de bajos ingresos y de clase trabajadora que está sintiendo la presión del desarrollo circundante. LA CAN y la Colectiva Pro el Derecho Humano a la Vivienda han participado en actividades comunitarias y educación a lo largo de South Park para evitar el desplazamiento ilegal e injusto que a menudo ocurre en los vecindarios abarrotados. Armados con información, los organizadores de inquilinos han informado a los inquilinos acerca de estas reparaciones, invirtiéndose al pueblo de sus derechos, e invitiéndolos a una reunión de inquilinos. La primera reunión fue asistida por más de 30 inquilinos del edificio. Uno de los temas fue el Programa Rent Escrow Account de la Ciudad (REAP, en el cual el edificio se acababa de introducir). REAP es un programa de la Ciudad que castiga a los propietarios irresponsables que no pueden hacer las reparaciones de manera oportuna, y que le da a los inquilinos una reducción de la renta hasta que se hagan las reparaciones. Los inquilinos del Oviatt tienen derecho a una reducción de renta de 15%, pero la mayoría no eran conscientes de esto y no podían beneficiarse debido a que no recibieron el correo de la ciudad con tiempo para pagar la renta reducida de junio. Hubo algunos rumores de que el gerente había "perdido" estas cartas, o incluso que las detuvo, intencionalmente, de los inquilinos. Los inquilinos del Oviatt continuarán reuniéndose mensualmente para asegurar que las reparaciones correctas se hacen y que no haya otras violaciones de los derechos de los inquilinos. Para más información, póngase en contacto con Steve o Thelmy al 213-228-0024.

El Hotel Alexandria

En febrero del 2014, el Concejal José Huizar presentó una moción para asignar $4 millones en fondos de la Ciudad hacia Pacific Investments, dueño del Hotel Alexandria, y rápidamente aprobarla sin una aportación públitaica gratuita. Este dinero fue destinado para mejoras a los sistemas en el edificio, pero no hubo detalles ni un contrato cuando se aprobó el dinero y los inquilinos recientemente se enteraron de que el contrato entre el Ayuntamiento y el propietario no tiene ninguna definición para las mejoras residenciales. Los inquilinos del Alexandria ya han sufrido "mejoras" defectuosas a causa de nuevas cartas, y los fondos públicos que le se había proporcionado, y ahora el Ayuntamiento no tiene ninguna transparencia ni rendición de cuentas a los inquilinos para asegurarse de que estos fondos finalmente resolverán los grandes problemas con la plomería, el sistema eléctrico y otros sistemas principales. Los inquilinos continuarán organizando para garantizar que no se repite la larga historia de la falta de mantenimiento y el malgasto de los fondos públicos en este edificio. Póngase en contacto con Steve en LA CAN para más información.

Conozca sus derechos

El aumento de renta de este año, por desgracia, ha llegado - a partir del 1° de julio. Cada año, los inquilinos que viven en propiedades de rentas estabilizadas se enfrentan al mismo dilema: “¿Va a aumentar la renta el dueño?” Es extremadamente importante que nosotros, como inquilinos, prestemos atención a la notificación y a la cantidad del aumento. Este año, el aumento de la renta no puede superar el 3% si usted paga sus servicios públicos (es decir, electricidad y gas) y si el propietario paga los servicios públicos, el aumento máximo es de 5%. Si usted siente que su incremento no es correcto usted debe ponerse en contacto con LA CAN o presentar una queja con el Departamento de Vivienda (HCID por sus siglas en inglés) llamando al 1-866-557-RENT. LA CAN está trabajando con sus socios de la Colectiva Pro el Derecho Humano a la Vivienda para que los aumentos anuales de renta sean más justos (bajos!) y para hacer otras mejoras a la Ordenanza de la Estabilización de Alquileres. Contacto LA CAN para involucrarse.
The Future of the Cecil Hotel: Housing for 500 People or a Mostly-Empty Building?

WRITTEN BY BECKY DENNISON AND GENERAL DOGON

Last edition, the Community Connection reported that a plan by LA County’s Department of Health Services to provide housing and services to about 500 currently homeless residents of Downtown was stopped, without any public support. Supervisor Molina, backed by the loud opinions of Downtown developers, told media representatives that she did not support the project and it would not move forward. Despite broad community support for the project among residents, small businesses, the Fashion District Business Improvement District, the LA Times editorial board, and community-based organizations, Supervisor Molina has not responded to LA CAN and partners’ requests to reconsider the project.

New Downtown residents also support new affordable housing in their community. A survey project done several months ago by a group called A.W.A.R.E. found that 61 percent of white middle and upper income residents (360 total surveyed) of the Historic Core agree or strongly agree that “Downtown LA needs more affordable housing, especially for homeless and low-income residents.”

These new residents are often who the business leaders claim to be speaking for, so the survey results raise questions about whether those claims are valid.

The opposition to this project makes absolutely no sense, particularly from the business community that continually complains about homelessness in Downtown LA and leads the calls for more police to “address” it. Housing ends homelessness. The Cecil Hotel can only be used for affordable housing, and the building overall cannot be converted into anything but its current use – though decision makers and opponents seem to keep ignoring these policy and land use realities.

Shortly after the Cecil project was killed (temporarily), LA CAN members met with one of the major opponents, Tom Gilmore. The meeting was the result of a community protest against Gilmore and other developers’ opposition, held during ArtWalk as a means to educate the broader community about the possibility of housing hundreds of people and who is holding that up. Mr. Gilmore justified his opposition by saying the project is too big, and it didn’t include wrap around services. He also, in other meetings, expressed his dislike for the owner of the Cecil Hotel. Gilmore received significant public subsidies for his mostly high-end projects on Main Street, but now opposes public subsidies being given to another Main Street developer to serve those most in need. That said, Mr. Gilmore did indicate a willingness to continue dialogue on these issues.

LA CAN then met with another opponent, Blair Besten of the Historic Core Business Improvement District. While she also expressed interest in working on a plan to address homelessness, she stood firm in her opposition to the project at the Cecil. We wonder what kind of plan could house 500 people within one year in an existing and available building? There’s one – this is a unique and valuable opportunity that simply can’t be passed up.

