

Community CONNECTION

The Voice and Heartbeat of Our Community

September - October 2014 | www.congress.org

One Nation, Divisible

Every 28 hours a Black person is killed by a police officer, security guard, or self-appointed vigilante. From Ferguson to South Los Angeles, New York to Oakland, the Twin Towers to San Quentin - Black lives are being lost to criminalization, police killings, mass incarceration and other various forms of state violence. An examination of this national crisis and a look toward where we go from here.



Race, Police Murders and Protest in the United States

Written by Pete White

The entire tenure of President Obama's presidency has been cast in the mythical illusion of a "post-racial" America. However, the ongoing shooting of unarmed Black men has reached a fever pitch and placed a bulls-eye on the hypocritical contradictions posed by this absurd "post-racial" assertion. Moreover, official responses - transmitted live on the internet and television - take away any and all doubt that America is still steeped in two systems of justice.

The images coming from Ferguson, Missouri are a reminder of years past and a tradition of resistance firmly woven within the DNA of America's Black community. It represents a turning point in how we view and accept the full scale militarization of our communities; it reestablishes the need for home-grown, authentic, community-based representation and leadership; it examines the use of "dispatched" leadership meant to guide or control the direction of otherwise expansive social activism.

In most cases the immediate response to social injustice, in this case murder by police, usually establishes the overall short-term response of the community. Sometimes it's a paralyzing sadness. At other times it's a sense of hopelessness and despair. But unbridled anger - anger at racist systems and structures - is also a catalyst by which responses can be measured. Such is the case in Ferguson.

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On State Violence and Resistance

Written by Jas Wade

The history of the United States is stained by brutal violence against many nations and peoples. Its history of anti-Black violence begins with its very creation that is rooted in genocide and slavery. Even after emancipation, the 13th amendment was written with the intention of never guaranteeing true freedom to Black people in the U.S. Instead laws and policies were used to propagate what it meant to be a "criminal" in order to build and sustain mass incarceration, which has helped continue the legacy of political and social oppression that targets and produces violence against Black people today.

An example of this relationship between state policy and state and vigilante violence was during the Jim Crow era where laws were written to enforce racial segregation and the disenfranchisement of Black people, while supporting the mass killings of Black people during this era through lynching. The displays of state violence against Black people are ever-present today: the high rates of underemployment, poverty, birth mortality, homelessness and hunger, and the mass murder of Black people by the hands law enforcement both in our communities and in custody - each are pervasive examples of state violence. Coretta Scott-King expressed that, "starving a child is violence. Neglecting school children is violence. Punishing a mother and her family is violence. Discrimination against a working man is violence. Ghetto housing is violence. Ignoring medical need is violence. Contempt for poverty is violence."

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DRONE-FREE LAPD - NO DRONES IN LOS ANGELES!



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PROP 47 - HOW CAN YOU HELP CALIFORNIA BECOME THE FIRST STATE IN THE NATION TO END FELONY SENTENCING FOR DRUG POSSESSION AND PETTY THEFT CRIMES?



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THE RENT IS STILL TOO DAMN HIGH - WHAT RENTERS ARE DOING TO FIX "RENT CONTROL" AND FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHT TO HOUSING



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DWAC RELEASES DOWNTOWN WOMEN'S NEEDS ASSESSMENT TO IDENTIFY GAPS IN SERVICES AND HIGHLIGHT OPPORTUNITIES



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Housing

Housing Watch

Written by Steve Diaz

Oviatt Hotel

For about two months, tenants in the Oviatt Hotel have been engaged in a fight for quality repairs. LA CAN has been working on tenant education throughout the South Park community of Downtown LA to ensure that tenants are aware of their tenant rights, especially about the City's Residential Hotel Ordinance which protects those buildings from demolition or conversion into upscale housing. Tenant education was crucial at the Oviatt because the building was in a city administrative program called the Rent Escrow Account Program (REAP). This program allows tenants to be able to receive a reduction in rent ranging from 10 to 50 percent, based on the number and type of unresolved habitability violations after being cited by the city in the form of a notice to correct or notice to comply. Many tenants were unaware of the possibility of paying a reduced rent as they did not receive proper notice.

Inspectors originally came to the building due to a complaint filed by a tenant, which all tenants have the right to do through the City's Housing and Community Investment Department. The City cited the owner because of the lack of weather-proofing on one side of the roof. Although the building entered REAP and provided tenants with temporary rent relief, very quickly the decision to remove the building from REAP moved to City Council. Tenants organized their neighbors and mobilized a delegation to City Hall, where they explained to Councilmembers about the numerous habitability issues existing in the building. Tenants strongly advocated that the council office should take action to ensure all repairs were done before the building was removed from REAP and full rents were required to be paid. Due to tenants speaking the truth to power, the Council office delayed the vote to remove the building from REAP and the City has given intensified attention to the building.

The Oviatt highlights the importance of tenant organizing and the power of people working together. City programs and officials will only do so much unless people move them to act. And while some progress has been made in this building, there are limits to the benefits of the current inspection process and related REAP program. Get involved with LA CAN and the LA Human Right to Housing Collective to work on needed policy changes to make LA a renter-friendly City.

Madison Hotel

In the previous edition of the Community Connection it was reported that tenants of the Madison Hotel are organizing to improve the health and well-being of tenants of the building. Since July, tenants created their own tenant improvement plan and presented it to the building's management and owners. The plan includes detailed set of initial priorities for changes in the building identified by active tenants, including issues such as safety/security, bed bug infestation, and building accessibility for people with disabilities. Tenants were successful in obtaining a meeting with the building owner George Lintz to discuss their plan. At this meeting, the tenant improvement plan was presented and other tenants spoke about why it was important for the owner to take action. Ten days later tenants received a response from the owner and he agreed to implement some of the recommendations and continue in conversation with tenants. Tenants will now monitor the process of implementing changes and continue organizing other people in the building to ensure that all needed changes are implemented and all tenant rights are upheld at the Madison.

La Vivienda En Vela

Escrito por Steve Diaz | Traducido por Thelmy Perez

El Hotel Oviatt

Por cerca de dos meses, los inquilinos del Hotel Oviatt se han comprometido en una lucha por la calidad de las reparaciones. LA CAN se ha dedicado a la educación de los inquilinos en toda la comunidad de South Park del centro de Los Ángeles para asegurar que los inquilinos son conscientes de sus derechos de inquilinos, especialmente acerca de la Ordenanza de Hoteles Residenciales de la Ciudad que protege los edificios contra la demolición o conversión a viviendas de lujo. La educación del inquilino fue crucial en el Oviatt porque el edificio estaba en un programa administrativo de la ciudad llamado el Programa de Rent Escrow Accounts (REAP). Este programa permite que los inquilinos puedan recibir una reducción de la renta entre 10 a 50 por ciento, basado en el número y tipo de violaciones de habitabilidad no resueltas después de haber sido citadas por la ciudad en forma de un aviso para corregir o aviso a cumplir. Muchos inquilinos no sabían que podían pagar una renta reducida, ya que no recibieron la debida notificación.

Los inspectores originalmente llegaron al edificio debido a una denuncia presentada por un inquilino, que todos los inquilinos tienen el derecho de hacerlo a través del Departamento de Vivienda (e inversiones en la Comunidad) de la Ciudad. La ciudad citó el propietario debido a daños en un lado del techo. Aunque el edificio entró en el programa REAP y proporcionó alivio a los inquilinos con rentas temporariamente reducidas, muy rápidamente la decisión de sacar al edificio de REAP se movió al Ayuntamiento. Los inquilinos organizaron sus vecinos y movilizaron una delegación al Ayuntamiento, donde les explicaron a los concejales sobre las numerosas cuestiones de habitabilidad existentes en el edificio. Los inquilinos defendieron firmemente que la oficina del consejo deberá adoptar medidas para asegurar que todas las reparaciones sean realizadas antes de que el edificio fuera retirado de REAP y sean obligados a pagar la renta entera. Debido a que los inquilinos le presentaron la verdad a los en poder, la oficina del Consejo retrasó la votación para eliminar el edificio de REAP y la ciudad ha intensificado la atención en el edificio.

El Oviatt destaca la importancia de la organización de inquilino y el poder de personas que trabajan juntas. Programas y funcionarios de la ciudad sólo harán lo mínimo menos que las personas se muevan a actuar. Aunque se han hecho algunos progresos en este edificio, hay límites a los beneficios del proceso de inspección actual y con el programa REAP. Involúcrese con LA CAN y la Colectiva Pro el Derecho Humano a la Vivienda para trabajar en los cambios de política necesarios para vivir en una Ciudad amigable para los inquilinos.

