

Community CONNECTION

The Voice and Heartbeat of Our Community

December 2013 - January 2014

www.congress.org



The Struggle for Human Rights in Skid Row, South LA, and Beyond 2013: A Year in Photos Page 12

CRIME ALERT WANTED

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
32(PC) AIDING & ABETTING
182(PC) CONSPIRACY
422.55 (PC) VIOLATING CIVIL RIGHTS

DATE / TIME: DECEMBER 23, 2006

LOCATION: 150 L.A. ST. [PARKER CENTER]

RD#: 1245 **DR#:** 06-12-32358

SUSPECT: CHIEF WILLIAM BRATTON

MONIKER: "SLICK WILLIE"

WEAPON: GUN & BADGE

VEHICLE: NUMEROUS

M.O.: SUSPECT TRAVELS FROM CITY TO CITY PROMISING TO CLEAN UP SERIOUS CRIME UTILIZING THE RACIST "BROKEN WINDOW POLICING" METHOD. HE INTIMIDATES, HARRASSES AND JAILS USUSPECTING POOR BLACK & BROWN RESIDENTS ALL IN THE NAME OF "PROGRESS."

ADDITIONAL: HE CAN USUALLY BE FOUND W/ HIS ACCOMPLICE DR. KELLING OF HANOVER JUSTICE GROUP. HE HAS PAID THE GOOD DOCTOR NEARLY \$00K IN CONSULTING FEES TO LEARN HOW TO CRIMINALIZE POOR FOLKS IN LOS ANGELES.

WARRANT: FELONY WARRANT # LACAN456S.MAIN

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Community Rallies in Response to City Council Attack on the Right to Share Food

WRITTEN BY KARL SCOTT AND GENERAL DOGON

A growing coalition of Southern California organizations, including LA CAN, are working to build a California Homeless Bill of Rights (HBR) Campaign. The urgent need for the HBR became even more clear in mid-October when Los Angeles City Councilmember Tom LaBonge proposed a motion that could potentially prohibit groups from serving meals in public spaces across the city. Unfortunately this is nothing new, as these sort of public feeding bans pop up in major cities across the country in recent years.

This particular motion first came to light when a small group of residents in Hollywood began to complain about the Greater West Hollywood Food Coalition's (GWHFC) food line. The GWHFC is a completely volunteer run organization that has served hot, nutritious meals to homeless and hungry residents in the Hollywood area for over 25 years (without ever missing a meal). Rather than come up with a solution that works for everyone, Councilmember LaBonge chose to attack not only this group but the Right to Share Food across the city with his motion to restrictively legislate how food programs can operate.

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North American Street Newspaper Associat.

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HOUSING

Housing Watch

WRITTEN BY STEVE DIAZ

Huntington Hotel

In November, the Honorable Richard Rico of the Los Angeles Superior Court approved a \$1.5 million settlement in a lawsuit brought against the owners of the Huntington Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. The lawsuit was brought by the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA) and Steptoe & Johnson LLP, on behalf of individual tenants and the Los Angeles Community Action Network. The lawsuit was based on the unlawful displacement of at least 60 low-income tenants living in downtown LA. The tenants alleged that after an ownership change, they were subjected to illegal rent increases, discrimination, harassment and retaliation as the owner attempted to force them out by circumventing tenant rights and protections. Many of the displaced tenants were elderly and/or persons with disabilities and many became homeless due to the illegal displacement.

The settlement includes monetary relief for individual plaintiffs' emotional distress and statutory damages, and a relocation fund for many of the displaced Huntington tenants.

During the course of the litigation, filed in December 2011, LA CAN and tenants won three preliminary injunctions, based on the legal rental amounts of the units, disability and source of income discrimination, and the right of one individual tenant to return to her unit after an unlawful eviction.

Though the lawsuit and settlement won't address all of the harms endured, it has provided some relief to tenants and sends a message to landlords that they cannot treat extremely low-income tenants any way they want and definitely cannot overlook the power of organized tenants. LA CAN will continue to fight against displacement and gentrification, and take action against those who violate tenant rights.

Pueblo Del Rio Public Housing Community

LA CAN's Pueblo Del Rio tenant committee launched a community improvement campaign on October 11th, which was highlighted in the last edition of the Community Connection. The campaign is focused on improving community health and safety by increasing stop signs, speed bumps and lighting. Committee members have been actively engaging other neighbors through a petition supporting these goals. In mid-November, the 175 signatures secured to date were submitted directly to Sanford Riggs, Director of Housing Services at the Housing Authority, and Pueblo del Rio's Property Manager and Maintenance Supervisor. At this meeting, tenants presented their concerns and asked for support for the campaign. The proposals were supported generally by Housing Authority staff, though there were some questions that needed to be investigated before full support could be secured. This conversation will continue with the Housing Authority as well as Councilmember Price's staff in the coming weeks, and tenants are committed to working together until all of the goals are achieved.

In addition to the stop signs, speed bumps and lighting, the bridge across Long Beach Boulevard which links one side of the development to the other was another issue brought up at the meeting between tenants and management. This bridge, which is owned by the MTA, is most often messy and unsafe. Tenants asked for support to clean up this bridge as an example of how the tenant committee can make a difference in improving our community. Housing Authority staff agreed to support the work, and to honor the volunteer work committed as official community service hours. Lastly, tenant committee members informed HACLA management of a great new project started several months ago by LA CAN - the weekly Pueblo Del Rio community produce market held every Wednesday from 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm at the James Slauson community center. Overall, the tenants' work over the past couple of months has achieved steps toward meeting the campaign goals, but we need more people to get involved to be sure we are successful! The tenant committee meets on the second Wednesday of every month at 5:30 pm at the James Slauson community center, or call Debbie or Steve for more information at (213) 228-0024.

Rosslyn Hotel

The Rosslyn Hotel has been under construction, part of a renovation and preservation project by SRO Housing Cooperation. The project is intended to improve the Rosslyn, adding amenities like kitchenettes and upgrading electrical and plumbing systems, while also preserving low rents and maintaining current tenants. LA CAN members were in strong support of the project when the funding was allocated and remain committed to achieving the goals of the project. However, the construction issues and new management policies have been causing concern among many tenants. Many tenants are not satisfied with the implementation of new policies without written notice, the new security guards, and the lack of information about the changing timelines of the construction. If you are a tenant of the Rosslyn Hotel and you share these concerns, visit LA CAN for more information and to document your individual pressing issues. A tenant meeting with SRO Housing Management representatives will be held on Wednesday, January 8 at 5:00pm, which is an opportunity to solve any tenant issues.

La Vivienda En Vela

ESCRITO POR STEVE DIAZ | TRADUCIDO POR THELMY PEREZ

Huntington Hotel

En noviembre, el Honorable Richard Rico de la Corte Superior de Los Ángeles aprobó un acuerdo de \$ 1.5 millones en una demanda presentada en contra de los propietarios del Hotel Huntington en el Centro de Los Angeles. La demanda fue presentada por la Fundación de Ayuda Legal de Los Angeles (LAFLA) y Steptoe & Johnson LLP, en nombre de inquilinos individuales y LA CAN. La demanda se basa en el desplazamiento ilegal de por lo menos 60 inquilinos de bajos ingresos que viven en el Centro de LA. Los inquilinos alegaron que después de un cambio de dueño, ellos fueron expuestos a aumentos de renta ilegales, discriminación, acoso y represalias como el dueño trató de forzarlos a desalojar a través de las violaciones a sus derechos y protecciones del inquilino. Muchos de los inquilinos desplazados eran personas mayores o/y personas con discapacidad, y muchos se convirtieron en personas sin hogar debido al desplazamiento ilegal.

El acuerdo incluye el alivio monetario por la angustia emocional y daños legales a los demandantes individuales un fondo de reubicación para muchos de los inquilinos desplazados del Huntington.

Durante el curso del litigio, archivado en diciembre de 2011, LA CAN y los inquilinos ganaron tres medidas cautelares, en base a las cantidades legales de las rentas de las unidades, la discapacidad y las raíces de la discriminación por los ingresos, y el derecho de un inquilino individual a regresar a su unidad después de un desalojo ilegal.

A pesar de que la demanda y el acuerdo no se ocupará de todos los daños sufridos, sí proporciona algo de alivio a los inquilinos y envía un mensaje a los dueños de que ellos no pueden maltratar a los inquilinos de extremadamente bajos ingresos como quieran y definitivamente no pueden ignorar el poder de los inquilinos organizados. LA CAN seguirá luchando contra el desplazamiento y la gentrificación (aburguesamiento), y adoptar medidas contra quienes violan los derechos de los inquilinos.