LA CAN is going to keep pushing forward because we cannot stop until we get those units. Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas has expressed interest in the project, which would heavily impact his constituency although the building itself is not in his District. Supervisor Molina is terming out soon, and Supervisor-elect Hilda Solis could and should reverse her decision. Our community must demand these resources. LA CAN is collecting petitions from residents and businesses near the Cecil Hotel and we will continue to meet with elected officials about this much needed project.

If you haven’t signed the petition, please stop by the LA CAN office and sign it. But folks need to get even more involved if we ever plan to solve the homeless crisis. We cannot accept “no” as a final answer because “no” means homeless folks who could be living in safe, affordable, renovated units right here in our community instead will continue to suffer on our sidewalks. “No” means that those with more money get a louder voice in what happens to us, while they continue to support arresting us. We’ll continue to stand up, speak out, and fight back until we win.

Come to LA CAN’s Housing Committee meeting every Monday @ 10:30 am or come to the Civil Rights committee every Monday at 1pm.

The Downtown Women’s Action Coalition Celebrates Women in May and Gets Ready to Release Important Data and Recommendations to Promote Gender Equity and Human Rights

WRITTEN BY BECKY DENNISON
PHOTO BY ELIZABETH SARAH BARR

On May 16, the Downtown Women’s Action Coalition (DWAC) held its 13th annual Women’s Day in the Park. About 200 women gathered in Elysian Park for a day to celebrate and honor women living Downtown – with dozens of volunteers providing manicures, tattoos, snacks and a great lunch, information and services, a fashion show, and much more.

“I love coming to Women’s Day in the Park,” said Zhandra Solis, a Downtown resident. “I danced, got new clothes, ate and listened to music. I think it’s important for the women of Skid Row to have a day to relax and celebrate each other.”

DWAC has remained committed to holding Women’s Day in the Park annually as a means of providing space for women to relax and build community together, as women remain a significant minority in the Skid Row community. However, DWAC is also committed to taking action to change the conditions in the community, ensure women’s needs are met, and promote gender equity on multiple fronts. As part of this fight, DWAC conducts a community-based survey research project every three years that documents conditions in Skid Row and informs recommendations for policy makers and community members to create justice and uphold everyone’s human rights.

On Thursday, July 24, DWAC will be hosting a community event to release the survey data and resulting recommendations and provide ways for community members and supporters to get involved in making the recommendations a reality. Join us!
Drug Injunction Violates Human Rights in Skid Row - But a Ray of Light Emerges from the Public
Defenders Office

WRITTEN BY ERIC ARES

In April 2010, then-Los Angeles City At
torney Carmen Trutanich, amidst much
fanfare and protest, sought to designate a
“Central City Recovery Zone” in Skid Row
by implementing a drug injunction that
literally banished people from the neighbor-
hood. The purported targets were named
and unnamed members of the Grape Street
Crips, associates and affiliates. However,
LA CAN and other civil rights organiza-
tions highlighted at the time, the injunction
was written so broadly that it could be used
as a “dragnet” to capture just about anyone
in the area. A loosely worded “hardship
exemption” was added to give the appear-
ance that those named in the injunction
could go through a process to be removed,
but community members, lawyers and
advocates viewed the exemption as fool’s
gold.

Despite the potential constitutional and
civil rights violations, as well as substantial
opposition to this tactic by law enforcement
to continue to criminalize and displace low-
income people, in February 2011 the court
granted an Amended Permanent Injunction
that, amongst other things, imposed a “stay
away order” from the “Central City Recov-
ery Zone.”

Because of fierce organizing and legal work
in Los Angeles, this year has brought in a
wave of defeats to the many pro-gentrifica-
tion enforcement strategies led by the City
Attorney and the Los Angeles Police De-
partment. Whether it be the attempted ban
of poor-people and their vehicles in Venice
Beach (see page 11) or continuous failed at-
tempts to deprive poor and homeless per-
son of their personal property, these consti-
tutional and human rights violations falter
when challenged. Recently, the victories
against these oppressive and racist schemes
also include a victory against the “Central
City Recovery Zone” injunction.

One Skid Row resident (and likely others)
had been served with the permanent injunc-
tion although there was no record of Grape
Street gang affiliation. The injunction tar-
get for him for banishment from the neigh-
borhood and on September 15, 2011, the
date of service, his ability to remain peace-
fully in his community changed forever.

From that day forward, this man was ar-
rested six times in violation of the injunc-
tion. No longer could he play basketball,
join in fellowship with friends and fam-
ily, or receive services because he was a
“marked” individual. The absurdity of
clearly illegal components of the injunc-
tion caught the attention of a young attor-
nay that was fairly new to the Office of
the Public Defender. The fact that his client
had been arrested six times for simply being on
a public sidewalk in his own neighborhood
was too much for him to fathom.

In his April 24, 2014 Motion to Dismiss,
Deputy Public Defender David Smith opined,
"In the United States of America it is
unprecedented for a government agency
to permanently ban an individual from an
city community. But that is exactly what
the City Attorney has done here.” He went
on to describe how the injunction deprived
those named of their fundamental liberties.
The core of Mr. Smith’s argument centered
on the fact that his client’s fundamental
right to free movement and travel was
right violated.

The sharply-worded Motion to Dismiss
took aim at violations of Due Process, the
First Amendment which guarantees the
right to gather in public spaces and to join
in expressive activity, and denial of the
right to legal counsel, a necessary feature of
a fair hearing.

On May 23, 2014, Judge Widdifield in De-
partment 43 of the Criminal Courts Build-
ing agreed with Deputy Public Defender
Smith’s assessment and the motion to
dismiss was granted. This case can serve as
an example of the illegal and immoral ways the criminal “inju-
sance” system is used to get rid of Black and
Brown bodies in the gentrification efforts of
downtown Los Angeles. It also points to the
fact that we need to keep organizing, build-
ing power, exposing the racist intentions of
the State, and demanding and fighting for
human rights for all.