El Hotel Madison

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El mercado es capaz de aceptar tarjetas de crédito y tarjetas de EBT, que es un gran paso, porque sabemos que hay una gran cantidad de familias de bajos ingresos en la comunidad que dependen de CalFresh (también conocido como "Estampías de Alimentos") para la compra de sus alimentos. Así que ¡venga a comprar una bolsa de productos frescos y sea parte de ayudar a mejorar las vidas y la salud de nuestras familias y comunidad!

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**EVERY WEDNESDAY
1PM - 3PM**

Civil Rights

DRONE-FREE LAPD, NO DRONES, L.A.!

Written by Hamid Khan

On Thursday, August 21 the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition, along with LA CAN, National Lawyers Guild, Restore the Fourth, Islamic Shura Council, and other groups and community members officially launched the Drone-Free LAPD/ No Drones, LA! campaign to stop the Los Angeles Police Department from using their recently acquired drones. Over 50 participants and 20 media outlets attended the launch which included a press conference, theatre, and a march to the Mayor's office. The community was energized and focused, sending a clear message to the Mayor, City Hall and the LAPD Police Commission: "Angelenos reject the use of drones by the LAPD and expect the Mayor to listen and heed the communities' demand."

A drone is an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) or an aircraft that can be remotely controlled without a human pilot on board. Drones can be programmed to fly by themselves or be maneuvered from the ground to search, spy, and bomb. Over the last 10 years the U.S. military has lost over 400 drones that have crashed by themselves. In May 2014 the LAPD announced it had acquired two DraganFlyer X6 Drones as "gifts" from the Seattle Police Department. On June 19, 2014 the LA Weekly reported, "It had been almost a year since the two 3.5-pound Draganflyer X6 drones caused a huge public uproar in Seattle over privacy rights and police snooping, forcing the mayor to permanently ground the mini spy drones before they took their first official flights. They'd been sitting on a shelf ever since the Canadian manufacturer refused to take them back. Now LAPD has taken possession of these drones and promises to hold public hearings – after the fact."

On August 12, 2014 the Drone-Free LAPD/No Drones, LA! Campaign sent a letter to Mayor Eric Garcetti detailing various concerns regard-



The the National Lawyers Guild, Stop LAPD Spying Coalition, Restore the Fourth, Islamic Shura Council and others gather on the steps of LA City Hall on August 21 for the launch of the Drone Free LAPD/No Drone Campaign.

ing the LAPD's acquisition and proposed usage of drones. This letter requested an urgent meeting with the Mayor stating, "As residents of Los Angeles, we reject the recent acquirement of drones by LAPD. We believe the acquisition of drones signifies a giant step forward in the militarization of local law enforcement that is normalizing continued surveillance and violations of human rights of our communities." Our deep concern and rejection of the proposed use of drones by LAPD arises from the addition of this technology to the massive arsenal of tactical weapons and surveillance equipment signifying LAPD as a model of a highly militarized police agency, with an extensive history of community distrust, various examples of "mission creep," violence, brutality, a blatant disregard for privacy rights, and high potential for false identification.

The Mayor's office replied that he could not meet with community for at least a month. Therefore, at the August 21st campaign launch,

community members marched to his office after the press conference with the intention to deliver a packet of information and to schedule a meeting with the Mayor. The LAPD, however, closed the entrance into City Hall and refused access to community members and other unaffiliated persons seeking to do business at a public facility. A representative from the Mayor's office eventually came down to address our concerns. We were told that our issues would be taken to the Mayor with follow up in regards to a request for a meeting but also with an explanation as to why police officers made an indiscriminate decision to close a public building when no safety concern was present. No meeting with the Mayor has been confirmed yet. Stay tuned!

Stop LAPD Spying Coalition
www.stoplapdspying.org
stoplapdspying@gmail.com
 (424) 209-7450

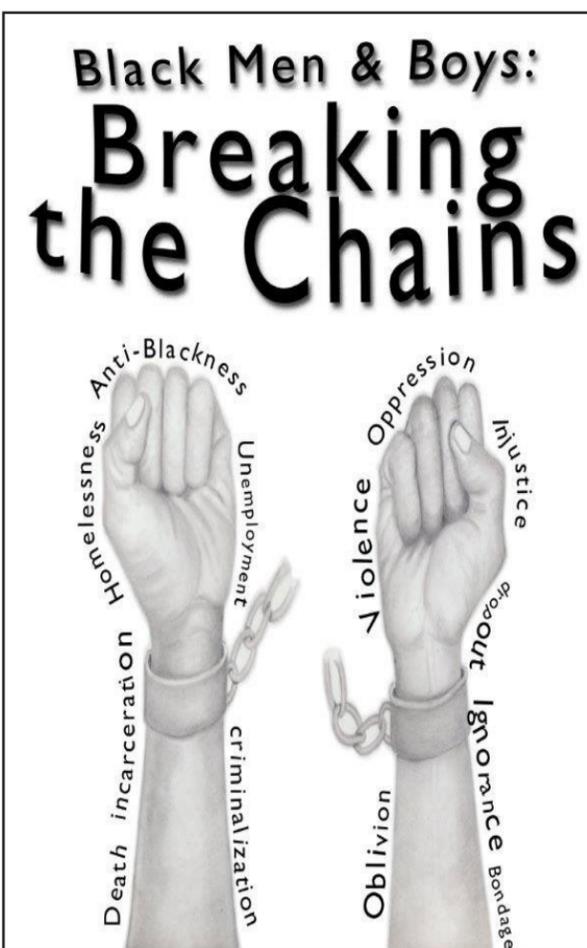
Skid Row Black Men and Boys Survey – Make Your Voice Heard!

Written by Karl Scott

On Labor Day, while everyone was out partying under awnings and in the street at the annual LA CAN Labor Day Gala, Black men were taking the time to participate in a very important Participatory Action Research (PAR) survey. After a year and a half of developing the project, the LA's Black Men and Boys (BMB) Committee* (which meets at LA CAN) launched its much anticipated PAR study that is geared toward understanding and analyzing the experiences of Black men who reside in Skid Row. The first day was a great success as almost 90 surveys were collected.

"This is a great survey because you are dealing with people at many levels who need different types of help," said Rayabushell, who filled out the survey on Labor Day. Ricky, another survey participant, added, "It's about time. This was long awaited."

The BMB team will continue to go out to reach Black men that did not have the opportunity to fill out a survey on Labor Day. After the data is collected, it will be analyzed and turned into a report that will be used in town hall forums, public meetings, and discussions with policymakers to bring attention to the issues affecting



Black men in Skid Row and to create real solutions to systemic problems.

"It was impressive to see the BMB survey being administered at the LA CAN Labor Day event," said Charles Porter, who has worked

in the Skid Row community for many years. "I hung out for a little bit and watched several community members sit down and take their time filling out the extensive survey. I participated in a few BMB planning meetings in the past and fully support this initiative. I look forward to seeing the results and working to help remove the conditions that threaten Black men and boys."

All Black men are encouraged to participate in this great opportunity to better our lives and our community. All those who fill out a survey receive a hygiene kit and a special "Breaking the Chains" teeshirt designed by BMB's own James Porter.

If you were not able to fill out a survey at the Labor Day Gala, there is still time! Surveys will be collected until October 31, 2014. Come by the LA CAN office at 838 E. 6th Street on a Tuesday or Thursday between 1:00 pm and 2:00 pm to fill out the survey and receive your teeshirt.

*LA's Black Men and Boys committee is part of the 2025 National Network for Black Men and Boys, which implements various place-based strategies and partnerships with community-based organizations for the educational, social, emotional, physical, spiritual, political, and economic development and empowerment of African descendant men and boys in the United States.

LA Human Right to Housing Collective

Numerous Studies Show LA's Rental Market Out of Control: City Must Implement LA Human Right to Housing Platform and Much More

Written by Thelmy Perez

"I hold my breath while my children bathe. I fear the ceiling might crash on their heads," reports Nohemi Armendariz, South LA tenant.

This ceiling has been "fixed" three times so far this year due to the deteriorating plumbing above Nohemi Armendariz's quaint two room apartment in South Central LA, near USC. The previous collapse happened while she and others sat in her kitchen in April, discussing tenant organizing strategies. Suddenly, she heard a loud crash and ran to the bathroom to see exposed piping, rusty and leaking, and plaster hanging from a large hole above the bathtub where her ceiling used to be; her daughter's bath time toys peeking through the debris that now filled the tub. It took weeks and several visits from the City's Housing and Community Investment Department and the County's Public Health Department to get the landlord to replace the damaged ceiling. However, despite the appearance of a repaired ceiling, the source of the problem was not addressed and today the moisture bubbles in the plaster and the peeling paint and the visible water in the light fixtures have become an all too familiar source of anxiety.