Pueblo Del Rio Pública Vivienda Comunitaria

El Comité de Inquilinos del Pueblo Del Rio de LA CAN lanzó una campaña para mejorar la comunidad el 11 de octubre, que se destacó en la última edición de esta publicación. La campaña se centra en mejorar la salud y la seguridad de la comunidad mediante el aumento de las señales de alto, reductores de velocidad (topes) y la iluminación. Los miembros del Comité han activamente involucrado a otros vecinos a través de una petición de apoyo a estos objetivos. En noviembre, las 175 firmas realizadas hasta la fecha se presentaron directamente a Sanford Riggs, Director de Servicios de Vivienda de la Autoridad de la Vivienda, y el Gerente de Pueblo del Rio y al Supervisor de Mantenimiento. En esta reunión, los inquilinos presentaron sus preocupaciones y pidieron apoyo a la campaña. Las propuestas fueron apoyadas generalmente por el personal de la Autoridad de Vivienda, aunque había algunas preguntas que deben ser investigadas antes de que el apoyo pleno se pudiera conseguir. Esta conversación continuará con la Autoridad de la Vivienda, así como el personal del Concejal Price en las próximas semanas, y los inquilinos se han comprometido a trabajar juntos hasta que todos los objetivos se logran.

Además de las señales de alto, los topes y la iluminación, el puente a través de Long Beach Boulevard que une a un lado de el proyecto al otro era otro asunto planteado en la reunión entre los inquilinos y de gestión. Este puente, que es propiedad de MTA, se encuentra frecuentemente sucio e inseguro. Los inquilinos pidieron apoyo para limpiar este puente como un ejemplo de cómo el comité de inquilinos puede hacer una diferencia en el mejoramiento de nuestra comunidad. El personal de la Autoridad de Vivienda acordó en apoyar el trabajo, y honrar el trabajo de voluntarios comprometido como horas oficiales de servicios comunitarios. Por último, los miembros del comité informaron a HACLA de un nuevo proyecto excelente que se inició hace varios meses por LA CAN - el mercado semanal de productos que se realiza en el centro comunitario James Slauson cada miércoles de 1:00-3:00. En general, el trabajo de los inquilinos en el último par de meses ha logrado pasos hacia el cumplimiento de los objetivos de la campaña, ¡pero necesitamos más gente a participar para estar seguros de que tengamos éxito! El comité de inquilinos se reúne el segundo miércoles de cada mes a las 5:30 pm en el centro comunitario James Slauson, o llame a Debbie o Steve para más información al (213) 228 - 0024.

Rosslyn Hotel

El Hotel Rosslyn ha estado bajo construcción, que forma parte de un proyecto de renovación y preservación de la Corporación SRO Housing. El proyecto tiene por objetivo mejorar el Rosslyn, añadiendo comodidades como cocinitas y modernizando los sistemas eléctricos y de plomería, y al mismo tiempo preservando las rentas bajas y el preservando los actuales inquilinos. Los miembros de la CAN LA estaban en el fuerte apoyo del proyecto cuando la financiación se asignó y comprometidos a las metas del proyecto. Sin embargo, los problemas con la construcción y las políticas de la nueva administración han causado preocupación entre muchos inquilinos. Muchos inquilinos no están satisfechos con la implementación de las nuevas políticas sin un aviso por escrito, las nuevas guardias de seguridad, y la falta de información sobre los cambios en la duración de la construcción. Si usted es un inquilino del Hotel Rosslyn y comparte estas preocupaciones, visite LA CAN para más información y para documentar sus problemas individuales serios. Una reunión con representantes de la administración de SRO se llevará a cabo el miércoles 8 de enero, a las 5:00 y es una oportunidad de resolver cualquier problema de inquilinos.

City of Los Angeles Human Relations Commission to Hold Public Hearings on LAPD's Suspicious Activity Reporting Program

WRITTEN BY HAMID KHAN

On October 10, 2013 the LA City Human Relations Commission (HRC) passed an historic motion to hold public hearings on the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) "Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) program, Gang Injunctions, and other public safety issues" with the overall theme centered around "profiling." This will be one of the first local public hearings in the nation to focus on the government's SAR program, which originated in Los Angeles and is now in 46 states across the country.

The motion also requires the HRC board to draft a letter to LAPD Commissioners, stat-

ing their "concerns regarding SAR, and the detrimental impact it has on various communities throughout the city," and to "submit findings and recommendations upon completion of the hearings to HRC board."

The Stop LAPD Spying Coalition led the effort in advocating for these public hearings and acknowledges the HRC decision as a major step forward in bringing to light LAPD policies of surveillance and information gathering. The Human Relations Commission's decision came after dozens of community members shared their concerns with HRC about the dire impact of LAPD's SAR policies such as racial profiling, invasion of privacy, and violation of civil liberties.

LAPD's SAR program, known as Special Order 1, and the iWATCH "See Something, Say Something" programs require LAPD officers to open secret files and initiate formal investigations on people engaging in many innocent non-criminal activities such as taking pictures, using binoculars, drawing diagrams, using video cameras, and taking notes. Notably, a March 2013 Office of Inspector General audit of LAPD's SAR program revealed that, out of a four month

sample of race/descent data, over 82% of SARs were filed on individuals belonging to racial groups identified as non-white. The largest number of SARs were filed on African-Americans.

On October 29th, coalition members testified before the Los Angeles Police Commission, including its new members appointed by Mayor Eric Garcetti. During public comment, coalition members called on the Police Commission to uphold the public trust and ensure that LAPD does not attempt to derail these public hearings that will be convened by the Human Relations Commission. Coalition members urged the Police Commission to direct the LAPD to operate with full transparency, honesty, and accountability in the HRC's implementation of public hearings on the SAR program.

The Stop LAPD Spying Coalition invites the Los Angeles community--individuals, families, and organizations--to engage in these hearings and take a step forward in educating the public on the systematic implementation of the surveillance state in our communities and neighborhoods.

To Your Health: Have Some Tea With Me?

WRITTEN BY CARMEN VEGA

"Real tea is derived from a particular plant *Camellia sinensis* and includes only four varieties: green, black, white, and oolong. Anything else (like herbal "tea") is an infusion of a different plants and isn't technically tea."

- "13 Reasons Why Tea is Good For You" | Time.com

Fine by me! It so happens that I cannot consume tea, but I can enjoy any herbal infusion. But for those lucky ones who can imbibe exotic black, white, green and oolong teas, there are many benefits to be gained.

Green tea has antioxidants that may boost the body's ability to burn fat and improve muscle endurance as well as protect the body against several types of cancers, including lung, liver, breast and ovarian. (Note: Traditionally green tea is prepared very light, so don't let that tea bag sit for too long.)

Tea has a high oxygen radical absorbance capacity, which helps destroy free radicals that damage DNA in the body. Free radicals are associated with causing heart disease, cancer and neurological degeneration.

There is also one basic benefit that may seem obvious or that we take for granted - the simple fact that tea is mostly HOT Water, which kills many germs and keeps you warm on chilly days.

So take the time to warm water or purchase a cup at a local shop because tea has so much to offer, and it's delicious!

The Case Against Soda

WRITTEN BY SEAN GREGORY

To ensure a healthy life style, one easy step is to avoid soda. The extremely high amounts of sugar in sodas often leads to diabetes and obesity, but we already know that. What you might not know is that soda can also lead to fat build up around the liver and skeletal muscles (which leads to obesity and insulin resistance as well).

Also, the caramel coloring in sodas has two cancer causing contaminants, 2-methylimidazole and 4-methylimidazole. 16 micrograms of 4-methylimidazole is enough to pose a cancer threat. Most popular brown sodas have 200 micrograms of 4-methylimidazole per 20 oz bottle.

You know the tangy flavor in soda? You know how it can last so long on a store shelf? That's the phosphoric acid, which, if consumed in high levels, can lead to heart and kidney problems. Also, the fact that

soda manufacturers have been increasing the phosphoric acid levels in soda products over past few DECADES doesn't help to improve your health levels.

For all you Mountain Dew lovers out there, be advised that this popular drink contains Brominated Vegetable Oil, which is an industrial chemical used as a flame retardant in plastics. This chemical has been known to cause memory loss, nerve disorders, behavioral problems, infertility, and lesions of heart muscles.