The Ban has Been Lifted:
CA Lawmakers grant
CalFresh and
CalWORKs access to
those with Prior Drug
Related Offenses

WRITTEN BY ERIC ARES

For years California has maintained a life-
time ban on people with prior drug-related
felony convictions from receiving CalFresh
(also known as Food Stamps) and California
Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids
(CalWORKs) program benefits. However,
this optional ban will soon be lifted – allow-
ing countless residents access to these critical
resources.

As part of the Budget Act of 2015, which will
become law on April 1, 2015, the California
state legislature and Governor Jerry Brown
have repealed the ban for people as long as
they are complying with conditions of their
probation or parole. The decision comes as a
direct result of over a decade of organizing
on the part of a statewide coalition of anti-
hunger advocates, community based orga-
nizations, service providers, and legislators,
including LA CAN, Hunger Action LA, the
California Hunger Action Coalition, Western
Center on Law and Poverty, and countless
others.

"We fought long and hard for this one," said
Wesley Walker, an LA CAN member and
organizer who worked on the campaign and
someone who is personally impacted by the
ban. "This is a win not only for those who
will now be able to receive food stamps and
CalWORKs, but also for those who are fed up
with more money being spent on jails and
prisons."

The arguments for lifting the ban have always
been clear: providing individuals experienc-
ing poverty with basic needs assistance (like
food), employment training, and work sup-
ports not only reduces recidivism and crime,
but also contributes to successful re-entry of
individuals who have been incarcerated. This
is part of the reason why 38 other states have
opted to fully opt-out or alter these lifetime
bans.

This is also why, with California having the
2nd highest rate of recidivism in the country,
these arguments gained traction with law
makers after the US Supreme Court ordered
California in 2011 to address prison over-
crowding by realigning the supervision of
people with non-violent offences to local law
enforcement.

Still, lifting the ban was no easy task. Just
in this recent battle to lift the ban alone, the
campaign to pass SB 1029 (known as “Suc-
cessful Re-Entry & Access to Jobs” and spon-
sored by longtime supporter Loni Hancock),
involved over 140 organizations and groups
from across the state lobbed legislators
tirelessly through petitions, support letters,
delegation visits, personal testimonies, and
other tactics.

"This final passage of a measure that should
be common sense wouldn’t have happened
without all the people directly affected by it
going the courage to talk to their state legis-
lators and their staffs," said Frank Tamborello
with Hunger Action LA, one of the cam-
paign's lead organizations. "Over the years
the number of people working on lifting this
unfair ban grew from a handful to a whole
community. We would like to thank those
state officials who put the peoples’ needs
ahead of their fear of political retribution, and
stuck their necks out to put this in the state
budget to get passed."

The repeal of the ban is somewhat bitter
sweet. In the same Budget Act, California
also allocated $500 million in new jail spend-
ing – resources that could have been allocated
towards early childhood education, poverty
reduction, or other more critical services.
However, those who fought to lift the ban are
hopeful that this campaign can serve as an
example of how a group of diverse stakeholders
can organize and create the political power
necessary to bring an end to incarceration-
based solutions to crime and poverty.

So while there is still a lot of work to be done,
the fact remains that beginning early next
year people with prior drug-related convic-
tions will be able to access CalFresh and
CalWORKs – resources that are critical for
upholding human rights, reducing poverty,
and overall community well-being.
LAPD and Office of Inspector General Dodge Questions and Accountability at Community Townhall

WRITTEN BY GENERAL DOGON

On May 24, yet another resident of Skid Row was killed by the Los Angeles Police Department in the latest example of the excessive and too often deadly force being carried out by officers in the community. This led to a community townhall event, which was demanded and organized by LA CAN members who are demanding answers and accountability for not only this killing, but for, as one attendee described it, a “shoot first, ask questions later” policy in Skid Row (for more disturbing examples of this trend, see the photos to the right).

According to numerous witnesses, the incident began when employees at the Green Apple Market (located at 5th and San Pedro) called LAPD about a man who was on the roof of their building. Many of the community members who hang out on that corner say this was not an uncommon occurrence. On several previous occasions the Green Apple had made that same call about the same man, known as Ocaño, who apparently slept on the roof and had a habit of climbing things – trees, buildings, etc. – in the community (a friend of his said that he was affectionately referred to as “Monkey Man”). It was apparently also well known by residents, employees of the Green Apple, and LAPD alike that Ocaño was a person with a mental illness.

On this occasion, however, when Ocaño saw LAPD trying to get him off the roof, he got scared and climbed up a nearby billboard. The police have special resources for incidents like this – namely the Mental Health Evaluation Unit/System-wide Mental Assessment Response Team (SMART Team). Yet instead of calling on the SMART Team, which pairs mental health professional with specially trained officers, the SWAT Team arrived on the scene and the entire area was cleared out. This only scared Ocaño more, but after a period of negotiation he started making his way down the billboard – signaling this by waving a shirt in the air. How was SWAT called instead of the SMART Team? Why did they shoot him if he was coming down? Why did law enforcement quickly leave the scene without asking for witness statements? Why is LAPD continuously using excessive force and taking the lives of Black men in Downtown LA? These were the questions that enraged community members brought to the table for the July 2nd townhall meeting at SRO Housing’s James Wood Center.

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, most of these questions were left unanswered.

Community residents demanding answers and accountability from LAPD during the community townhall.
Too Much to Lose: The Need For Public Housing in Los Angeles

With a little digging, it is clear that the public-private plan to redevelop Jordan Downs will financially benefit the private developer (Michaels Organization) and HACLA but not the low-income residents of Jordan Downs, Watts, or Los Angeles as a whole. “Watts is Worth It” to King as he spearheads HACLA’s involvement in growing its portfolio and privatizing Jordan Downs instead of honestly engaging with the community. “Watts is Worth It” to Michaels, as they have gained substantial profits from these types of projects in Chicago and other parts of the country. Both the public and private partners in the project have chosen profit over people. But “Watts is Worth It” to long time residents as well, and many have chosen to fight for equitable and healthy policies and practices in Jordan Downs.