Unfortunately, Nohemi's anxiety is shared by thousands of low-income tenants living in aging buildings across the City. Her neighbor came home recently to find the ceiling collapsed over her kitchen and spent hours trying to salvage what she could. In Boyle Heights, Maria and her husband say they have given up asking their landlord to make the necessary repairs and instead pay for them out of their own pocket in order to "avoid problems" with their landlord. The City, they say, "is useless in these situations." In Koreatown, Kevin and his neighbors have a basement filled with raw sewage which they say has been making them ill for months. One neighbor awoke to what she thought was an earthquake only to realize that the foot of her bed had fallen through termite-destroyed hardwood floors.

Not only are many rental units in unhealthy condition, but tenants are paying exorbitant amounts of their income to keep these roofs over their heads. "In the most unaffordable city in the country, in which the average renter is paying 47% of their income solely towards their rents, we must obligate our decision makers to impose tougher regulations on allowing rent increases," explained Alma, organizer with the LA Human Right to Housing Collective. The problems facing low income tenants in units that are "below market" in Los Angeles are both unsafe, unhealthy housing conditions and lack of affordability. As communities such as Nohemi's become more desirable to affluent residents due to upscale development (aka gentrified), many landlords will purposely

Language from the Housing Collective Petition:

"We, THE UNDERSIGNED tenants OF LOS ANGELES, call for the following amendments to the city's rent stabilization ordinance (RSO):

1. Adopt and enforce strict definitions of high standards for quality repairs, so as to end the "Mickey Mouse" repairs that have led to detrimental health and safety impacts on tenants and the deterioration and elimination of affordable RSO housing.
2. Eliminate the currently guaranteed 3% minimum annual rent increase.
3. Eliminate the additional 2% rent increase for those who do not pay their own utilities."

*For more information or to get involved visit:
Facebook.com: L.A. Human Right to Housing Collective*

neglect their obligation to provide proper maintenance and allow their buildings to deteriorate as well as raise the rents as much as they are allowed, in order to pressure their long term, low income residents to vacate out of fear and frustration. Once the units are empty, the City's Rent Stabilization Ordinance allows landlords to charge much higher "market" rents.

In response to these aspects of the City's extreme housing crisis, LA Human Right to Housing Collective members created a platform with three initial priorities. The goal of the tenants' proposal is to ensure that low-income residents can afford to live in Los Angeles AND that the homes that are currently affordable to low income residents are preserved over the long term in their structure and in their rents. The tenants' policy proposal, therefore, addresses both high quality repairs and limiting rent increases. The renters' proposal calls for the elimination of the arbitrary 3% annual guaranteed rent increase and the unjustifiable additional 2% annual rent increase for tenants whose gas and electric bills are included in their rents. "By eliminating/limiting the annual rent increase AND defining what repairs must be, we can begin to address the housing crisis afflicting LA by preserving the existing RSO housing, both structurally and economically, that is affordable to low income Angelenos over the long term," says Ignacio, a Downtown resident leader.

Resoundingly, the tenants describe their experiences with the City's Housing and Community Investment Department (aka HCID or "the housing department") inspectors as frustrating. They say that inspectors may cite for cosmetic repairs for the visible damage but rarely require landlords to permanently address the source of the issue such as replacing deteriorated plumbing or eliminating termites. "Often times, we can't communicate our experiences with the inspectors when they are here; either because they don't speak our language or they don't care to hear from us but only from the manager or landlord," explained Mary, another

tenant in South LA. Tenants also complain that oftentimes the inspectors don't see the problems at their worst because landlords are informed when complaints are filed and will come the day before the inspection to 'mickey mouse' any visible problems (like simply painting over mold). Over the years, the Housing Collective and other tenant rights organizers have increasingly accompanied residents during inspections in order to bridge the communication gap and to ease the intimidation and fear of retaliation that residents often report feeling if they do speak up in front of their landlord/manager. Off record, inspectors have anonymously told us that they feel that their hands are tied by the minimal requirements of the "code," which simply states that they must instruct the owners to "repair or replace" only the visible violations.

"This is why organizing across the entire City is so important," said Steve Diaz, an organizer with the Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN), "so that tenants can share their experiences, identify systemic problems, develop and propose policy solutions, and apply pressure on their council members from every corner of the City to make the necessary changes to the laws so that these 'mickey mouse' practices are outlawed and, as a result, public health and quality of life is improved on a broad scale." Therefore, the Housing Collective launched a campaign to do just what Diaz described: to propose reforms to the City's Rent Stabilization Ordinance (aka "the RSO" or "rent control") to include high-quality repairs and lower annual rent increases.

The Housing Collective is currently collecting supporters' signatures on a petition for the reforms described above, as well as stories from tenants experiencing the conditions described above. To get involved, please contact lahumanrighttohousing@gmail.com or 818-835-1091 or PLEASE sign the petition!

La Colectiva por el Derecho Humano a la Vivienda

Numerosos estudios demuestran que el mercado de alquiler de LA esta fuera de control: La ciudad debe implementar la plataforma de la Colectiva por el Derecho Humano a la Vivienda y mucho más

Escrito y traducido por by Thelmy Perez

“Aguanto la respiración mientras mis niños se bañan. Temo que el techo se puede caer en sus cabezas” dijo Nohemi Armendáriz, inquilina de Sur Los Angeles.

Este techo se ha “reparado” tres veces en lo que va de este año debido al deterioro de las tuberías por encima del apartamento de dos habitaciones de Nohemi Armendáriz en el Sur Centro Los Ángeles, cerca de USC. El colapso anterior ocurrió, mientras que ella y otros se sentaban en su cocina en abril, discutiendo estrategias de organización de inquilinos. De repente, se escuchó un fuerte ruido y corrió al baño para ver tubería expuesta, oxidada y fugas, y yeso colgando de un gran agujero por encima de la bañera donde su techo estaba; juguetes de su hija escondidos a través de los escombros que ahora llenaba la bañera. Tardó semanas y varias visitas de la Ciudad Departamento de Salud Pública del Condado para que el propietario reemplazara el techo dañado. Sin embargo, a pesar de la apariencia de un techo reparado, el origen del problema no fue abordado y hoy las burbujas de humedad en el yeso y la pintura descascarada y el agua visible en las luces se han convertido en una fuente muy familiar de ansiedad.

Lamentablemente, la ansiedad de Nohemi es compartida por miles de inquilinos de bajos ingresos que viven en los edificios viejos en la ciudad. Su vecina llegó a casa hace poco para encontrar que el techo se derrumbó sobre su cocina y pasaba horas tratando de salvar lo que podía. En Boyle Heights, María y su marido dicen que han renunciado a pedirle a su propietario reparaciones necesarias y en vez pagan por ellas de su propio bolsillo a fin de “evitar problemas” con su propietario. La ciudad, dice que, “es inútil en estas situaciones.” En el Koreatown, Kevin y sus vecinos tienen un sótano lleno de aguas negras que dicen que los tiene enfermos durante meses. Un vecino se despertó a lo que ella pensaba que era un terremoto sólo para darse cuenta de que los pies de su cama habían caído por el piso de madera destruido por termitas.

No sólo son muchos los apartamentos en condiciones insalubres, pero los inquilinos están pagando cantidades exorbitantes de sus ingresos para mantener sus techos sobre sus cabezas. “En la ciudad más inaccesibles del país, en el que el inquilino común está pagando 47% de sus ingresos exclusivamente hacia su renta, debemos obligar a nuestros tomadores de decisiones a imponer regulaciones más estrictas en los aumentos de renta permitidos”, explicó Alma organizador con la LA Derecho Humano a la Vivienda Colectiva. Los problemas que enfrentan los inquilinos de bajos ingresos en las unidades que se encuentran con rentas “por debajo del mercado” en Los Angeles son ambos, las condiciones de vivienda insalubres e inseguras y la falta de rentas económicas. Como comunidades como la de Nohemi son más deseables a los residentes de altos ingresos

La Petición de la Colectiva:

“Nosotros, los inquilinos abajo firmantes de Los Angeles llamamos por las siguientes modificaciones de la ordenanza de estabilización de rentas de la ciudad de Los Angeles (OSR):

1. Adoptar y aplicar las siguientes definiciones de estándares altos para reparaciones de calidad, con el fin de acabar con las reparaciones “Mickey Mouse” que han resultado en impactos peligrosos para la salud y seguridad de los inquilinos y en el deterioro y la eliminación de la vivienda económica bajo la OSR.
2. Eliminar el actual aumento mínimo anual de renta de 3%.
3. Eliminar el aumento adicional de 2% por la luz y el gas.”