Sodas in aluminum cans are even more harmful because the cans themselves are lined with Bisphenol A (BPA) which is used to keep the acids in the soda from reacting with the metal. BPA is known to interfere with hormones and is also linked to infertility, obesity, and diabetes.

If you look closely to the ingredients for any soda you will notice that most of the ingredients are derived from corn. As much as 88% of the corn grown in the US is genetically modified to resist toxic pesticides or ENGINEERED to create pesticides

within the plant itself.

Giving up the consumption of soda will stop the unnatural aging that soda causes and prevent cancer, liver and heart failure, obesity internally and externally, memory loss, the unnatural mutation of hormones and the depravation of vital nutrients and bone structure as well as the deterioration of the digestive system.

I would recommend incorporating more water (the element of life), green, red, and black teas, and fresh squeezed fruit juices (NOT FROM CONCENTRATE) on a daily basis for optimal health of the mind and body. Every now and then many people can even have one glass of red wine, which has antioxidants that are good for the heart (and soul!).

Source: "9 Disturbing Facts about Soda" - Rodale News | rodalenews.com.

JORDAN DOWNS

WHY ISN'T HACLA BEING TRANSPARENT ABOUT HEALTH RISKS AT JORDAN DOWNS?

WRITTEN BY THELMY PEREZ

The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) seems to be knowingly exposing its tenants, in the Jordan Downs public housing project, to toxic substances that are harmful to human health and blatantly lying about it.

It is unclear whether HACLA understood the extent of the contamination and the health risks posed to Jordan Downs' residents by the three parcels of vacant, industrially zoned, toxic land known as "the Factory" in 2008, when HACLA purchased the land for 30 million dollars. Given the industrial zoning and the enormous cost to the public of this purchase, it is expected that HACLA would have conducted appropriate investigations into the toxicity of the area as part of its due diligence, prior to purchasing the land. We can also expect that, as the public agency responsible for the 700-unit Jordan Downs public housing community surrounding the Factory site, HACLA would also have looked into the potential impact any issues with the land could have on its current and future tenants. What is crystal clear is that, since at least 2009, HACLA has been thoroughly aware of the dangerous environmental conditions at the Factory site.

Documents obtained by the Housing Collective (the Collective), through CA Public Records Act (PRA) requests, provide proof that HACLA was not only aware of the fact that these conditions existed at the Factory site, but also were likely to exist, and certainly effect, the surrounding land - currently occupied by Jordan Downs residents - as well as neighbors in the surrounding Watts community. In fact, a member of HACLA's staff outlined the hazardous conditions at the Factory site and the potential for those conditions to spread into the existing residential areas of Jordan Downs in a 2009 interoffice memo. After reviewing environmental reports, commissioned years before the HACLA purchase by previous owners of the Factory site, the staff member warned HACLA executives: "Jordan Downs revitalization efforts will include development of other parcels including the parcel where 700 units are currently located. It is quite possible that these properties might also suffer from environmental contamination and therefore might require remediation. Therefore, an additional environmental assessment needs to be conducted." To date this has not happened.

Other documents surfaced by the Collective provide additional evidence of both the pressing need for an area-wide environmental review and HACLA's awareness of the need to ensure the safety of current residents of Jordan Downs and the broader Watts community. In 2010, Jordan Downs project manager, Larry Goins wrote to the then-CEO of HACLA, Rudy Montiel, advising him that HACLA should pursue "reasonable remedies" to protect against the spread of the toxic substances discovered by HACLA's own soil sampling ("Phase II") of the Factory site. Goins suggested one of the remedies available to HACLA was to "conduct a Phase II on the remaining JD (residential) site to determine additional impacts. Within 30 days, results can be generated. Approx. \$10,000." That amount is just a tiny fraction - 1% of the amount of funds HACLA has authorized to pay consultants for redevelopment planning. In addition, HACLA contracted environmental consultants, Mearns Consulting Inc., in 2011, to produce a Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA) of the Factory site. The HHRA is a step in the assessment and remediation process that estimates the "nature and probability of adverse health effects in humans who may be exposed to chemicals" in a contaminated environment (US EPA). In a cover letter to the final HHRA report, Dr. Susan Mearns informed HACLA: that "the HHRA indicates the adult and children residential receptors have unacceptable risk estimates [to cancer causing constituents] due to exposure to concentrations of Aroclor-1254 in the soil matrix and to naphthalene in soil vapor."

It is this particularly exposing report - the HHRA, - that HACLA, as well as the State of California's Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) - a Department of the California Environmental Protection Agency) - seem to want to keep hidden; both public agencies withheld it from the public records released to the Collective under the PRA. After ignoring several requests for the HHRA, DTSC finally responded that persons interested in reading the document could do so only in person at their Chatsworth office, 41 miles away from Jordan Downs. The Housing Collective's organizers eventually obtained a temporary link to a PDF of the report only after going directly to the author for access.

Over three years have passed since HACLA received the first documented warning of potential health risks to JD residents, more than half of whom are children below the age of 17. Additionally, while taking no steps to warn residents of potential health risks from adjacent contaminated land, nor evaluating the impact on land currently occupied by Jordan Downs

residents, HACLA has entered into a contract with DTSC to oversee a "voluntary cleanup agreement" of the Factory site.

DTSC is also in charge of the public consultation processes connected to the remediation of the Factory site. So far, this has included DTSC holding a single public comment meeting during its review process of HACLA's proposed "Remediation Action Plan" (aka RAP) which details the "chemicals of concern" (COCs) and the proposal for removing of these COC from the sites. The RAP was only released to the public last summer - four years after HACLA first became aware of the conditions. The first public meeting at Jordan Downs, however, wasn't held by DTSC until August (2013). Jordan Downs residents who attended the August meeting expressed many concerns with the RAP, including that it was not made available to residents other than online. They were also concerned with the lack of information provided about the health risks associated with the COCs, and the failure of officials to bring up the possibility of contamination on land residents currently occupy at Jordan Downs. Residents called for an additional public meeting to discuss these, and other, critical issues. DTSC rejected this request. However, the Housing Collective felt it was critical for community concerns to be properly, and publicly, addressed and met with DTSC Director Debbie Raphael during a trip to Sacramento to raise the residents' concerns. In September, DTSC announced that they would hold the additional meeting to answer the questions raised in the first meeting.

At this second meeting, secured by Jordan Downs' residents and the Collective, the residents who participated expressed frustration, disappointment, lack of trust and anger over DTSC's lack of respect for the community. Residents were also disgruntled and deeply concerned with DTSC's failure to address or even document the issues they were raising. In response, DTSC claimed the meeting was an "information meeting" and NOT an official public comment meeting. After this meeting, the burgeoning Collective Tenants' Committee in Jordan Downs called upon DTSC's Directors once again, demanding an extension of the public comment period for the RAP and another public meeting. Two extensions and an additional public meeting were obtained through this process, giving the community and the Collective an opportunity to engage with environmental justice advocates about the situation at Jordan Downs in advance of the next public comment meeting.

The public comment period closed on November 20th. Along with the Housing Collective, Los Angeles Community Action Network, National Resources Defense Council, Center for Public Environmental Oversight, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, Physicians for Social Responsibility-LA, National Economic and Social Rights Initiative, Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust, and Strategic Actions for a Just Economy all submitted compelling comment letters. These letters highlighted the inconsistencies between information given by HACLA and DTSC and information found in the RAP and the HHRA, and urged DTSC to reject the RAP, the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and its addendum, demanding instead, an area-wide environmental study be conducted before any further action. This area-wide study would take into account the COCs identified in the RAP, as well as others that were not identified as COCs but were found in soil samples. Additionally, advocates heavily criticized HACLA and DTSC for withholding important documents like the HHRA from the public - a document that is essential to understanding the RAP and the health risks to residents. In flagrant breach of principles of transparency, accountability and morality, to this date, the full HHRA has not been made public.

After spending tens of millions of public dollars to purchase, prepare and study the Factory site for future residential use, HACLA neglected to take measures proposed by its staff and consultants to understand and minimize potential health risks to JD residents, current and future, despite the cost being a comparatively meager \$10,000. Instead, HACLA has covered up important documents and even blatantly misled Jordan Downs residents, allies, and the public about the health risks associated with known and potential, but yet unknown, contamination. In October 2013, after various community meetings in which residents themselves demanded additional studies of the soil outside their homes, HACLA confirmed publicly that, in fact, it had not studied the soils where the current residents live - just outside of the Factory site - HACLA printed in its Jordan Downs Newsletter for residents: "there are low levels of materials... which can pose health risks... There is currently no risk to residents."