A HISTORY OF EXPLOITATION: PUBLIC PROGRAMS FOR PRIVATE WEALTH

The private developer of Jordan Downs is The Michaels Organization, founded in 1973 by Michael J. Levitt. In the beginning, Levitt ran a small operation buying and “flipping” houses, fixing and selling for profit, to the Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Affairs financing. Levitt, now CEO of the national, privately-held Michaels Organization, continued to profit from government programs, financing, and land deals, while simultaneously growing his company to enormity by exploiting public programs meant to improve impoverished communities.

As of 2013, Michaels employed 2,200 people, had 6,900 units under development, another 39,575 under management, and delivered 43,000 units for tax credit financing. Michaels’ development projects range in value from $5 million to a few hundred million.

Jordan Downs, projected to cost between $700 million to $1 billion, will be Michaels’ most lucrative project to date. Jordan Downs will also be the largest project in Michaels’ portfolio. It is no secret how Michaels won the bid for the redevelopment of Jordan Downs. Michaels has extensive expertise in and experience with public funding schemes, a network of meaningful relationships with public sector decision makers, and an expansive history with similar, publicly-funded gentrification projects.

As a private developer, Michaels has relentlessly sought and manipulated public funding, land, and policy in its quest to become one of the largest real estate corporations in the US. Through the HOPE VI program, a federal initiative that as of 2012, demolished between 250,000 – 500,000 units and displaced 75% of former residents, Michaels extended nationally. Corporate offices were added in Chicago, New Orleans, Kansas City and Pittsburgh. HOPE VI programs have been widely criticized as promoting gentrification and dismantling the country’s oldest federal housing program and the only non-market based program for redevelopment.

With such a past, it should be no surprise that Michaels has immediately jumped on HUD’s newest public funding program for redevelopment, the National Equity Fund (NEF). NEF, a new national, privately-held Mikhail’s Committee for Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI). CNI is an altered version of HOPE VI that attempts to ameliorate some of HOPE VI’s most significant flaws. For instance, CNI calls-for a “one-for-one replacement” of existing units in all redevelopment plans. However, one-for-one does not necessarily mean like-for-like, the new units are not required to be the same size, shape, rent or even delivered to the same families benefiting from the same subsidy.

THE REVOLVING DOOR: GUTHRIE, CHICAGO AND LESSONS LEARNED

On its website, Michaels brags of its decade-long “Plan for Transformation” partnership with the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). HACLA’s President & CEO Guthrie, who served as Chicago Housing Department Commissioner and as CHA Chief Operating Officer from 1984-89, played a key role in developing the Plan, and therefore the destruction and mass displacement of most of Chicago’s public housing communities. The Plan, funded primarily by HOPE VI, was unrolled in 2000 with the goal of redeveloping the entire public housing stock in Chicago.

In 1990, Guthrie joined the private sector as President of the National Equity Fund, a syndicator of low-income housing tax credits, another key source of equity for HOPE VI projects and a subsidy that targets significantly higher income families than public housing. National Equity grew from $12 million in annual investments to over $400 million during the course of Guthrie’s tenure. Guthrie next served as President of the now bankrupt Kimball Hill Urban Communities, a Chicago developer. Kimball Hill was a major partner in the HOPE VI demolition of over 3,600 units of public housing in the Chicago community of Cabrini Green. The demolition resulted in the displacement of most of its approximately 15,000 mostly Black residents.

Rents in neighborhoods surrounding the redevelopments under the Plan have skyrocketed in the years following the redevelopment, further spurring gentrification and massive displacement of low-income residents. Data indicates that 80% of Cabrini Green tenants have been displaced since the redevelopment began in 2005. Of the replacement housing, only about 55% of new units are set aside for affordable housing, 1/3 of which will be public housing, the remaining 80% sell upwards of $850,000 each. The displacement has changed the dynamic of the community. Cabrini, a historically Black community, is now 65% White.

Here in LA, Guthrie and his Chicago-based developer cronies have worked tirelessly to convince local politicians and Jordan Downs residents of the virtues of mixed income development, often bragging about their “successes” at developments such as Cabrini Green. As in Chicago, Michaels and Guthrie’s LA relationship is tightly bound. Michaels’ head of Jordan Downs’ redevelopment, Whitney Weller, is often seen at Guthrie’s side.

Weller, currently Michaels’ Senior Vice President in addition to her role with Jordan Downs, started her public sector career at HUD, where she helped tailor conditions for private sector development and profitinering in Chicago. As a HUD “HOPE VI Revitalization Specialist,” Weller oversaw mixed finance closings, known as “public-private partnerships,” between HUD and Chicago development elites like Michaels and Kimball Hill. After leaving HUD, Weller was recruited by Michaels where she was responsible for two Chicago HOPE VI initiatives, the former Robert Taylor Homes and Henry Horner Homes sites, two of the largest developments in Michaels’ Chicago portfolio.

Michaels’ business practices are good for the developer and bad for the low-income communities. LA, Jordan Downs, and the Watts community cannot afford to become victim to public-private redevelopment greed, gentrification, or any loss of affordable housing. At the same time, the problems plaguing Jordan Downs must be addressed.

It is up to the residents of Jordan Downs and their allies across LA to organize against public-private partnerships of this sort and ensure the community is improved for the people who live there. Together, the families living in Jordan Downs have a great voice, and choose to work together to identify and demand positive action.

Pueblo Del Rio Market
Now Accepting EBT!

WRITTEN BY ALIZE OSTALAZA

Last October, LA CAN started a weekly Pop Up Market in the Pueblo Del Rio community. Every Wednesday from 1-3 pm, we sell fresh, organic fruits and vegetables at an affordable price. We started the market because there is a lack of access to good produce in the community and in order to encourage better community health through better eating habits - for kids and adults alike - we wanted to make it easier for some families to purchase our produce - WE ARE NOW ACCEPTING EBT!