Para obtener más información o para participar visite:
Facebook.com - L.A. Human Right to Housing Collective

debido al desarrollo de lujo (gentrificación), muchos propietarios deliberadamente descuidan su obligación de proporcionar el mantenimiento adecuado y permiten que sus edificios se deterioren y cobran las rentas más altas que se les permite, con el fin de presionar a los residentes de bajos ingresos para desalojar por miedo y frustración. Una vez que las unidades están vacías, la Ordenanza de Estabilización de Rentas de la Ciudad permite que ellos cobren las rentas mucho más altas “de mercado”.

En respuesta a estos aspectos de la extrema crisis de vivienda de la Ciudad, los miembros de La Colectiva Pro el Derecho Humano a la Vivienda crearon una plataforma con tres prioridades iniciales. El objetivo de la propuesta de los inquilinos es asegurar que los residentes de bajos ingresos pueden seguir viviendo en Los Angeles y que los hogares que actualmente están asequibles a los residentes de bajos ingresos se mantienen a largo plazo en su estructura y en sus rentas. La propuesta política de los inquilinos, por lo tanto, se dirige tanto a las reparaciones de alta calidad y los límites en los aumentos de renta. La propuesta de los inquilinos pide la eliminación del aumento arbitrario en la renta de 3% anual garantizado y el aumento de renta injustificable adicional del 2% anual para los inquilinos cuyas facturas de gas y electricidad están incluidos en sus rentas. “Al eliminar / limitar el aumento de la renta anual y la definir lo que son las reparaciones de calidad podemos empezar a abordar la crisis de vivienda de LA por la preservación de la vivienda RSO existente, tanto estructural como económicamente, que es asequible para los angelinos de bajos ingresos para el largo plazo,” dice Ignacio Aguas.

Frecuentemente, los inquilinos describen sus experiencias con los inspectores del Departamento de Viviendas de la Ciudad como frustrante. Dicen que los inspectores pueden citar para reparaciones cosméticas para el daño visible, pero rara vez requieren que los propietarios hagan frente de forma permanente la fuente del problema, tales como la sustitución de tuberías deterioradas o eliminación de las termitas. “Muchas veces, no podemos comunicar nuestras experiencias con los inspectores cuando están aquí; ya sea porque no hablan nuestra idioma o que no les importa saber de

nosotros, pero sólo desde el gerente o propietario”, explicó María, otra inquilina en el sur de Los Ángeles. Los inquilinos también se quejan de que muchas veces los inspectores no ven los problemas en su peor momento, porque a los propietarios se les informa cuando se presentan quejas y ellos llegarán el día antes de la inspección para hacer su ‘mickey mouse’ con cualquier problema visible (como simplemente pintar sobre el mojo). Con los años, los organizadores de los derechos de inquilinos y otros han acompañado cada vez más a los residentes durante las inspecciones con el fin de cerrar la brecha de comunicación y facilitar la intimidación y el miedo a las represalias que los residentes a menudo dicen sentir si lo hacen hablar en frente de su propietario / gerente. Fuera del record, los inspectores de forma anónima nos han dicho que sienten que sus manos están atadas por las exigencias mínimas del “código”, que se limita a establecer que deben instruir a los propietarios a “reparar o reemplazar” sólo las violaciones visibles.

“Esta es la razón que la organización de inquilinos a través de toda la ciudad es tan importante”, dijo Steve Díaz, uno de los organizadores con LA CAN, “para que los inquilinos puedan compartir sus experiencias, identificar problemas sistémicos, desarrollar y proponer soluciones políticas, y aplicar presión sobre sus miembros del consejo de todos los rincones de la ciudad para hacer los cambios necesarios en las leyes para que se proscriben las prácticas de “mickey mouse” y, como resultado, la salud pública y la calidad de vida se mejorara de amplia escala “Por lo tanto, la Colectiva de Vivienda puso en marcha una campaña para hacer justo lo describió Díaz: proponer reformas a la Estabilización de Alquileres de la Ciudad (también conocido como “la RSO “o” control de rentas”) para incluir reparaciones de alta calidad y renta anual inferior aumenta.

La Colectiva está reuniendo firmas de inquilinos en una petición para las reformas descritas anteriormente, así como las historias de los inquilinos que experimentan las condiciones descritas anteriormente. Para participar, por favor póngase en contacto con lahumanrighttohousing@gmail.com o 818-835-1091 o por favor firma la petición!

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On State Violence and Resistance

“Our communities hold legacies of resistance to state violence through a culture of unity and self-awareness, organized strategy to address the needs and struggles in our communities and the building of leadership. We must continue this legacy of fighting for our human rights, including those of our families and communities through organized struggle that pushes the state to invest in alternatives to incarceration while learning to love and protect each other.”

Downtown Los Angeles ranks as the most militarized community in the country, with an intense environment of racial profiling and police tactics of harassment and violence that create a revolving door between LA County jails and homelessness. The Safer Cities Initiative and enforcement of Los Angeles Municipal Code 41.18(d) are clear examples of government policies that both criminalize people and excuse the profiling, arrests, and incarceration of a community that is largely Black. Though Black people make up 9% of the population in Los Angeles, they constitute 31% of those incarcerated in LA County jails, which is the world’s largest jail system. LA County jails have a long and dark history of brutal deputy-on-inmate violence and in these last two years exposure around the racism, violence and medical neglect inside the jails has exploded.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors recently passed a \$2.3 billion jail expansion plan intended to be a “mental health treatment jail.” The Board of Supervisors’ endorsement of this jail signifies a blatant disregard for the well-documented violence and human rights abuses happening behind the walls of County jails. Why is it that in LA County persons must be confined and incarcerated in order to receive mental health services? In reality it is the absence of health and human services in the our communities, especially Downtown LA, along with the violations of civil and human rights of residents and the psychological terrorism by law enforcement that creates and exacerbates mental health conditions by the hands of the state.

The Supervisors’ plan indicates the continued divestment from our communities to policies and a budget allocation that overwhelmingly goes towards more policing and jails. Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, who is the representative of South LA and much of Skid Row, is pushing for \$20 million to go toward mental health diversion resources to keep people out of jail. This initial dedication of county resources to support diversion from incarceration and toward mental health services is important because it indicates the effect from grassroots organizations that are pushing elected officials to be accountable to the communities they are allegedly supposed to represent. This leadership from community

WORD, IN THE HOOD,

From Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri to Ezell Ford in South Los Angeles - From Oscar Grant in Oakland to Eric Garner in New York. The deadly killing of innocent people on the part of law enforcement officers has reached epidemic levels across the country.

How do we not only get justice for innocent individuals murdered by law enforcement but stop this crisis? What is it going to take to stop extreme police violence and the taking of innocent lives?



Papa Professor

By protesting, but doing so in a legal way. They are deliberately murdering us. And while they are doing it we’re fighting each other and going to prison. They’ll only pay attention and respect us if all races step up and get involved.



Juan Manny

These are just more examples of police officers using excessive, unneeded force. Even if a person is guilty of a crime, it doesn’t give cops the authority to shoot and kill if there is no immediate threat. I witness this all the time. It’s time for someone to watch the watchers.



TC

ORGANIZE!

ORGANIZE!

ORGANIZE!

based organizations is critical because they are connected to the daily life of the community, and the demands they put forth are in accordance with the experiences of those directly impacted. However this \$20 million allocation is a mere 1% of the \$2.3 billion that is being dedicated to new jail construction!

The County Board of Supervisors is scheduled to vote on the mental health diversion plan on Tuesday, September 30. We must continue to push that the County and City budget (that we each pay for through our taxes) be dedicated to meeting the needs of our communities, which include health services, jobs, housing and education, and moved away from incarceration and expanded jails.

The resilience pulsing throughout our communities is profound - we are still here. Despite historical and present assaults on our personal and collective health, safety and wellbeing, here we are - surviving and restoring our connection to self and the greater community to make it through each day.

Our communities hold legacies of resistance to state violence through a culture of unity and self-awareness, organized strategy to address the needs and struggles in our communities and the building of leadership. We must continue this legacy of fighting for our human rights, including those of our families and communities through organized struggle that pushes the state to invest in alternatives to incarceration while learning to love and protect each other. In building resilience after difficult, oppressive and/or traumatic experiences and developing practices to encourage and sustain ourselves, we expand our capacity to hold each other and continue the struggle for justice.

Stories held in our communities by loved ones who are survivors of state violence are crucial in building solutions, including those of longtime Downtown LA resident Ray Lewis:

“To me state violence means a government, organization, entity or force that is directing violence upon a natural person. State violence is the secret entities and agencies that use guns and mental, spiritual, and psychological forces to work against you and me - trying to knock us off our square. It was state violence involved with the Vietnam War; it was state violence with the Tuskegee Airmen; and it’s state violence that is behind police shootings of young black males. It was state violence that killed Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. It is state violence that has the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department on lock down right now. State violence is alive and real in your face today. We need to take the power from it and acknowledge it.