The key questions the residents and the Collective would like HACLA to answer in relation to this unbelievable approach to residents' health and wellbeing is, 'What are you hiding, HACLA and why?'

Note: DTSC is expected to make their decision on approval of the RAP and whether they will require an area-wide study in early 2014. To get involved, contact Thelmy Perez at lahumanrighttohousing@gmail.com or 818.835.1091.

JORDAN DOWNS

¿HACLA: donde esta la transparencia sobre los riesgos a la salud en Jordan Downs?

ESCRITO Y TRADUCIDO POR THELMY PEREZ

La Autoridad de Vivienda de la Ciudad de Los Ángeles (HACLA) parece conscientemente exponer a sus inquilinos a sustancias tóxicas que son dañinas para la salud humana en el proyecto de vivienda pública, Jordan Downs, y descaradamente les ha mentido al respecto.

No está claro si la HACLA entendió el alcance de la contaminación y los riesgos a la salud que esto representa para los residentes de Jordan Downs cuando, en 2008 compró, por 30 millones de dólares, las tres parcelas de tierra toxica, industrial y vacante conocidas como "la Fábrica". Teniendo en cuenta la zonificación industrial y el enorme costo para el público de esta compra, se espera que la HACLA se habría llevado a cabo investigaciones apropiadas sobre la toxicidad de la zona como parte de su debida diligencia antes de comprar estas tierras. También podemos esperar que, siendo la agencia pública responsable por la comunidad de Jordan Downs de 700 unidades de viviendas públicas, que rodea el sitio de la Fábrica, HACLA también habría estudiado el potencial impacto que cualquier problema con la tierra podría tener sobre sus inquilinos actuales y futuros. Lo que es muy claro es que, al menos desde 2009, HACLA ha sido totalmente consciente de las condiciones ambientales peligrosas en el sitio de la Fábrica.

Documentos obtenidos por la Colectiva de Vivienda (Colectiva), a través de las ley de Archivos Públicos de CA (PARA por sus siglas en ingles), presentan la prueba de que HACLA no sólo estuvo consciente del hecho de que existen estas condiciones en el sitio de la Fábrica, sino que también eran propensos a existir, y sin duda afectar, las tierras circundantes - actualmente ocupadas por los residentes de Jordan Downs - así como otros vecinos fuera de Jordan Downs. De hecho, un miembro del personal de HACLA esbozó las condiciones peligrosas en la fábrica y el potencial de que esas condiciones existen entre las zonas residenciales existentes de Jordan Downs en una carta "memo" en el 2009. Después de revisar los informes ambientales encargados años antes de la compra, el funcionario advirtió a los ejecutivos de la HACLA: "Los esfuerzos de revitalización de Jordan Downs incluirán el desarrollo de otras parcelas, incluyendo la parcela donde se encuentran actualmente las 700 unidades. Es muy posible que estas propiedades también puedan sufrir de contaminación ambiental y por lo tanto pueden requerir limpieza. Por lo tanto, una evaluación ambiental adicional debe llevarse a cabo." Hasta la fecha esto no ha ocurrido.

Otros documentos obtenidos por la Colectiva proporcionan evidencia adicional tanto de la necesidad urgente de una investigación ambiental de la zona entera, y del conocimiento de HACLA de la necesidad de garantizarles la seguridad a los actuales residentes de Jordan Downs y la comunidad más amplia de Watts. En 2010, Larry Goins, empleado de HACLA, le escribió al entonces presidente ejecutivo de HACLA, Rudy Montiel, aconsejándole que HACLA debe buscar "soluciones razonables" para proteger contra la propagación de las sustancias tóxicas descubiertas por la propia investigación ("Fase II") de tierras de HACLA en el sitio de la Fábrica. Goins sugirió que uno de las soluciones disponibles a HACLA era "llevar a cabo un estudio de fase II en el área residencial de JD para determinar los impactos adicionales. Dentro de 30 días, los resultados se pueden generar. Aprox. \$ 10.000". Esa cantidad es sólo una pequeña fracción - 1% de la cantidad de fondos que HACLA ha autorizado a pagar consultores para la planificación de la reurbanización.

Además, HACLA contrató consultores ambientales, Mearns Consulting Inc., en 2011, para producir una Evaluación de riesgos a la salud humana (HHRA) del sitio de la Fábrica. El HHRA es un paso en el proceso de evaluación y remediación que estima la "naturaleza y la probabilidad de efectos adversos para la salud en los seres humanos que pueden estar expuestos a los químicos" en un ambiente contaminado (EE.UU. EPA). En una carta de presentación del informe HHRA final, Dr. Susan Mearns informó HACLA: que "el HHRA indica que el adulto y los niños receptores residenciales tienen estimaciones de riesgo inaceptables [a los mandantes que causan cáncer] debido a la exposición a concentraciones de Aroclor -1254 en la tierra y naftaleno en el vapor de la tierra".

Es este informe particularmente revelador - el HHRA- que HACLA, así como el Departamento de Control de Sustancias Tóxicas (DTSC) de California (un departamento de la Agencia de Protección Ambiental de California) - parecen querer mantener oculto; ambas agencias públicas lo detuvieron de los archivos públicos liberados a la Colectiva bajo el PRA. Después de ignorar varias solicitudes por el HHRA, DTSC finalmente respondió que las personas interesadas en ver el documento podrían hacerlo sólo en persona en su oficina de Chatsworth, de 41 millas de distancia de Jordan Downs. Los organizadores de la Colectiva finalmente obtuvieron un vínculo temporal a un PDF del informe sólo después de ir directamente al autor para el acceso.

Más de tres años han pasado desde que HACLA recibió el primer aviso documentado de los riesgos potenciales para la salud de los residentes de JD, más de la mitad de los cuales son niños menores de 17 años. Además de no tomar ninguna medidas para advertir a los residentes de los posibles riesgos a su

salud por la tierra contaminada adyacente, ni evaluar el impacto sobre la tierra actualmente ocupada por residentes de Jordan Downs, HACLA ha firmado un contrato con DTSC para supervisar un "acuerdo de limpieza voluntario" del sitio de la Fábrica.

DTSC también está a cargo de los procesos de consulta pública relacionados con la rehabilitación de la Fábrica. Inicialmente, esto requiere que DTSC cumpla con una sola audiencia pública durante su proceso de revisión de la propuesta del "Plan de Acción para Remediación" de HACLA (RAP, por sus siglas en ingles) que detalla las "sustancias químicas de preocupación" (COC, por sus siglas en ingles) y la propuesta para remover estas sustancias fuera del sitio. El RAP al fin fue publicado el verano pasado - cuatro años después de que HACLA reconoció las condiciones peligrosas. La primera audiencia pública en Jordan Downs, sin embargo, no se llevó a cabo por el DTSC hasta agosto (2013). Los residentes de Jordan Downs que asistieron a la reunión de agosto expresaron muchas preocupaciones con el RAP, incluyendo que no se puso a disposición de los residentes aparte de en internet. También estaban preocupados por la falta de información sobre los riesgos a la salud asociados con los contaminantes, y la negligencia de las autoridades de explicar la posibilidad de que la tierra actualmente ocupada por los residentes de Jordan Downs esté contaminada. Los residentes pidieron una audiencia pública para discutir estos y otros temas críticos. DTSC rechazó esa petición. Sin embargo, la Colectiva de Vivienda consideró que era importante que las preocupaciones de la comunidad sean adecuadamente, y públicamente contestadas y se reunieron con la Directora de DTSC Debbie Rafael durante un viaje a Sacramento para plantear las inquietudes de los residentes. En septiembre, DTSC anunció que iban a organizar la reunión adicional para responder a las preguntas planteadas en la primera reunión.

En esta segunda reunión, garantizada por los residentes de Jordan Downs y la Colectiva, los residentes que participaron expresaron su frustración, decepción, falta de confianza y la ira por la falta de respeto a la comunidad por DTSC. Los residentes también estaban descontentos y profundamente preocupados por el hecho de que DTSC no quiso tratar ni documentar las cuestiones que estaban surgiendo. En respuesta, DTSC reclamó que la reunión fue una "reunión informativa" y no una audiencia pública oficial. Después de esta reunión, el creciente Comité de la Colectiva en Jordan Downs hizo un llamamiento a los administradores de DTSC, una vez más, exigiendo una extensión del período de comentarios públicos sobre el RAP y otra audiencia pública. Dos extensiones y una audiencia pública adicional se obtuvieron a través de este proceso, dándole a la comunidad y la Colectiva la oportunidad de involucrarse con los defensores de la justicia ambiental sobre la situación en Jordan Downs antes de la próxima audiencia pública.