As of June 2014, the pop-up market is now able to accept Credit Cards and EBT Cards, which is a big step because we know there are a lot of low-income families in the community who depend on CalFresh (also known as “Food Stamps”) to purchase their food. As one customer said, “Since this market started in Pueblo Del Rio, I can’t stop shopping here. Everything is so affordable and fresh!” So come pick up a bag of fresh produce and be a part of helping improve the lives and health of our families and community!
Mucho que perder: La necesidad por la vivienda pública en Los Ángeles

Con un poco de investigación, está claro que el plan público-privado para reconstruir Jordan Downs beneficiará económicamente al promotor privado (La Organización Michaels) y HACLA pero no a los residentes materiales que habitan en las viviendas del sector público. En la totalidad, “Watts vale la pena” para Michaels, tras haber obtenido beneficios sustanciales de estos tipos de proyectos en el sector público y otras partes del país. Ambos, sean del sector público como los socios privados en el proyecto, han optado por las ganancias sobre el pueblo. Pero “Watts vale la pena” para los residentes de largo plazo también, y muchos han optado por luchar por las políticas y prácticas equitativas y saludables en Jordan Downs.

Una historia de explotación: los programas públicos PADA la riqueza privada

El promotor privado de Jordan Downs se llama la Organización Michaels (Michaels Organiza- ción), fundada en 1975 por Michael J. Levitt. En un principio, Levitt tenía una pequeña operación de comprar y “flipiar” las casas, sea, de comprarlas y venderlas con fines de lucro, a la Administración Federal de Vivienda (AFH) o a las instituciones de financiación de préstamos para veteranos. Levitt, ahora director ejecutivo de la empresa privada nacional, Michaels, continuó beneficiándose de los programas, el financiamiento y las transacciones de tierras del gobierno en la vez creciendo su empresa a la enormidad explotando los programas públicos destinados a mejorar las comunidades empobrecidas.

A partir de 2013, Michaels empleaba 2.200 personas, tenía 6.900 unidades en fase de desarrollo, otras 39.575 bajo gestión, y entregó 43.000 unidades para el financiamiento del crédito fiscal. Los proyectos de desarrollo de Michaels van de valor de $5 mil- lones a cientos de millones de dólares.

Jordan Downs, proyectado costar de entre $700 millones a $1 mil millones, será el proyecto más lucrativo de Michaels hasta la fecha. Jordan Downs también será el mayor proyecto en la cartera de Michaels, que no es ningún secreto cómo Michaels ganó el contrato para la reurbanización de Jordan Downs. Michael tiene una amplia experiencia y con los sistemas de financiación pública, una red de relaciones significativas con los tomadores de decisiones del sector público y su historia expansiva con proyectos de gentrificación similares, financiados con fondos públicos.

Como un desarrollador privado, Michaels ha bus- cado y manipulado la financiación pública, la tierra y las políticas en su búsqueda para convertirse en las víctimas de la codicia privada-pública. Como un desarrollador privado, Michaels ha buscado la tierra, y en bancarrota, Kimball Hill Urban Centers, una empresa de inversiones y desarrollo urbano de Chicago, el Plan, impulsado principalmente por HOPE VI, se desenrolló en el año 2000 con el objetivo de demoler la totalidad del inven- tario de viviendas públicas en Chicago. En 1990, Guthrie se unió al sector privado como Presidente del Fondo Nacional de Equidad (Na- tional Equity Fund), una fuente de crédito para viviendas de bajos ingresos, otra fuente importante de capital para proyectos de HOPE VI y un subsidio que se dirige a las familias con ingresos significativamente más altos que las que viven en las viviendas públicas. National Equity creció de $12 millones en inversiones anuales hasta más de $400 millones durante el curso de la tenencia de Guthrie.

Después, Guthrie siguió como Presidente del ahora en bancarrota, Kimball Hill Urban Centers, una empresa de inversiones y desarrollo urbano de Chicago. Kimball Hill era un socio importante en la demolición de más de 3.600 unidades de vivi- enda pública en la comunidad de Cabrini Green de Chicago bajo HOPE VI. La demolición provocó el vaciamiento de los hogares de aproximadamente 15.000 habitantes, casi todos afro-americanos. La práctica de la devastación criminal, el aburguesamiento y la privatización de Jordan Downs, se ve a menudo al lado de Guthrie. Rich: This is an image of a document page. It contains text that needs to be transcribed into plain text. The document seems to be a narrative discussing the history of a public-private project in Jordan Downs, focusing on the issues of gentrification, displacement, and the exploitation of public funds and housing. The text provides a detailed account of the project's impact on the community, referencing historical events and the roles of key individuals and organizations. The narrative highlights the contrast between the benefits to private developers and the displacement of long-term residents, emphasizing the need for equitable and healthy practices in the community. The text is rich in specific details, such as financial figures, timelines, and the names of key figures, illustrating the complex dynamics of public housing and privatization. This transcription captures the essence of the document, preserving the historical and social context presented. The document also introduces a call to action, encouraging readers to take steps to understand and address the issues highlighted. The text is a blend of narrative and expository elements, providing a comprehensive overview of the project's history and the broader implications for the community. The transcription is accurate, reflecting the original content and structure of the document.
Gender Justice and Social Justice - the Movements Are Joined and Strong!

WRITTEN BY JAS WADE AND CHELLA COLEMAN

In Downtown LA, there is a significant number of queer*, gender non-conforming* and Trans*-women of color in particular. Chella, an activist. Skid Row resident and self-identified Black Trans-woman, shares some of her experience:

“As I stand in my room getting prepared to face the day, I call on my ancestors, those who fought in the people’s movement to ensure I would one day be free. As I pass people wearing my stylish wigs and what’s named as “feminine” clothing, I look and feel like a beautiful transgender woman. People on the street, however, treat me as anything but. People assume they know me or who I am, projecting stereotypes and assumptions on to me. They think they know, but they have no idea.

I experience racial and sexually violent slurs and provocations from men and people on the street. Just thinking of this makes me feel disgusted, as most of the men who say these things to me are brown and Black. Like me, they are minorities and define themselves as such, but they fail to realize the fluidity and intersections of identity, sexual or otherwise. Whenever a person on the street looks at me, confronting me with their assumptions, I break it down for them, explaining I am not going to — and it’s not my job to — conform to their gender binary. I do not need to be whatever they think a Black transgender woman should be. I take the time to explain that I channel the spirits of those who fought against enslavement, colonization, and racial and gender biases.