There are numerous times I have witnessed the police and private security guards harassing the homeless and low-income residents of Downtown. State violence impacts my well-being - there are feelings of rebelliousness, criticalness, contemplation, survival, victory, depression, chaos. But I also build resilience as I draw, play my drum, meditate and contemplate on how stay optimistic - always remembering that I come from a majestic and powerful culture and people and that the ancestors are always with me and helping me.”

Feature

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Race, Police Murders and Protest in the United States

As I stared at my computer screen in the early hours after the murder of Mike Brown I listened as a young man defiantly stated, "This ain't going down in Ferguson!" There was something familiar, not in just a verbal sense, but his entire demeanor that insisted that everyone should buckle their seat belts and get ready. It was almost prophetic.

The next day a photo emerged of a wall of heavily armed White police officers outfitted with full-scale military weapons and uniforms standing directly across from a line of Black men standing shoulder-to-shoulder, armed with nothing but determination. Many of the police officers could not even look them in their faces, instead fixing their eyes on the ground. Fear maybe?

The stage was set. And, as usual, race determined the response from the state. Curfews, gas, media blackouts, new sound cannon technology and deployment of the National Guard were the core responses of the state. In one photo a single young man in dreadlocks, unarmed, is confronted by a half dozen automatic weapon-carrying, crazed-looking, White officers who appeared as if they just returned from Iraq.

Yet earlier this year Cliven Bundy, a racist Nevada rancher, took on the federal government in an ongoing dispute over his refusal to pay grazing fees. The government (specifically the Federal Bureau of Land Management) arrived

at his ranch to impound his cattle to pay for the fees and Bundy and his family held them off during their initial salvo. Bundy, in no uncertain terms, told the government that he would defend his property by all means necessary should they return.

Bundy became a folk hero for White anti-government conservatives. He publicly called for allies to bear arms with him in the protection of his property should the government return. And when the government, in fact, did come back, his allies traveled from near and far (packing heat) to defend against the government seizure. On national television a heavily armed White militia and protestors forced the government to lower their weapons and leave Bundy's property.

No National Guard, no sound cannon technology, no tear gas, no local police with automatic weapons to restore "peace"- just a graceless departure of defeat on the part of the government and loud thunderous celebration on the part of the Bundy militia. Post-showdown, a number Bundy militia participants have been caught up in police shootings and other criminal plots. A few even proudly boasted of the participation and deadly anti-government leanings, and still no militarized response by the state.

The Michael Brown murder, as well as the peaceful protest and the subsequent aggressive police response toward mostly Black protesters, leaves us with many questions but also provides a canvas from which to organize and mobilize.

Did you know that, of the 17,000 law enforcement agencies across the country, very few

actually report the number of "justified" (as determined by them of course) homicides to the federal government? Many municipalities simply refuse to hand over the information and I think we all can come up with a few reasons why. Also, no municipalities offer up statistics regarding "unjustified" shootings.

Did you know that, according to recently released FBI data, two African American/Black men have been killed per week by a White police officer? This startling data covers the period of 2005 - 2012 and, as described above, is definitely an undercount. The Malcolm X Grassroots Organization released a report in 2012 that showed Black men were in fact killed every 28 hours by law enforcement or security guards. The report, *Operation Ghetto Storm: 2012 Annual Report on the Extrajudicial Killings of 313 Black People by Police, Security Guards, and Vigilantes*, is a must-read and has provided the basis for aggressive investigation and fact-finding.

Did you know that the rate of police killings of Black men is nearly the same rate of lynchings in the early decades of the 20th century? So for all of you saying, "That would never happen to me!" it's happening now and on your watch.

The extrajudicial killing of Black men has reached epidemic proportions and demands our immediate attention. We can choose to sit silently, suffer silently, or move to organize against the steady encroachment of a full-scale police state. We must pick up the baton in the same way offered by the young man in Ferguson and state loudly and defiantly, "This ain't going down nowhere!"

The Criminalization of Black People with Mental Health Conditions is a National Crisis That Deserves International Scrutiny

Written by Mark-Anthony Johnson

Article 6 of the United States Constitution states that treaties are "the supreme law of the land." The United States constitution says a lot of things. However, given the "supreme" influence that treaties are given with regard to domestic law, it should be of great concern that the United States has a deficient track record with regard to its compliance with the International Convention to Eliminate all forms of Racial Discrimination, also known as CERD. Ratified in 1997, this binding agreement obligates the United States to identify and eliminate human rights abuses against people of color as they exist within all state entities, including the criminal justice system.

As part of a formal review of the United States compliance with CERD, Dignity and Power Now drafted and submitted to the United Nations' CERD committee a report titled, *Impact of Disproportionate Incarceration & Violence Against Black People with Mental Health Conditions in the World's Largest Jail System*. The report, produced in collaboration with lawyers from UCLA's Law and Human Rights Project and the product of several interviews with formerly incarcerated people who had spent time in Twin Towers, details how the Los Angeles jail system is prime example of a national crisis in the incarceration of Black people with men-

tal health conditions. While Black people make up 9.6% of the Los Angeles County population, they make up 43.6% of the County's jail population diagnosed with a "serious mental illness." Los Angeles County is by no means alone in this regard but represents a national trend that is replicated in some the largest mental health facilities in the country, including Rikers Island in New York and Cook County Jail in Chicago. The alarming rate at which Black folks with mental health conditions are housed in these jails demonstrates that talking about mental health diversion without talking about race is counter-productive.

To address the criminalization of people with mental health conditions without talking about race misses the underlying systemic racism that motivates mass incarceration and mass disintegration of mental health services. Descriptions of psychosis have been used to confine Black people in the United States since slavery and Los Angeles County represents an extension of that history. While Los Angeles County is in the midst of concerted effort to create services, it continues to overlook this present and historical reality. Lack of mental health services in the Black community persist despite federal acknowledgment of the disparities. Furthermore, Policy Research Associates - a nationally and internationally recognized leader in research in the behavioral health field - has produced studies showing that those most likely to receive mental health diversion services are white women. Conversely, being Black and male were found to be limiting factors in one's ability to access diversion opportunities.

Deconstructing systemic racism as a "supreme law" and priority requires an analysis and programmatic emphasis on those disproportionately impacted by the criminalization of mental health conditions: Black people. While this should be true, the reality is that even the

United Nations cannot force the United States into compliance. A grassroots movement rooted in the leadership of directly impacted people who thoroughly understand not only how mass incarceration targets Black people but know firsthand what services are required to secure the optimum psychological and physical well-being of incarcerated people can in fact intervene on this national crisis.

The United Nations' review of the United States articulated racial discrimination as synonymous with both civil and human rights violations. The Los Angeles County Jail system therefore, being the largest jail system on the planet, holds the title of one of the largest perpetrators of human rights abuses against Black people in the world. Both Dignity and Power Now and LA CAN have been building a movement of formerly incarcerated people, particularly those who have been in Twin Towers Jail or who themselves have been diagnosed with a mental health condition, to end the criminalization of Black people with mental health conditions in Los Angeles. The implications of building a movement that decarcerates people with mental health conditions in the jail system and secure resources for Black people to be diverted from that ravenous system is a human rights struggle relevant to not only LA County, but the entire country.

Mark-Anthony Johnson is a Co-Director of Dignity and Power Now (DPN) (www.endsheriffviolence.org). Dignity and Power Now (DPN) is a grassroots multi-racial organization that fights for the dignity and power of incarcerated people, survivors of Sheriff violence and their families with the goal of ending State Violence and Mass Incarceration. Mark-Anthony and DPN can be reached at mark.anthoj@gmail.com.

Opinion

“Leadership” on Homelessness and Skid Row Lacks Substance and Innovation

Written by Becky Dennison

Over the past couple of months, Councilmember Huizar, whose district includes all of Skid Row and most of Downtown, has positioned himself in the media on numerous occasions on issues related to the Skid Row community and homelessness. Although his staff organized a working group of Skid Row residents earlier this year and there are numerous social service providers and social justice organizations he could learn from and work with, his plans seem to be developed without any community input at all or fueled by the business community's interests. Additionally, the “new” initiatives he is touting include street outreach and a proposal for a homeless “czar” for the City of Los Angeles – neither of which bring any actual new resources into the community.

LA CAN has long supported the intent of the City's Operation Healthy Streets as residents have been calling for more street cleaning, trash collection and other public health infrastructure for many years. These are basic services the City provides for all neighborhoods and should have been doing in Skid Row without a County Public Health Department citation compelling them to do so. Councilmember Huizar recently held a

press conference to announce that the County would be adding street outreach workers to Operation Healthy Streets, which happens only once every other month, and said that taking services into the streets was the “first of its kind.”