El período para comentarios del público cierra el 20 de noviembre. Junto con la Colectiva de Vivienda, los siguientes grupos: Los Angeles Community Action Network, National Resources Defense Council, Center for Public Environmental Oversight, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, Physicians for Social Responsibility-LA, National Economic and Social Rights Initiative, Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust, and Strategic Actions for a Just Economy todos presentaron cartas de comentarios públicos. Estas cartas destacaron las inconsistencias entre la información dada por la HACLA y DTSC y la información que se encuentra en el RAP y el HHRA y le suplicaron a DTSC a rechazar el RAP y el informe de impacto ambiental (EIR) y su apéndice, exigiendo en su lugar, un estudio de impacto ambiental de la zona entera antes de que cualquier otra medida. Este estudio de la zona entera tendría en cuenta los químicos de preocupación identificados en el RAP, así como otros que no fueron identificados como químicos de preocupación, pero fueron encontrados en las muestras de la tierra. Además, los activistas fuertemente criticaron HACLA y DTSC por la retención de documentos importantes como el HHRA del público - un documento que es esencial para la comprensión del RAP y los riesgos de salud a los residentes. En flagrante violación de los principios de transparencia, responsabilidad y moralidad, hasta esta fecha, el HHRA completo no se ha hecho público.

Después de gastar decenas de millones de dólares públicos para comprar, preparar y estudiar el sitio de la Fábrica para el futuro uso residencial, HACLA omitió tomar medidas propuestas por su personal y consultores para entender y reducir los posibles riesgos a la salud de los residentes de JD, actuales y futuros, a pesar de que el costo hubiera sido un escaso \$10.000. En cambio, HACLA ocultó documentos importantes e incluso descaradamente engañó residentes de Jordan Downs, sus aliados, y al público sobre los riesgos de salud asociados con los conocidos y potenciales, pero aún desconocidos, químicos peligrosos. En octubre de 2013, después de varias reuniones con la comunidad en la que los propios residentes exigieron estudios adicionales de las tierras fuera de sus hogares, HACLA confirmó públicamente que, de hecho, no había estudiado las tierras donde los residentes actuales viven - en las afueras de la Fábrica - HACLA escribió en su Boletín para los residentes de Jordan Downs: "hay bajos niveles de materiales ... lo que puede plantear riesgos para la salud ... Actualmente no hay ningún riesgo para los residentes".

Las principales preguntas que los residentes y la Colectiva quisieran que HACLA contestan en relación a esta increíble estrategia con respeto a la salud y bienestar de los residentes es: '¿Qué estás escondiendo, HACLA y por qué?'

Nota: Se espera que DTSC va a tomar su decisión sobre la aprobación de la RAP y si van a requerir un estudio de toda la area a principios de 2014. Si desea participar, póngase en contacto Thelmy Pérez en lahumanrighttohousing@gmail.com o 818.835.1091.

FEATURE

Take Back the Night and the Downtown Women's Needs Assessment

WRITTEN BY DEBORAH BURTON

The Downtown Women's Action Coalition (DWAC) has been very busy the past few months. 2013 was another great year for DWAC, and we've finished it off strong with our annual Take Back the Night Event and Downtown Women's Needs Assessment.

On October 29, Take Back the Night began at LA CAN with t-shirt making and everyone coming together in sisterhood to stop violence against women in our community, city and world. Soon after the march began as we made our way through Skid Row - stopping at key areas in the community (like San Julian Park) to recruit others to join us and so that women could give personal testimony, read a poem, or sing a song. As always, the march concluded at the Downtown Women's Center, where both men and women formed a safe space for individuals to share their stories of violence, survival, and perseverance during an open mic. Take Back the Night is always a highlight for DWAC, and this year was no different.

On November 16, DWAC implemented its Downtown Women's Needs Assessment survey, a project started in 2001. The goal is to help local organizations track changes to community demographics, document feedback on local services, and brainstorm ideas for new services that might help the community. Additionally, it provides reliable statistics to attract political, media and donor attention to the struggles of women living in Skid Row.

Over the years, critical information about needs of women who live in Skid Row has been gathered. One year, for example, we learned that 7 out of 10 women surveyed had experienced violence at some time in her life, which led to anti-violence workshops in the community. Survey feedback another year led to a family law attorney working at LA CAN and the Downtown Women's Center.

This year was particularly exciting because we had the largest group of volunteers that we've ever had. On the morning of November 16, groups set out to various locations throughout the Skid Row community (James M. Wood Center, Central City Church, LA CAN, Volunteers of America, Hippie Kitchen, etc.) to survey as many women as possible. The day turned out great as we conducted a record number of surveys.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



The women and men of DWAC march through Skid Row and Take Back the Night.

Reclama la Noche y la Encuesta Para las Necesidades de las Mujeres del Centro

ESCRITO POR DEBORAH BURTON | TRADUCIDO POR THELMY PEREZ

La Coalición de Acción de Mujeres del Centro (DWAC) ha estado muy ocupada los últimos meses. El 2013 ha sido otro gran año para DWAC, y hemos concluido fuertemente con nuestro evento "Reclama La Noche" y con la encuesta de Necesidades de Mujeres del Centro.

El 29 de octubre, el evento "Reclama La Noche" comenzó en LA CAN con la decoración de camisetas y todos reuniéndose en hermandad para poner alto a la violencia contra las mujeres en nuestra comunidad, la ciudad y el mundo. Poco después que la marcha comenzó, hicimos nuestro camino a través de Skid Row - parando en lugares claves de la comunidad (como el parque San Julian) para reclutar a otras a unirse a nosotros y para que las mujeres pudieran dar su testimonio, leer un poema o cantar una canción. Como siempre, la marcha concluyó en el Centro de las Mujeres del Centro, donde los hombres y las mujeres formaron un espacio seguro para que las personas compartan sus historias de violencia, la supervivencia y perseverancia durante una sesión de "micrófono abierto". Como siempre, Reclama La Noche es un evento importante para DWAC, y este año no fue diferente.

Desde 2001, DWAC ha realizado una encuesta de las necesidades de las mujeres del Centro, una encuesta realizada con 200-300 mujeres que viven en la comunidad del Centro de Los Angeles. El objetivo es ayudarles a las organizaciones a conocer de los cambios en la demografía de la comunidad, documentar las opiniones sobre los servicios locales, y crear ideas para nuevos servicios que pueden ayudar a la comunidad. Además, proporciona unas estadísticas fiables para atraer la atención de los políticos, medios de comunicación y de los donantes a las luchas de las mujeres que viven en Skid Row.

Con los años, información crítica acerca de las necesidades de las mujeres que viven en Skid Row se ha recopilado. Un año, por ejemplo, nos enteramos de que 7 de cada 10 mujeres encuestadas habían sufrido violencia en algún momento de su vida, lo que resultó en talleres contra la violencia en la comunidad. Comentarios de la encuesta en otro año resultó en una clínica legal de abogados de derechos de familia en el Centro de Mujeres del Centro.

Este año fue particularmente emocionante porque tuvimos el mayor grupo de voluntarios que jamás hemos tenido. Así que en la mañana del 16 de noviembre, los grupos se salieron a varias localidades de la comunidad de Skid Row (El Centro James M. Wood, La Iglesia Central City, LA CAN, Volunteers of America, Hippie Kitchen, etc.) para encuestar a la mayor cantidad de mujeres posible. El día resultó ser genial como realizamos un número récord de encuestas.

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 11

LA COMUNIDAD PUEBLO DEL RIO
MERCARDO DE PRODUCTOS
FRESCO | ORGÁNICO
LOCAL | ASEQUIBLE
FRUTAS Y VERDURAS
EN EL SALON COMUNITARIO DEL PARQUE JAMES SLAUSON
 ubicado en 53rd and Compton Ave.
 Para más información:
 Eric 213.228.0024

CADA MIERCOLES
1:00PM-3:00PM

FEATURE



Left: Supporters of the Greater West Hollywood Food Coalition stand in solidarity at the October 30 Action; Right: Supporters of a CA Homeless Bill of Rights and the Right to Share Food gather before their November 27 march to Pershing Square.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Community Rallies in Response to City Council Attack on the Right to Share Food

Groups across the city organized immediately and mobilized at an October 16 Public Works and Gang Reduction Committee hearing to challenge residents and business owners who were present to support outdoor feeding restrictions. Those who were present in support of the Right to Share Food were able to convince the Council Committee to hold the motion until reports are produced from a number of government agencies, including the LA County Department of Public Health and LAPD.