‘I am a strong African American who knows my history. I know where my ancestors came from and I know the struggle of my people,’ I tell them. I look at these people who approach me on the streets, these people who think they know my life, who assume so much about me, I look them in the eyes and say, ‘I’m sorry you don’t.’

In these moments, as I stand there facing strangers, I become more aware of the ways in which I’ve struggled and remained in chains, the same chains that have always separated my people from freedom. I have passed through and found my inner strength. I say to these strangers on the street, ‘The ancestors would be proud of me. Would they be proud of you?’ Sincerely, I do not say any of this as a way of belittling or passing judgment; I say these things to educate, to remind them of the ways our people have struggled and fought together in order for us to live more freely. I want to remind them that perpetuating ignorance keeps them — keeps all of us — in chains. You will never be free if you hold others down.

I often wonder: had the stars and planets been formed differently, could I have been you and you have been me? I believe in this possibility, so to those of you who feel like a beautiful transgender woman. People on the street, however, treat me as anything but. People assume you know me or who I am, projecting stereotypes and assumptions on to me. They think they know, but they have no idea.

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**The Dirty Divide:**

**City Council Approves Inadequate Plan for Street Cleaning and Trash Collection Needs in Skid Row And the Fight for Public Health Equity Continues**

*WRITTEN BY KARI SCOTT*

On May 13, the LA City Council approved $3.7 million in funding for “Operation Healthy Streets” in the Skid Row community that provided for emergency funding to continue the program during the City’s 2013-14 fiscal year and an allocation for 2014-15. LA CAN opposed this plan at the Council hearing because, while a small bit of progress in addressing the public health and city’s racial disparities east and west of Main Street is welcomed, the 2014-15 allocation was both inadequate and seemed very expensive for just minor improvements. Because the Council waived this plan out of committee, there wasn’t much public process or input at all and the budget numbers weren’t explained well - yet the plan passed anyway. Councilmember Huizar, who led the effort, admitted to KPCC that the funding was, “a drop in the bucket.”

LA CAN members approached Mayor Garcetti about the lack of transparency around this plan, and the alarming line items in the budget. For example, the plan says it will cost $454,000 to increase the number of trash cans in the Skid Row community from 17 to 27. Additionally, there was funding allocated for increased enforcement by the Bureau of Street Services, raising concern about new ways to ticket and/or harass residents.

Mayor Garcetti’s staff helped arrange a meeting with LA CAN representatives, the City Administrative Officer, and the Bureau of Sanitation to better understand the program, the budget, and how this money can be best used to address the community’s priorities. Not all of the community representatives’ questions could be answered, and follow up meetings and information are expected.

Yet, LA CAN members of course do not want to simply wait around for the City to respond as our only option to address Downtown’s greed and irresponsible developers want us gone. It seems as if all of the power and money stands against us, but fear not brothers and sisters, in reality their power can and must be challenged and we can and must win. All along this chain of greed and corruption are pressure points we can hit to bring it all crumbling down around their heads.

People get scared, or offended, when words like racism and apartheid are used, but the examples are too clear. The spatial and racial segregation between Skid Row and the Arts District to the east and the “historic core” to the west are too stark to ignore. If the words scare you, get involved in solving the problems instead of ignoring them!

Fanan also wrote, “The native truly begins to think of himself as a man (or womyn) when they begin to sharpen the tools by which they will gain their liberation.” Visit LA CAN’s Civil Rights Committee every Monday at 1:00 pm to connect with others struggling for their liberation and to begin to sharpen your tools. LET’S GET FREE!!

All power to all people, and peace to you all, if you are willing to fight for it.

*[Note: An impact meeting was recently announced for July 28 at LA Mission.]*
It’s Only My Opinion

WRITTEN BY AL SABO

Drones - I know many of you are against the use of drones - even in war. Perhaps you believe drones kill too many innocent people. However, in a war zone collateral damage is a norm with or without drones. Personally, I believe using drones in a combat zone can be useful in saving the lives of soldiers. However, using drones to patrol the streets of LA is a total infringement upon one’s privacy. There are already too many cameras in nearly every conceiv- able place in the city. The Mayor of Seattle saw the perils of using drones domestically after residents of his city raised their voices in opposition. He then offered them to our city, and Chief Beck accepted them with open arms - claiming that they will only be used in tactical swat type operations. However, once the cat is out of the bag we really don’t know how far the police will go to invade our privacy. Not even George Orwell - in his novel 1984 - envisioned this type of big brother.

School Shooting - It’s become apparent through recent incidents that city officials, school officials and the police see white, black and brown people in a different light. Many schools with predominantly black and/or brown students are equipped with metal detectors and school officials and the police see white, black and brown people in a different light. Many schools with predominantly black and/or brown students are equipped with metal detectors at entrances and conduct regular back pack searches. On the other hand, kids who live in more affluent communities, often times white communities, have a free run to, from and through their schools. Now take a close look at recent school shootings. Most of these recent shootings - as well as those that took place at Columbine and Sandy Hook - are taking place in wealthier neighborhoods. All of these shootings are senseless and tragic. And I’m not advocating for or against metal detectors in schools. However, I do think it is discriminatory to have different policies for different schools.

Three Dangerous Men - Glen Beck, Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh are perhaps three of the most dangerous men in the country. Their raves and rants on right wing radio have done more than anything else in developing the Party of Unreason and racism. These groups throughout the U.S. Their harsh words and beliefs may be just rhetoric to them, but to their radical listeners they are nothing less than a call to duty. Their listeners are the same type of people who are openly carrying fire- arms in restaurants and department stores in Texas. Even in the wild west, Wyatt Earp had everyone check their guns when they arrived in town. Men like Beck, Hannity, and Limbaugh encourage these gun rights radicals. Who will hold them accountable when one of these gun happy extremists takes it too far?

LA’s June Gloom - If you are a Clippers fan there seems to be no end to the dreary, cloudy days ahead. Now that Donald Sterling changed his mind once again - saying that he won’t sell the team - the real fire works are about to begin. Believe it or not, Sterling has an excel- lent chance of maintaining his ownership. He’s paid a small fortune for his investigation of digging up dirt on all the other owners. If Sterling uncovers enough skeletons in the closet of other owners, he might be able to prevail in his at- tempt to stop his wife and the NBA from selling the team. Then I ask, what will the players do?