Of course this isn't true – street outreach has been happening in Skid Row since the 1980s. Street outreach workers are critical and can help people connect with housing and services – the problem with the model is that there aren't nearly enough housing units and services available for everyone who wants or needs them. Until the supply of housing is drastically increased, which the City could do, street outreach will not be effective on a large scale. In fact, when the Councilmember was asked at his press conference by LA CAN's General Dogon what type of housing the outreach workers would be providing, his answer was, “aah...through the...aah...County.” When pressed for specifics on the housing to be offered his response was, “whatever they provide.”

After the August 2 press blitz on Operation Healthy Streets, in the September 8th edition of the Downtown News, Councilmember Huizar wrote an op-ed called, “The True Mark of Downtown's Success Will Be How We Respond to Homelessness.” Among other things, he highlights a “comprehensive report” that “bears serious discussion.” On September 29, 2014 his office will host a meeting to discuss the Plan for Hope, developed by those associated with the Historic Core Business Improvement District. The report is not comprehensive and includes

numerous unsubstantiated facts and claims.

While some recommendations could be helpful, overall the Plan does not call for any increase in permanent housing or funding for permanent housing. Instead it calls for a “no net loss” of permanent supportive housing – a policy which already exists, but is only a safeguard to prevent displacement and gentrification. It is a baseline – not the end goal. The Plan calls for intensified criminalization, a racist model that has not worked since 2006. In addition to the many issues with the content of this Plan, it also was initiated and funded by “stakeholders from the Downtown area, who currently wish to remain anonymous.” Homeless and formerly homeless community residents and other experts should be driving the Councilmember's actions, not anonymous stakeholders without the necessary knowledge and expertise.

Make your voice heard on September 29th at 6:30 PM at the Los Angeles Theater Center (514 S. Spring St.), and stay involved until we get substantive and new resources and plans!

Note: LA CAN is listed as an organization that was interviewed for the Plan, though it does clarify the Plan does not represent our viewpoints. LA CAN was not formally interviewed for the Plan, as we expressed our distrust about a plan being created by those without the needed expertise, though we did share some of our current campaigns with the contacts listed on the Plan.

Fight Back, Defend Your Family, Defend Your Homes!: An Open Letter to the people of Jordan Downs

Written by Adam Rice

Sisters and Brothers,

Recently one of your neighbors received what has become an all too familiar, at least in Jordan Downs, knock on the door and outside stood a HACLA investigator and two LAPD officers. The investigator stated that they had come to look to see how many people lived in the unit, and insisted they be allowed in to inspect. When the resident asked questions as to why the investigator wanted to inspect the unit, the response was, “I am the law here!” When the resident allowed the investigator into her home, it was insisted that the two officers come in as well for “protection,” even though the resident, a single mother, was home alone. As the forced inspection continued, closets and drawers were dug through despite earlier assurances that the visit was only to see who lived there. When the resident complained, the investigator called the two police officers upstairs and a search of the resident occurred. Was this legal? Yes, but only because the resident gave her consent.

I recently attended a know your rights training given by the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles at Jordan Downs, with about 20

tenants in attendance. We learned that the only time any HACLA employee is allowed to enter your unit without notice is if there is an emergency maintenance or health and safety issue, such as a fire or gas leak, or to do repairs requested by you not more than 25 days prior. Otherwise HACLA must, by their own policy, give you 48 hours written notice of their intent to enter your home, and they may only enter during “reasonable working hours.”

The LAPD must have a warrant to enter your home, unless there is a police emergency, such as a subject they are pursuing running into your unit, or if a member of your family is on probation or parole and is subject to a search condition. And even in this case, only the common areas, and those accessible to the specific person with the search condition, may be searched.

This is the law, it is designed to protect you. The investigator and officers in this story are not above it - they are simply its agents. Their job is to work with and protect the interests of residents. But, in reality, we all know that is not how it plays out.

So what can you do to defend your family from an illegal search - searches that are often conducted to gain evidence for an eviction? Most importantly, do not let HACLA or LAPD into your home without the proper notice or warrant. Even if HACLA has given the proper notice, you do not have to allow LAPD to enter your unit to accompany HACLA.

A good general rule for dealing with police

or HACLA investigators at your door is to keep the screen door locked at all times, and only speak to them from inside your unit, saying only, “I respectfully decline your request to enter my home without the appropriate [notice]/[warrant].” Always remain polite and calm. If they force their way in, repeat your polite objection, but let them in. NEVER physically prevent staff or police from entering your unit (this is for your and your family's safety). Write down the time and date of entry, and the names and badge numbers of those present. Video is a much more reliable witness than memory, so if you have a cell phone or a camera, keep it rolling from the time you answer the door until the time they leave. Remember to keep private things out of plain sight.

Police and HACLA knocking at your door can be a scary experience, so it's important to show support for your neighbors by standing witness to, and if possible taking video, of all interactions between the police and your neighbors. Only by standing together can you protect yourself and members of your family from having their rights violated. Only by standing together can we prevent unjust evictions and mass displacement of our neighbors, ourselves, and our community.

If you have been a victim of a warrantless search, or any other harassment on the part of LAPD or HACLA, come to the L.A. Human Right to Housing Collective's Tenant Self-Defense Committee every Tuesday at 4:30 pm in the classroom at the Jordan Downs gym. Protect your family, protect your community.

Opinion

It's Only My Opinion

Written by Al Sabo

"Broken Windows" Policing and Homicides

by Cops: Where else other than New York City could a man be a victim of homicide by a cop for having a history of selling individual cigarettes? That's what happened when Eric Garner was killed by NYPD in July. The incident began when plain clothes officers began questioning Garner about illegally selling untaxed cigarettes - even though he wasn't even doing so (he only had history and record of this, which the officers were aware of). Now how does this lead to Garner being put into chokehold and slammed against the sidewalk, which led to his death?

Unfortunately, it's no surprise given the type of policing currently being carried out in New York under the leadership of William Bratton. Bratton's style of policing is based around the Broken Windows theory, which upholds the idea that heavy enforcement of low-level crimes (like broken windows, jay walking, drinking in public) will prevent more serious and violent crime from occurring. This theory has been refuted and revealed as completely bogus. However, it continues to be implemented throughout the country in places like Los Angeles (where it is the basis for LAPD's "Safer Cities Initiative") and New York (where in recent years it's been used to support NYPD's notorious and discriminatory Stop and Frisk policy).

Broken Windows policing creates the opportunity for officers to harass, arrest, and prosecute citizens for minor infractions and misdemeanors. But most importantly it's enforced unequally, usually in poor communities of color that are experiencing gentrification, like Downtown LA and many parts of New York.

I was appalled when the LAPD gunned down Dale Garrett at the corner of 5th and Spring Streets for allegedly having a weapon (or was it selling drugs? The LAPD never did have a consistent story). However, is it any wonder how this same no tolerance policy could lead to the death of a man who wasn't even breaking the law? And even if he was selling cigarettes, no one should lose his or her life for such a minor crime.

Broken Windows, the Safer Cities Initiative, and similar policing models just give the police a reason to harass people for minor crimes. And with

more of these stops we are seeing more stories of incidents escalating and resulting in the killing of innocent people. When will it end? When will law enforcement officers be held liable for their crimes? The taking of a life on the part of police officers should only happen under the most extreme and rare occasions, and should at the very least never happen during unjustified stops for minor crimes. Yet the police commission and the police department and the police officers' union always arrive at the same conclusion; justifiable homicide. When will it all end?

Civilian Oversight Committee: It's become more and more apparent with each passing day that the LAPD, the LA County's Sheriff's Department, and other local law enforcement agencies are incapable of policing themselves. Bodies like review boards, police commissions and the Internal Affairs Divisions have proved to be inadequate in handing out meaningful justice to officers who blatantly commit major crimes, including homicide by cops. This is why the campaign for a Civilian Oversight Board for the Sheriff's Department is so important. Only a true civilian review board can level the playing field between aggressive cops and sheriffs acting out of policy and the residents and inmates that suffer from their negligence or outright repression.

Gloria Molina, Tom Gilmore and the Cecil Hotel: In a recent edition of the Downtown News, Supervisor Gloria Molina expressed a major need for housing and supportive services for Skid Row and the neighboring downtown community. Yet Molina has consistently failed to show support for the proposal to approve funds to renovate and designate over 500 rooms in the Cecil Hotel for homeless residents. She stood by the decision to oppose the project despite the willingness of the Cecil owner to go along with the plan and the fact that most of the Cecil rooms cannot be used for anything but low-income units.

But the real culprit in stalling this concrete solution to homelessness for is the Downtown business community and its players, like the Central City Association and their members like Tom Gilmore. Mr. Gilmore has been one of the biggest winners of gentrification in downtown as he has been the lead developer in the Old Bank District, which includes the restaurant Pete's and several loft properties.