Soon after the Committee hearing, LA CAN and other HBR endorsers organized a vigil in support of GWHFC on October 30. Over 50 supporters present at the action were able to see firsthand that many of the violations and accusations brought forward by residents were untrue. First of all, the food line exists in an industrial area that is at least 3 full city blocks in any direction from a residential area. The only “neighbors” encountered were employees of businesses in concrete buildings. Secondly, GWHFC has an extremely well organized operation that includes thorough cleaning and sanitization measures and a person keeping everyone out of the street and on the sidewalk with a flashlight. Additionally, there are other critical services provided at the site, like a mobile medical van and legal services.

The opposition continued to build and was exercised in a march on November 27, the day before Thanksgiving, when all kinds of politicians, business leaders, and volunteers come out to serve food with poor and homeless residents. About 100 people marched to call attention to the fact that these holiday programs and their “celebrity” volunteers get praised for serving poor and homeless folks turkey legs while smiling for the media - as if poor and homeless folks only eat once a year. It was therefore important to come out in support of the Homeless Bill of Rights and say to everyone that the Right to Share food must be protected 365 days a year, not just on Holidays.

The march went from St. Francis Center on Washington and Hope Streets to Pershing Square. St. Francis was chosen as the starting point because the area has recently become a target of LAPD - with homeless folks regularly being harassed, receiving tickets, and having their property threatened to be taken away. After rallying and a brief intro for those present and the news cameras on hand, the group made their way through downtown, gathering signatures for a petition supporting the Right to Share Food and the full Homeless Bill of Rights and chanting “We need food, everyday, don’t legislate our lives away.”

During one of the stops on the march, Joe Thomas, a homeless veteran, talked about the daily trials that he and others have to go through just to rest, eat, and exist (see page 10 for more of Joe’s comments). When the group arrived at Pershing Square, Ramona, a South Central resident, spoke passionately about hunger not being a crime and scolding politicians for allowing people to serve food on holidays but criminalizing anyone doing the same thing during the rest of the year.

The rally concluded with a skit that reenacted the story of Nelly, a 92 year-old woman who was pushed out of Pershing Square for serving sandwiches to homeless folks. At the same time, however, the Farmer’s Market at Pershing Square continues to serve the interests of higher-income downtowners (they don’t even accept EBT cards). This contradiction must be resolved, and a Homeless Bill of Rights would help to do just that.

The movement to ensure the Right to Share Food in Los Angeles is upheld grew even more in a demonstration held in Hollywood on December 14. Several hundred people marched and shared the message of protecting civil rights along Hollywood Boulevard, in an action organized by the Monday Night Mission.

As a result of the numerous local actions and related local and national press coverage, LaBonge seems to be backing off his push for a ban. We can’t stop now. This motion must be stopped and we must uplift the Right to Share Food for all! Of course, even when this motion is defeated, the battle is not over. We must continue to fight for a California Homeless Bill of Rights and to protect the civil rights of ALL residents.

To get involved in the Homeless Bill of Rights Campaign, come to the LA CAN Civil Rights Committee meeting every Monday at 1:00 pm at 530 S. Main St.

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FRESH | ORGANIC
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EVERY WEDNESDAY
1:00PM-3:00PM

OPINION

It's Only My Opinion

WRITTEN BY AL SABO

Pershing Square: I recently attended a meeting held at the Biltmore Hotel that dealt with the future of Pershing Square. The multiple choice questionnaire they passed out was so skewed that the only conclusions you could reach were the ones that they wanted you to reach. It was the only public hearing I ever attended where no one was given a voice to express their opinions. Get it right, Pershing Square Task Force. Functionality is always better than aesthetic beauty. Rock gardens and indigenous plants are for no one. They only provide photo ops for tourists. Grass, shade trees, park benches and picnic tables will lead families to the park. Sometimes less is more (and less costly too).

Councilmember Tom LaBonge: How Hollywood's Councilmember had the audacity to participate in this year's Hollywood Christmas Parade is beyond me. It might have been acceptable if he were in a car with other Hollywood notables like the Grinch, Mr. Potter and Scrooge. He proved himself to be the most despicable person not only in Hollywood but in the entire city. His efforts to stop the right of good samaritans to distribute food to the poor is not only unconscionable, but most likely unconstitutional as well. No city ordinance will or can stop me from helping the less fortunate whenever I can.

U.S. Penal System: The system is broken. It was never intended to create life sentences, but that's what exactly what it has done. Everyone agrees: Commit the crime and you must do the time. It doesn't end there, however. You become what Merle Haggard called a "Branded Man." If a man can't find work because he's branded, he still must eat and his only way to survive is to go back to crime, which only leads to recidivism. This is why when your time is done, your criminal record should be expunged. Do the crime, do the time, and then start anew.

Bankrupting Detroit: When Michigan's Republican Governor and his self appointed, hand picked City Manager of Detroit filed the largest municipal bankruptcy in our country's history, they knew exactly what they were doing. They were simply protecting the assets of the wealthy. Under bankruptcy laws, banks and corporations are paid first. What's left over might eventually trickle down to the city employees who dedicated their lives to the city and its citizens. There is no guarantee that will happen though.

Walk A Mile In My Shoes: That's exactly what the former Police Commissioner of NYC was forced to do when he was sentenced to three years in prison on fraud charges. Once a strong advocate

of mandatory sentences, he now has a different opinion. Giving a man a second chance through education and training is a much better tool than incarceration. He too now understands that being a branded man is a life sentence. How can anyone go straight if he's never given a second chance?

Ronald Reagan: He often said, "Pull yourself up by your own boot straps." He was so out of touch with reality that he didn't understand that the average man could not afford a pair of shoes let alone a pair of Reagan's \$500 boots. Two of our biggest problems today can be directly attributed to Ronald Reagan. Both homelessness and mental health issues can be laid on his doorstep. By cutting billions from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, he guaranteed that homelessness would mushroom. And when he cut funding for mental health services he set the state for prison overcrowding.

Just Say No: No, I'm not referring to Republicans in Congress. I'm referring to Nancy Reagan's feeble message on how to prevent teen pregnancies when sex is so prevalent in our every day lives. Saying no may work once or twice, but human desires will prevail in the end. All creatures are driven by procreation. Without that drive humankind would become extinct. Just saying no doesn't work.

Trickle Down Economics: Even the new Pope, Francis, has concluded that not only does it not work, but it leads to idolatry of money as well. He further stated that the poor are still waiting for the money to trickle down to them. Something is morally wrong when the upper 2% own 50% of the wealth in this country, which is greatest disparity of wealth the nation has seen since the time prior to the Great Depression.

Abraham Lincoln: In his Gettysburg Address, which recently celebrated its 150th Anniversary, President Lincoln pondered whether the nation of the people, by the people and for the people could endure. He understood that the people meant ALL people, not only white people and the wealthy. His words resounded as if a premonition to the death of capitalism. He realized that if this nation were to endure, all must share in this country's virtues and wealth. When all have a pice of the pie or an equitable share of the wealth, we all do better (even the wealthy!). If we are to endure, socialism is the path we need to follow.

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

Homeless Veterans - Still on the Frontlines

WRITTEN BY GERARDO GOMEZ

As we celebrated Veterans Day in November, we must not forget the thousands of homeless veterans that are in our communities. They may not get the special treatment, or be asked to join in a parade, but like every other soldier, they put in their time and energy and deserve to be recognized. I am always amazed at how people can "support" the troops or have campaigns to bring the troops home. But when those troops come back to the United States, they become unknown soldiers. This is especially the case with homeless vets who have given their commitment to fight for this country only to see their country not fight for them.

We have seen too many homeless veterans on our streets. We have seen a lot of our soldiers come back from war torn countries and not be given the proper care to deal with Post-Traumatic Stress. Instead of thanking our veterans for putting their lives at risk, we have seen this country turn their backs on them. We can continue to have Veterans Day as a holiday, but what good is that if it's only to be used as a photo opportunity for the President or any other politician?

Let's really honor our Veterans by taking care of our homeless

veterans, especially women. The general public has a perception that women who are veterans are nurses, file paperwork and not engaged in combat. That is what mainstream media wants us to think about women in uniform. The truth is that women soldiers are also on the front lines. They have also given their fair share, but when they come back to their communities, they realize that resources for women veterans are very scarce, which is a tragedy in itself. Even worse, too many women in the military have to deal with Military Sexual Trauma (MST) as well.