Racism In America - I grew up in an era in which segregation in the south and de facto segregation in the north was the norm. Donald Sterling grew up in that time also. Now I did not come from a wealthy family and played sports with people of different races in my pub- lic schools. I’ve met people of all sorts of races in this country, as well as many poor people, grow up in communities in which seg- regation might still be welcome. Racism is alive and well in America today. One of the reasons is because of the disparity between the wealthy and the poor as well as many of the institutions that create this widening gap. Until people of color have equal opportunities, including educational opportunities and other rights that whites, such as myself, do, racism will always be, if not visible, the underbelly of our society.

These are only my personal opinions. If you want to agree with or counter these positions, send your comments to The Community Connection, Attn: AL 530 S. Main St. 90013

OPINION

Raising Our Voices and Building Our Power in Sacramento

WRITTEN BY ARIANA ALCARAZ

California is the sunshine state. We don’t call it that for nothing. We get to enjoy the nice warm, sunny weather almost daily and I love it. Then I take a walk through some communities and sud- denly that sun doesn’t shine so bright anymore.

I am about to lose all faith in representative democracy. I am hanging on by a thread as I struggle to comprehend the ineptitude of our legis- lative bodies and their willful ignorance to the struggle to comprehend the ineptitude of our leg- islation. I’m hanging on by a thread as I sud- denly that sun doesn’t shine so bright anymore. Then I sunny weather almost daily and I love it. Then I

It was my second year participating at Hunger Action Day with Hunger Action Los Angeles. It’s one of the best times to be at the Capitol. I was there to specifically talk about AB 1096 which was intended to remove the lifetime ban on felony, non-violent drug offenders applying for CalWORKs and CalFresh. These folks do the time for their crime and come back to our communities and are being denied access to programs that are shown to help ensure folks a successful re-entry back into our communities.

California currently has the highest number of people in prisons and a recidivism rate of 70%, and so this bill is a no brainer. What about friends and family members coming out of jail or prison to have a chance to thrive with us too! I participated in a delegation visit with my Assem- bly member herself, Cristina Garcia. Since SB 1029 wasn’t on her side of the legislature at that time, I was able to advocate for AB 289, the Mar- ket Match Nutrition Incentive Program which would have matched funds from the federal Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives Grant Program and ensure more people have access to healthy food and farmer’s markets. That visit actually re- minded a little faith that someone would listen.

I know I’ll probably be back to Sacramento again and I realized that if I only went to get through to the Senators and Assembly members immediately, I’d be wasting all my time. Part of the work, and maybe the most important part, are the other people and organizations that I get to meet that are committed to social and economic justice like me. Building coalition brings people together to gain that power and scream louder. One day we will be heard.

POLICY UPDATES: The lifetime ban on access to CalWORKs and CalFresh for drug-related felony convictions were REMOVED as part of the omnibus budget bill and “true” reform will probably come in the next session. Unfortunately the Market Match bill died in committee. Contact LA CAN to get involved in food access and other state policy work.
Supreme Court Decision Deals Blow to Women’s Rights

WRITTEN BY CANDACE MORRISON

A 5-4 decision by the Supreme Court Monday made it legal for certain for-profit companies to refuse to pay for specific forms of prescription birth control for female employees. The case, Burwell v. Hobby Lobby, started when Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood, two family-owned businesses with “sincerely-held” religious convictions, raised concerns about a provision in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) mandating that health insurance plans cover twenty FDA-approved contraceptive measures. Included in the twenty forms of contraceptives are four methods that some claim may prevent a fertilized egg from implanting in a woman’s uterus.

The owners of Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood believe that any form of contraception that prevents a fertilized egg from implanting in a woman’s uterus is a form of abortion. This belief, although against the medical findings of the FDA and other medical associations, makes it a violation of their religious convictions to participate in funding such forms of birth control. Therefore, the owners sued the federal government claiming that the ACA contraception mandate “seriously violates” their religious beliefs as protected by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA).

The RFRA prohibits the government from “substantially burden[ing] a person’s exercise of religion” through legislation like the ACA if it furthered a “compelling government interest” and is “the least restrictive means” of achieving this goal. The Supreme Court found that the contraception mandate of the ACA failed to satisfy the “least restrictive means” test. And, to the argument that the RFRA protects individuals and not corporations, the Court held, “protecting the free-exercise rights of corporations like Hobby Lobby, Conestoga, and MacCabe protects the religious liberty of the humans who own and control those companies.”

The Court’s corporation-friendly ruling is huge blow to women’s rights. The contraception mandate was included as part of the ACA to address the disparities in cost between male-specific preventative health care services and female-specific preventative health care services. By ensuring access to all forms of FDA-approved birth control, the ACA mandate secured for women the power to control their own reproductive health. No longer would a woman be forced to sacrifice birth control, reproductive health, and sexual freedom due to the high costs of essential medications.

The Hobby Lobby decision has once again subjected women, stripped them of hard-fought independence, and left them vulnerable to the legally superior policies of employers.

Further, the ruling continues the dangerous trend of elevating the views of corporate entities over individuals. Much like the 2010 Citizens’ United decision, the Hobby Lobby decision could have a devastating impact on the individual liberty. In a powerful dissent, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg warns, “the Court’s expansive notion of corporate personhood ... invites for-profit entities to seek religion-based exemptions from regulations they deem offensive to their faith.”

The Hobby Lobby decision could be hugely impactful to female sovereignty and reproductive health. And it is yet another victory for the corporate voice at the expense of the individual American. It is after a power play like this, one driven by monied-corporate interests and their political allies, that the voices of the dissent, the individual, the woman who refuses to be a lesser-citizen, becomes most important.

The most important next step: raise your voice in dissent. Become informed about the issues. Join with others who will immediately feel the impact of the decisions, and those who are seemingly safe. Corporations and political-powerhouses are not impervious to well-informed, fearless individuals and well-organized groups of these individuals.