Gilmore repeatedly said he supports projects that will help end homelessness. Well, then why won't he publicly support the Cecil pro-

posal? Perhaps the real reason Gilmore refuses to support the Cecil project is greed. Even at the expense of keeping hundreds of people on the streets who could be housed at the mostly empty hotel.

Warren Buffett and Philanthropy: In recent years many billionaires, including Warren Buffet, have touted their donations of millions of dollars to large charities, like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which goes toward ending international problems like eradicating Polio worldwide.

I only make note of this because, as the saying goes, charity begins at home. In other words, I think Warren Buffet and other large philanthropists should look no further than Skid Row when considering where these multi-million dollar donations should go. The Gates charities will do fine without him - they are well funded. However, Buffet and his philanthropic millions could end homelessness in Skid Row. Homelessness ends with housing, and Buffet's millions could build that housing in the form of renovations or new buildings.

If Buffet and those like him really want to make a difference with their money, they don't have to look overseas. There are plenty of major problems in our country that could be solved with their help. And homelessness could and should be one of them.

Takers and the Minimum Wage: Republicans have this all wrong. They believe that if you eliminate entitlement programs and eliminate minimum wage requirements everyone would not only be forced to work but jobs would be readily available to all. In reality, the elimination of entitlement programs will only result in rampant escalation of poverty. If they want to eliminate entitlement and social programs like Social Security, unemployment compensation, and food stamps (now known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) then they have to eliminate the need for them. And you only do that by creating jobs and raising the wages of those jobs. Money in one's pocket is the best way to end poverty. And more money in everyone's pocket means more money to not only sustain individuals but also more money to contribute and create a thriving economy.

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

To Your Health: Yogurt! YUM!

Written by Carmen Vega

Plain, unsweetened, goat milk yogurt...yuummmm - NOT! While goat milk yogurt might be an acquired taste, it is easier for our bodies to digest!

Yogurt contains pro-biotics, or bacteria, that is beneficial for our bodies. In short, it's very healthy! The active cultures in yogurt, like *S. thermophilus*, *L. bulgaricus*, and *L. acidophilus* help strengthen the digestive tract, which means they help you digest all foods.

Yeast is a fungus that kills off our naturally occurring bacteria. It can grow in abundance in our stomachs due to heavy carbohydrate-based diets (think of foods like wheat, bread, pasta, etc.). It nestles in the intestines and blocks the process of nutrient absorption to

the blood - therefore weakening the body and causing inflammatory problems like arthritis or other health conditions. Basically, too much yeast is bad.

This is one of the reasons yogurt and pro-biotics are so important. They fight the development of too much yeast in the body, ensuring your body gets the nutrients it needs from the food you eat.

Also, I emphasize plain yogurt because we want to avoid the often excessive sugar (and high fructose corn syrup!) found in a lot of commercial, sweetened yogurt. This type of yogurt might taste better, but it is nowhere near as good for you as plain yogurt.

But how do we eat plain yogurt - which can taste sour despite its medical benefits? Well, one way is to just consume small spoonfuls. But a better idea is to cut up one of your favorite fruits (like bananas, apples or pears, for example) and mix it in a bowl with a few spoonfuls of plain yogurt. You can also add berries, nuts or cinnamon, which will help

create a tasty snack or dessert while providing your body with nutritious and healthy pro-biotics. I personally like adding sunflower seeds, which are a good source of calcium as well!

So what do you say? Goat yogurt? Or even just plain cow milk yogurt? Give it a try!

Always Somebody

Written by Carolyn Schaugard

If one more person takes
One more person or thing away
from me
I'll scream.
All my life
That's the way it's been
There's always somebody.

Proposition 47



CALIFORNIANS FOR
SAFE
NEIGHBORHOODS
& SCHOOLS

Prop 47 and a Once in a Generation Opportunity

Let's Reduce Prison and Jail Overcrowding and Make Our Schools and Communities Safer and Stronger

Written by Eric Ares

On November 4, voters in California will have a once in a generation opportunity to permanently reduce incarceration for certain low-level crimes while shifting one billion dollars over the next five years alone from the state correctional system to K-12 schools and mental health and drug treatment. Proposition 47, supported by the Californians for Safe Neighborhoods and Schools, would reclassify six low-level offenses from felonies or wobblers (meaning it can be charged either as a felony or a misdemeanor) - making convictions of these crimes misdemeanors and no longer prison-eligible.

Proposition 47 would also authorize resentencing for anyone who is currently incarcerated in prison or jail for the listed offenses (which include petty theft, shoplifting, receipt of stolen property, writing a bad check, fraud and drug possession [all under \$950]). These actions would save the state of California \$150-\$250 million a year. These savings would then be put into a fund for schools, victim services, mental health and drug treatment programs - making our communities safer and helping to stop the growing communities of color-to-prison pipeline by reducing incarceration and recidivism.

One cannot overstate the significance of this proposition - particularly for poor communities of color that have been devastated by and continue to reap the negative effects of mass incarceration in California. It would reduce the consequences of felony convictions for low-level crime - consequences that include creating barriers to employment, housing, and public assistance programs. Rough estimates indicate

What would Proposition 47 do?

Reclassify

Prop 47 would reclassify six low-level, nonviolent crimes (petty theft, shoplifting, receipt of stolen property, writing a bad check, fraud, and drug possession [all under \$950]) from felonies to simple misdemeanors. This means no one would serve prison time for these offenses and thousands of people every year would avoid the collateral consequences of having a felony record.

Retroactive

Prop 47 would be retroactive - meaning that it would authorize resentencing for anyone who is currently incarcerated in prison for the listed offenses and also authorize any individual with prior felony convictions for these crimes to remove the felony from their record, eliminating a big barrier to jobs, housing, student loans, and public assistance.

Re-Allocate

California counties will save hundreds of millions annually through reduced jail populations and court costs. The state savings will generate between \$750 million - \$1.25 billion over the next five years alone. This money will be re-allocated to K-12 schools (25%), mental health and drug treatment (65%), and victim services (10%).

that about 10,000 people in state prison and 10,000 people in county jails would likely be eligible for release in the first year alone under Proposition 47.

Most of these folks are African American and Latino men. People would be given the opportunity to reunite with their families, who would also benefit from the shifting of funding from corrections to education and social service programs. Incarceration reductions would only continue going forward - as it is estimated that somewhere between 40,000 - 60,000 people are convicted of these low-level, nonviolent crimes annually. This means more reductions in prison and state overcrowding. An important note: Proposition 47 does not apply to registered sex offenders or anyone with a prior felony conviction for crimes such as rape, murder or child molestation.

Annually, California spends \$10 billion on the prison system with more than 130,000 people in prison at a yearly cost of \$62,396 per inmate. Those are billions of dollars that could be going to critical state services and programs and be used to serve youth and families. But perhaps

more important than the economic cost is the human cost. We as Californians need to decide what kind of state we want to build going forward. Do we want to invest in our future by putting money into our communities, which makes our neighborhoods safer and allows law enforcement resources to focus on violent and serious crimes? Or do we want to continue investing billions in private prisons and incarcerating people for low-level, nonviolent offenses while our schools and social service programs continue to face more and more funding cuts?

Many of our elected state officials have unfortunately opted for more prisons and incarceration when presented with these questions. But the good thing about Proposition 47 is that this time it is up to us. On November 4 we have a chance to directly influence the future of our state, communities, and neighborhoods. So make sure you are registered to vote and, more importantly, show up to the polls on election day. With Prop 47 we have an opportunity to reunite families, make our schools stronger and our neighborhoods safer. And it is an opportunity that we absolutely cannot afford to waste.

Were you sanctioned or penalized by the General Relief Program between January 1, 2010 and April 8, 2014? If so, that sanction may have been illegal or improper, and you MAY be eligible for a cash payment!

Several public interest attorneys recently settled a lawsuit on behalf of General Relief (GR) recipients based on unfair policies of the LA County's Department of Public and Social Services that improperly sanctioned or penalized people in the program. Sanctions and penalties remove or limit people's access to the GR program, taking away much needed cash income. As insufficient as the \$221 monthly GR payment is, it often pays people's rent and provides for other necessities. The recent \$6.9 million court settlement provides repayment to those improperly sanctioned.

You are eligible for money if between January 1, 2010 and April 8, 2014:

- a. You were an applicant to the GR program and were denied aid and given a sanction/ waiting time penalty before you could reapply AND the reason given was because you failed to meet an employment-related program requirement; OR
- b. You were a participant in the GR program and your aid was stopped, you were given a sanction/ waiting time penalty during the first three months you were receiving GR cash aid in a twelve month period, AND the reason given was because you failed to meet an employment-related program requirement.