The Veteran's Administration has unveiled a 5 year plan to End Veteran Homelessness. While that may sound nice, we have to wait and see. The problem with all these "strategic" plans to end homelessness is that every city and state practically has one. It's basically lip service in my eyes. I have seen too many strategic plans to end homelessness come and go without actually addressing the issues.

A 5 year plan to End Veterans Homelessness is like saying the United States in 5 years will stop invading and occupying countries around the world. It's not going to happen. I wish we can end Veteran Homelessness in 5 years. I wish the United States would stop invading and occupying countries. But we have to be realistic. It's not going to happen.

In the mean time, however, let's not forget our brothers and sisters in the streets who continue to be on the front lines.

OPINION

Hold the Press! William Bratton's Return as NYC's "Top Cop"

WRITTEN BY PETE WHITE

To say that William Bratton's return to the New York Police Department is troublesome would be an understatement. His reinstatement highlights the shockingly short institutional memory of politicians eager to use Bratton's well developed media appeal. Unfortunately, beyond the headlines and soundbites, Bratton's true impact comes at the expense of poor communities of color. Upon announcement of his return to the position of NYC's "top cop" there has been nothing short of an all-out media fawning for the wolf in sheep's clothing. Oddly, Los Angeles has been used to justify and prop-up why he is worthy of returning to his East Coast throne. But missing are the readily available facts that paint the real picture of Bratton's reign in Los Angeles.

For example, a December 6, 2013 Dennis Hamill article in the New York Daily News amounts to nothing more than a fluff piece (non-critical evaluation of things sputtered by Bratton) that simply allows the new Commissioner to control the narrative. In one especially bothersome and long quote Bratton is allowed to talk about (1) how he supports and utilized stop and frisk in Los Angeles and (2) how it was not focused on "good kids on the way home from school or work."

A simple internet search would have led Hamill to the extensive campaign organized by the Labor/Community Strategy Center's Community Rights Campaign, which has led a multi-year effort to stop the ticketing and harassment of these "good kids" going to and from school—a policy ushered in by Chief Bratton and another manifestation of his celebrated stop and frisk strategy. In fact, a

staggering 47,000 tickets were issued from 2004-2009 to predominantly African American and Latino students.

In addition to the assault on our youth, the predominantly Black Skid Row community in Downtown LA knows all too well the impact of Bratton in their community. During the first three years of Bratton's Safer Cities Initiative, LAPD wrote 36,000 tickets and made 27,000 arrests within a 50-square block area with a population of 13,000 - 15,000 predominantly Black people. LA CAN members and other community residents have long organized against the initiative and advocated for its end - many times at the risk of their personal safety. They have confronted and protested Bratton in public meetings and have co-authored and participated in numerous studies and community-based assessments showing the human rights violations perpetrated by former Chief Bratton.

Hamill could have just searched the LA Times and would have found extensive coverage on the Community Rights Campaign, LA CAN and many others who fought back against Bratton's repressive and racist policing. Or he could have simply picked up the phone and made a few calls to those who were working on the ground in poor communities of color under Bratton's tenure in LA to ensure journalistic integrity was applied. But it's not just Hamill's article.

There has been a wave of articles since Chief Bratton's reinstatement in New York and very few of them have been critical of his record in Los Angeles. Instead, we have been bombarded with Bratton quotes and politically connected civil rights advocates' assertions that have nothing to do with the realities in our communities. The Community Connection, as a community-based newspaper, hopes to set the record straight as the "Bratton media express" rolls out its fabricated versions of Los Angeles policing because the record should be clear and authentic.

Stand Your Ground

WRITTEN BY JOHN RAPHLING

In the wake of the killing of Trayvon Martin and the subsequent trial in which a jury acquitted his killer, many people have criticized Florida's "stand your ground" laws. The essence of the "stand your ground" law is that a person who is attacked has the right to self-defense and does not have to retreat, even if retreat is possible. Trayvon Martin's killer claimed that he was attacked, and that he killed in self-defense. (I did not watch any of the trial and do not know if that was the actual defense he used in court. "Stand your ground" was raised in his defense in the media.)

Many advocates for racial equality and civil rights now have called for repeal of "stand your ground" laws, noting that many states have them. Before changing a law, it is important to understand it fully and to understand whether its repeal would improve or harm the cause of justice.

California has a version of "stand your ground." It is part of the common law rules of self-defense and has been in place since at least the 1800's.* California jury instructions, which define the law for juries deciding criminal cases, give the clearest explanation of our "stand your ground" laws: A person who is being attacked "is not required to retreat. He or she is entitled to stand his or her ground and defend himself or herself ... until the danger has passed." (CalCrim 3470. See also CalJic 5:50.) California's law allows the person attacked to actually pursue the attacker until the attacker no longer poses a danger. We have no duty to run away, even if it would be easier and safer to run away than to stand up and defend ourselves.

However, any force used in self-defense must be reasonable. It must be proportional to the threat of force against us. Therefore, "stand your ground" does not allow us to kill somebody who attacks us unless deadly force is necessary and reasonable. In other words, if someone punches us, we are not allowed to use that punch as an excuse to kill that person—unless we have good reason to believe that the attack with fists is going to cause us seri-

ous physical injury or death. In the case of Trayvon Martin, Mr. Zimmerman said that the sixteen year old boy was hitting him, so he shot and killed the boy. That response seems unreasonable, disproportionate, and certainly not justified by California's "stand your ground" laws.

California's self-defense laws, including "stand your ground," apply as much to defense of our own selves as to defense of others. If someone is attacking a friend of ours or even just a person we see on the streets, we have as much right to use reasonable force against the attacker to protect that person as we do to protect ourselves.

The benefit of the "stand your ground" law is that it allows us to protect ourselves from an attacker and does not require us to run away. It reflects the reality that running away from an attacker often encourages the attacker to attack us again or encourages others to attack us, or otherwise makes us weaker. We should not be forced to give up our right to self-defense and made to run away.

Criticism of "stand your ground" is misguided. It is essential to our right of self-defense. Of greater concern in the Trayvon Martin case is that Mr. Zimmerman appears to have justified treating a sixteen year old boy as a criminal based on nothing more than his skin color; that the police department conducted an investigation that seemed designed to help Mr. Zimmerman prove his innocence; that a jury with no black members decided that it was reasonable for him to shoot an unarmed teenage boy. These are greater societal problems that we need to address. We should not, however, address them by limiting our right to defend ourselves.

In the next issue, this column will address the question of whether or not we have the right of self-defense when the police are our attackers.

**People v. Hecker* (1895) 109 Cal. 451, 463

Disclaimer: This column provides a very general and incomplete explanation of basic legal principles, and may not apply to the specific facts of your case. Please consult an attorney concerning your particular situation.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Remembering Me on Thanksgiving and Christmas

WRITTEN BY GERARDO GOMEZ

You see me sleeping on the streets.
You give me money instead of something to eat.
I ask myself if you gave me the money to help me
or because it makes you feel good.
Whatever your intention was, I don't know.

You see sometimes I don't need money.
I just want someone to talk to me.
But I know it's easier for you to give me money
than to shake my hand.

I also know that you only feed me on two occasions:
Thanksgiving and Christmas.
Why can't you feed me on any other day?
I am hungry everyday just like you
unlike you most of these days I don't eat.

I will admit that my best meal
comes when you feed me on these two occasions.
I wish it could happen more often,
but I know that you only remember me on these two days.

Now that I have shared with you what's on my mind
I hope you will look at me in a different way.
Maybe now you won't be scared to talk to me
Maybe you will be kind enough to feed me on a day
that is not Thanksgiving or Christmas.

With a Little Food From My Friends

LYRICS BY SEAN GREGORY

What would you do if I walked up to you
and said that I'm really hungry?
Hand me some bread so I don't fall down dead,
I won't throw my plate in the street.
I get by with a little food from friends.
I won't die with a little food from my friends.
Do you want to help us along?
Come and sing this resilient song.

If you're a cop will you try not to stop to harass the people feeding?
Don't pull out your book and write some tickets for 41.18(D).

I get by with a little food from my friends.
I won't die with a little food from my friends.
I'll survive with a little food from my friends.
Would you like to join us my friend?
We'll stand up and fight this until the end.
Hand out some food, we will not be rude
and we'll throw our trash all away.
We're hungry right now plus we need to survive,
not just on a holiday.