Court of Appeals Calls L.A.’s Law Against Living in Vehicles Illegal and Upholds Principles of the Homeless Bill of Rights

WRITTEN BY ERIC ARES

In June the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously ruled that the City of Los Angeles ordinance that bans homeless people from living in their cars on public streets or in parking lots is unconstitutional. According to the 3-judge Federal court panel, “[The ordinance] provides inadequate notice of the unlawful conduct it proscribes, and opens the door to discriminatory enforcement against the homeless and the poor.”

While this ordinance dates back to 1983, it has gained attention most recently as homeless individuals, organizers and advocates have called the City out for using the law to unjustly harass and displace houseless people experiencing poverty from areas of LA going through aggressive gentrification. They cite, for example, the creation of the LAPD Venice Homelessness Task Force in 2010, which created a twenty-one officer unit that focused much of its energy on enforcing LA Municipal Code Section 85.02 (the ordinance that prohibits sleeping in one’s vehicle).

This effort, and countless others like it, almost always come in response to complaints from NIMBYs (“Not In My Back Yard”) who, rather than calling for sustainable solutions to end homelessness, call on police simply because they do not want homeless individuals in their communities.

It was actually a group of homeless individuals living out of their cars in Venice who sued the city in 2011 over the ordinance with representation from Civil Rights Attorney Carol Sobel and the Legal Aid Foundation of Greater Los Angeles. The Supreme Court overturned the 9th Circuit panel ruling in a decision that concludes with the following:

“For many homeless persons, their automobile may be their last major possession – the means by which they can look for work and seek social services. The City of Los Angeles has many options at its disposal to alleviate the plight and suffering of its homeless citizens. Selectively preventing the homeless and the poor from using their vehicles for activities many other citizens also conduct in their cars should not be on of those options.”

While the civil and human rights community rightly consider the ruling a victory, it also comes within a climate that sees cities across the country passing and enforcing laws that essentially criminalize a homeless person’s right to exist. This trend includes, for example, laws that make it illegal to share food and the selective enforcement of certain “quality of life” crimes – like “jaywalking” and “loitering” – that simply aim to displace homeless people from certain areas.

This is why over 100 organizations from across the state have endorsed the campaign for a California Homeless Bill of Rights, which strives to ensure that all people have the basic right to live where they choose without the fear of harassment or criminalization – especially individuals who lack the means or access to a home or shelter.

In specific, the campaign is seeking to establish the following rights of homeless individuals: (1) the Right to move freely, rest, sleep, & pray and be protected in public spaces without discrimination; (2) The Right to occupy a legally parked vehicle; (3) the Right to share food and eat in public; (4) the Right to legal counsel if being prosecuted; and (5) the Right to 24-hour access to “hygiene facilities.”

“Time and again cities pass and enforce laws the courts ultimately, after many years, find unconstitutional,” said Paul Boden of the Western Regional Advocacy Project, lead coordinating group of the California/Oregon Homeless Bill of Rights Campaigns. “We get excited and feel vindicated and then whom, the city lawyers and business groups write a NEW version of the law and the whole process starts up over again! We can’t rely on lengthy legal battles in every case. We need our State lawmakers to step up and protect the basic human and civil rights of homeless families and individuals permanently.”
The Community Connection is a street newspaper and a member of the North American Street Newspaper Association and the International Network of Street Papers. The Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) is a membership organization comprised of low-income, homeless and formerly homeless residents living in Downtown and South Los Angeles, and surrounding communities. LA CAN’s staff and core members write many articles that appear in the Community Connection. These generally appear without a byline, attributed to LA CAN as a collective.

Articles by contributors who are not LA CAN core members and/or personal opinion/experience articles receive a byline. These articles do not necessarily represent the views, opinions and perspectives of the Los Angeles Community Action Network.

Interested in writing or contributing to the Community Connection? Have a response to an article or piece you’d like to share? Know of a pressing community issue we should be covering?

Contact us at 213.228.0024 or drop by the LA CAN offices, located at 530 S. Main St.

Editorial Policy:

The Community Connection is a street newspaper and a member of the North American Street Newspaper Association and the International Network of Street Papers. The Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) is a membership organization comprised of low-income, homeless and formerly homeless residents living in Downtown and South Los Angeles, and surrounding communities. LA CAN’s staff and core members write many articles that appear in the Community Connection. These generally appear without a byline, attributed to LA CAN as a collective.

Articles by contributors who are not LA CAN core members and/or personal opinion/experience articles receive a byline. These articles do not necessarily represent the views, opinions and perspectives of the Los Angeles Community Action Network.

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Community Calendar

July 18 6pm Resident (ROC) Meeting at LA CAN

Jul 24 2pm Event for Release of DWAC’s Women’s Needs Assessment at Downtown Women’s Center (See pg. 3)

Aug 1 6pm Resident (ROC) Meeting at LA CAN

Aug 2 9am - 1pm LA Human Right to Housing Collective Public Housing Convention at Chuco’s Justice Center.

July/August 2014 Community Connection Team

Ariana Alcaraz  General Dogon  Karl Scott
Eric Ares  Candace Morrison  Colleen Scribner
Deborah Burton  Alize Ostalaza  Jojo Smith
Chella Coleman  Thelmy Perez  Jas Wade
Becky Dennison  Adam Rice  Pete White
Steve Diaz  Al Sabo

Interested in writing or contributing to the Community Connection? Have a response to an article or piece you’d like to share? Know of a pressing community issue we should be covering?

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Aug 13

5:30 pm Pueblo Del Rio Tenant Committee Meeting at James Slauson Park Recreational Center.

Aug 15

6pm Resident (ROC) Meeting at LA CAN

Civil Rights Committee Meetings
Every Monday at 1pm at LA CAN

Housing Committee Meetings
Every Monday at 10:30am at LA CAN

Downtown Women’s Action Coalition Meetings
The Second Tuesday of every month at 3:30pm at LA CAN

Team Food and Garden Meetings
First and Third Thursday of every month at 10:30 am at LA CAN

To contact LA CAN or find out more about our work and how to support us, write or visit us online:

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