You DO NOT have to prove anything. The settlement is tied to your name and social security number. If you think you might qualify, you should: a. Call 1-855-635-0619 and provide your name and Social Security Number; OR b. Fill out the Self-Enrollment Form at the link provided at GRSETTLEMENT.COM.

People who are now on GR or who apply during the next 16 months will automatically be paid by credit to their GR EBT card.

If you have any questions or would like help filing a claim, visit LA CAN's Legal Clinic on Wednesday nights at 6:00 PM.

Arts, Culture, and Community



My Friend Harriett

Written by Lydia Trejo

For a long time I did not really know Harriett. I knew that she and my husband were friends, but we never really talked. But in 2008 my husband passed away, and that's when we became very close and something more than friends. She took care of me and I took care of her. We were like mother and daughter.

We saw each other every day. I would get her groceries and medicine and cook for her, and we would watch television every night. She loved her sports - especially football and basketball. While watching TV we would talk about pretty much everything - family, friends, news, gossip. She was so easy to talk to and had a wonderful heart.

I loved her very much and I wasn't the only one. Harriett was loved by a lot of people in the community. Almost every day she'd set up her seat on Main Street - spending the day talking to friends and neighbors and feeding dogs. People liked her because she was warm and kind. She also loved her community, and she loved LA CAN. She believed in fighting for what was right, and came to almost every ROC (Resident Organizing Committee) Meeting to stay involved. She also pushed other people to get involved too.

Harriett was my friend - my best friend. She was a strong and tough person, and also so loving. I miss her a lot. I miss her smile, her laugh and sense of humor. And I'll miss just talking to her. We all will.

Rest in Peace, Harriett

2014 Labor Day - Celebrating Community Labor

Written by General Dogon

On September 1, residents of Skid Row came together to celebrate the 15th Annual Los Angeles Community Action Network Labor Day Gala. It was a special one because it was the first since LA CAN moved into its new building on 6th and Gladys Streets - just a few feet away from where the organization was founded 15 years ago by 25 residents in the Rossmore Hotel.

As always, the celebration was an opportunity to kick back, reflect on the work community residents are doing, and uplift both what we have accomplished and what we are still fighting for. We do so by educating one another, breaking bread with one another, dancing, games and other artistic and cultural activities.

The first thing we did was remind everyone that the community belongs to the people by claiming the space as our own and closing off the street. As the stage was being set up, residents started approaching - curious about what was going on. When the sound system was finally set up and P-Funk started blasting through the speakers, the crowds made their way to the tents and the fun began.

In addition to celebrating, the Gala is about recruiting members of the community to get involved the important work being done to protect our civil, housing and human rights. So while folks danced and ate BBQ, LA CAN organizers and members set up shop - getting petitions signed for more affordable housing, gardening in nearby parkways, sharing knowledge about various campaigns, and conducting an important participatory action research (PAR) study geared towards understanding the experiences of Black men who reside in Skid Row.

But as we worked, we also partied, which culminated in the annual highlight of the event: the West Coast Apollo - a showcase of the amazing talents in the community. Brother Pancake serenaded the crowd, Sister Suzette



Shaw shared her powerful poetry, while other folks ripped the mic, danced, and sang.

One of the main highlights of the event was when Pete White gave a moving unity speech concerning all of the police killings of unarmed Black men - making the connection between Ferguson, South LA, and Skid Row. And, most importantly, he reminded everyone in the crowd that while we need to take moments to celebrate, we also need to remember our duty to stand up and get involved in the fight for

Above: The scene at the Labor Day Gala in front of the new LA CAN offices at 838 E. 6th Street; Below: Team Food members transforming a dirt parkway into a community garden.

social and economic justice. This resonated with everyone at the event - so much so that after the Soul Train line reached its last stop and the trash was cleaned up, it was clear that folks were ready to suit up, boot up, and get back to our fight for justice in our community and beyond.

Downtown Women's Needs Assessment

Downtown Women's Action Coalition Releases New Data and Moves Recommendations Forward

Written by Becky Dennison

On August 6, the Downtown Women's Action Coalition held a forum to release and discuss findings and recommendations from a 2013 survey of homeless and low-income women living in Downtown Los Angeles. About 100 people attended and engaged in a lively discussion about unique problems women face, as well as what can be done to improve conditions.

Among many findings, the 2013 Needs Assessment reports that among women in Skid Row:

- 73.1% listed housing as the most needed resource
- 50% have experienced sexual assault (13.3% in the last year)
- 60.9% have experienced domestic violence
- 41.7% reported not being able to access clean, safe bathrooms and showers

"These startling numbers highlight the high level of need for impactful service addressing conditions that prevail among women in Skid Row," said Lisa Watson, CEO of the Downtown Women's Center. "We call upon our elected officials and providers of services to affected populations as well as the community at-large to work collaboratively with us to assure the existence of affordable housing to meet the obvious need. The need for trauma-informed and woman-centered care as well as improved intervention on conditions of violence is prevalent. Education and employment opportunity together with affordable housing are, ultimately, central to systemic change that may realize an end to homelessness."

The report offers comprehensive recommendations to address the needs and conditions highlighted. At the forum and in several subsequent planning meetings, three recommendations were prioritized:

- Increasing availability of and access to permanent housing
- Establishing sufficient 24-7 access to clean and safe bathrooms and showers
- Addressing the impacts of violence within and against our community

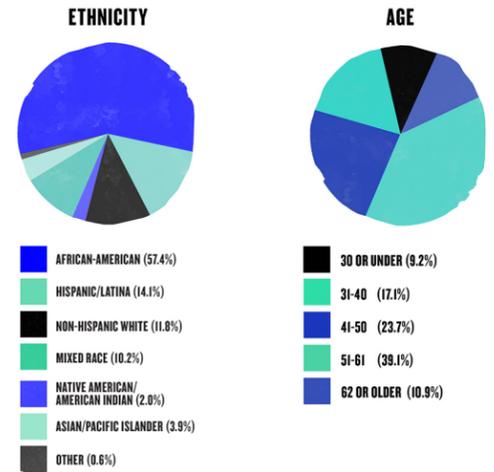
DWAC membership is expanding and there are several upcoming opportunities to urge our policymakers to take significant action, instead of the symbolic efforts we've seen more recently. Stop by LA CAN or Downtown Women's Center for more information about how to get involved!

Note: The full report is available online at www.dwcweb.org

September/October 2014 Community Connection Team		
Ariana Alcaraz	Hamid Khan	Lydia Trejo
Eric Ares	Ray Lewis	Carmen Vega
Becky Dennison	Thelmy Perez	Jas Wade
Steve Diaz	Adam Rice	Wesley Walker
General Dogon	Al Sabo	Pete White
Mark-Anthony Johnson	Carolyn Schaugaard	Karl Scott

DEMO GRAPHICS

Compared to all of LA County, women on Skid Row are disproportionately more likely to be women of color, and the median age continues to rise.



WHAT THIS MEANS:

Demographic data shows the need for services that target older women, and the impact of structural racism as a factor causing homelessness.

* African-American women have been consistently overrepresented in the homeless population; according to 2012 census data, African-Americans make up only 9.9% of LA County's total population.

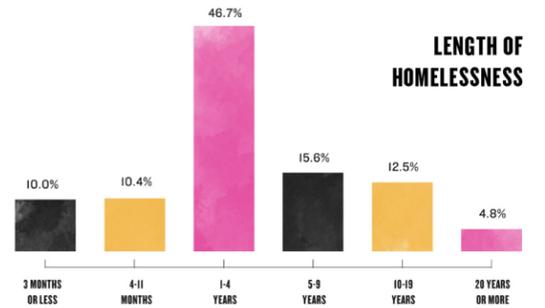
Downtown Women's Action Coalition | Women's Needs Assessment 2013 | www.dwcweb.org/needsassessment

HOUSING

A lack of affordable/low-income housing is one of the largest variables in keeping women homeless; 73% of respondents listed it as the most-needed resource to improve the downtown community.

HOW TO HELP:

Advocating for affordable housing in every community will provide resources for women and families, eliminating one of the major causes of homelessness.



* 86.4% of formerly homeless women in housing have health insurance, 74.8% have a support network of family and friends, and 85.4% report having enough to eat.

Downtown Women's Action Coalition | Women's Needs Assessment 2013 | www.dwcweb.org/needsassessment

LA CAN Meeting Schedule

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
 Contact LA CAN for new, updated schedule

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

Pueblo Del Rio Tenant Meetings -
 Every Second Tuesday at 5:30pm at James Slauson Park Rec Center

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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www.cangress.org
 WEBSITE
cangress.wordpress.org
 BLOG

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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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