I get by with a little food from my friends.
I won't die with a little food from my friends;
I'll survive with little food from my friends
Do you want to help us succeed?
It's not a crime to go out and feed.
Food is a right we'll continue to fight until you see it our way.
Until we have won and the hunger
has stopped we refuse to just go away.
The system is wrong so we're singing this song
for ideas that we're here to portray.
Our efforts aren't through so we will continue
to fight against this charade

Late One Night

WRITTEN BY CAROLYN SCHAUGAARD

Late one night in the month of June
I was feeling small, hating all
And pleading for sleep.
When suddenly appeared
Before me a man in green about
Three inches tall
Who seemed to glow
Like a ballroom ball.
Behind him was a man
With a snout
Who seemed to shrug
From this man in green
Who had a gleam.

To make a long story short
That man in green was preparing
Me for Satan's please
He has a lot of power and I must
Say I never will forget that man
In green who had a gleam
Who appeared to me
Late one night on that June day,
Father above thank you for
Sparing me and giving this to me.

ABUSE, NO! EMPOWERMENT, YES!

WRITTEN BY CHERYL WILLARD

No longer I'm such a fool
No longer believe in you
Your breathing and kissing on my neck,
no longer has an effect
Your lies no longer make me cry
Your abundance of guilt you try to manuscript
no longer works
Because this woman smartened up!
ABUSE, NO! EMPOWERMENT, YES!
ABUSE, NO! EMPOWERMENT, YES!

WHAT IF?

WRITTEN BY JOE THOMAS

Imagine, if you will, that you are abandoned. You seek
shelter, food and rest, legal counsel hygiene care, but
where? You have just crossed over into the LaBonge zone.

Here, hunger sets in and you wish to eat, but to do so is to
break the law! You wish to sit and have a rest, but that vio-
lates the rules. You are homeless, and you have no rights,
dignity or respect.

We all have human rights, but right now there are those
that are trying to take them away from us - the forgotten,
the unhoused, those who have no place in society.

This is why the California Homeless Bill of Rights Cam-
paign is so important. We must destroy these bigotries and
protect the rights of all - those housed as well as unhoused.
We want to be able to rest, sleep, share food, have a right to
an attorney if being prosecuted - we want the same rights
as everyone else.

Until We Meet at the Crossroads: Rest in Peace Nathan “Blue” Bracy

WRITTEN BY GENERAL DOGON

Skid Row recently lost a true legend - a brother that stretched his roots from the bottoms of Skid Row to the cool breeze and ocean waters of Venice Beach. Nathan, better known as “Blue”, lived in the Sanborn Hotel for the last 3 decades. He loved Skid Row and Skid Row loved him back.

A bongo player, Blue was a musical genius in his own way. He was a member of the Skid Row drummers, a hood drum circle that plays regularly during Art Walk in front of LA CAN. He was also a founder of the drum circle at Venice Beach.

But on the everyday tip Blue was a laid back brother you could catch relaxing on Main Street playing a drum with his overalls on. He was a true soldier that spoke out against injustice and worked to keep peace in the hood. He'll be truly missed.

Here is what other Skid Row community members had to say about Blue:

“Blue was a solid guy I knew for years. I’m going to miss him sitting on Main Street playing the drums” - Jodie

“We speak a lot about folks being legends, but brother Blue was a real one.” - Robert

“He was a quiet, humble man, but when the time called for a voice from the community, he always stepped up and was a peaceful mediator. Thanks, Blue.” - Ana

“I, Waterhouse, have traveled around the world, and I’ve met many people. Blue was a man of love, dignity, and justice - a true musician. He was very humble and meek in his everyday life, which drove people of all classes, colors and creeds to love and respect him. His love for God was overwhelming, and his life and legacy will live on. One Love, Blue.” - Waterhouse



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Take Back the Night and the Downtown Women’s Needs Assessment

Here is what one of our volunteers, Ariana Alcaraz, had to say about the day:

“I had a great time participating in the DWAC Women’s Needs Assessment last month. In the short time I had, I was able to survey all the women I spoke to except for one who was on her way to work. It was obvious that this was something ALL women in downtown appreciated because they understand the need for more resources and programs made specifically for women in the downtown and Skid Row neighborhoods. What was beautiful about the conversations with the several women I spoke to was they had the entire community of women in mind when answering. So although an issue didn’t pertain to them individually, they spoke up and supported programs to address the needs of sex workers and women in abusive relationships and creating MORE safe spaces for women in downtown, because you can never have too many of those. Also, it was brought to my attention the needs for undocumented women who do not have access to a lot of the resources and programs already available because of the language barrier or the lack of documentation. The survey did mention questions about children but many women who have children in the Skid Row neighborhood are threatened by Department of Children and Family Services and even though there are a few safe spaces for women, they don’t allow children so it’s hard to find a place where women AND children can be indoors and get off the streets. Look forward to next year!”

In the next few months we will be calculating the results of the survey and ultimately writing a report on the findings, which will serve to help improve policies and programs that impact the lives of women in Skid Row.

VIENE DE LA PÁGINA 6

Reclama la Noche y la Encuesta Para las Necesidades de las Mujeres del Centro

Esto es lo que una de nuestras voluntarias, Ariana Alcaraz, tenía que decir sobre el día:

“Me gusto mucho participar en la encuesta de necesidades de las mujeres del Centro. En el poco tiempo que tenía, tuve la oportunidad de encuestar a todas las mujeres con las que hablé con la excepción de una que estaba en camino a su trabajo. Era obvio que esto era algo que todas las mujeres en el Centro aprecia porque entienden la necesidad de más recursos y programas hechos específicamente para las mujeres en el Centro y Skid Row. Lo que era bello en las conversaciones con las varias mujeres con las que hablé fue que tenían toda la comunidad de las mujeres en mente al contestar. Así que, aunque un problema no les pertenecía a ellas individualmente, hablaron y apoyaron programas para atender las necesidades de las trabajadoras del sexo y las mujeres en relaciones abusivas y la creación de más espacios seguros para las mujeres en el Centro - porque nunca podemos tener suficientes de estos. Además, me llamaron la atención a las necesidades de las mujeres indocumentadas que no tienen acceso a una gran cantidad de los recursos y programas que ya están disponibles debido a la barrera del idioma o la falta de documentación. La encuesta mencionó preguntas acerca de los niños, pero muchas mujeres que tienen hijos en el vecindario se ven amenazadas por el Departamento de los Servicios Para Niños y Familias y aunque hay algunos espacios seguros para mujeres, no permiten niños por lo que es difícil encontrar un lugar donde las mujeres y sus hijos pueden estar bajo un techo y protegidas de las calles. ¡Espero con anticipación el próximo año!”

En los próximos meses vamos a calcular los resultados de la encuesta y, finalmente, redactar un informe sobre los resultados que servirá para ayudar a mejorar las políticas y los programas que afectan a las vidas de las mujeres en Skid Row.

2013 Photos: The Struggle for Human Rights in Skid Row, South LA, and Beyond



1. Naomi of the LA Human Right to Housing Collective’s Flower St. Committee speaks at a press conference after residents organized to prevent a developer from purchasing and converting a 33-unit apartment in South L.A.; 2. LA CAN’s Dirty Divide Report detailing the inequality in trash and bathroom services in Downtown; 3. In Sacramento for Hunger Action Day; 4. Folks gather for the Southern CA Homeless Bill of Rights Campaign Launch; 5. Team Food members take part in the Rooftop Garden’s Spring Planting; 6. A City-wide Coalition at City Hall to defeat the Community Care Facilities Ordinance; 7. General Dogon with Assembly-member Tom Ammiano speaking before the Assembly’s Judiciary Committee; 8. A memorial at the site of where LAPD shot and killed community member Kenny Williams; 9. Outside the courthouse celebrating the not guilty verdict in the unjust case against Deborah Burton; 10. Another successful and powerful Vagina Monologues performance; 11. The LA Human Right to Housing Collective gathers for a meeting and leadership development training; 12. Tabling in Pershing Square to ensure that the space remains accessible to all people; 13. Alize sets up at the Pueblo Del Rio Community Market; 14. Testifying at the LAPD Commission; 15. Resident Aazim Muhammad spoke out at a public meeting organized by LA CAN regarding the Skid Row TB scare in March.

Community Calendar
The LA CAN offices will be closed from December 21, 2013 to January 2, 2014.

- 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 - 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
- Pueblo Del Rio Tenant Committee Meetings - Second Wednesday of every month at 5:30pm at James Slauson Park 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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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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