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PHOTO BY DARIN HUGHES.

THE MOTHERS FIGHTING FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Meet the moms who are fighting hard for family shelter and housing.

On a sunny Tuesday morning, over sixty community advocates, families, and mothers gathered onto the steps of City Hall. While the information they hoped to provide the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor was a detailed outline of budget requests from the Homeless Emergency Service Providers Associations (HESPA), the demands that these families wanted was simple: Safe, dignified housing for their families. The group, which chanted their demands in English, Spanish, and Cantonese, included families living in shelters, SROs, cars, and doubled up in other people's living rooms.

Irma Nuñez, Jacquelynn Evans, and Leontine "Tina" Collins are three of these mothers fighting for housing. Two of them—Nuñez and Evans—are peer organizers at the Coalition on Homelessness, working to organize and build power amongst homeless and formerly homeless families. Collins is a longtime volunteer of the Coalition and has worked with the Coalition's Housing Justice Workgroup for the past five years. Most recently, she joined the Coalition's Homeless Speakers Bureau, a group of people who have experienced homelessness who share these experiences and educate the public. All of them have experienced housing instability and understand the difficulty of being homeless and a mom.

On the day of the action, which was also the group's celebration of Mother's Day, mothers, some with their kids in strollers or in their arms, stormed the Mayor's Office to demand affordable housing, housing subsidies, and shelter for their families.

People usually don't think of families when they think of homelessness, but families represent over half of all homeless people in the United States. The families that day demanded to be seen and heard, not just by City officials, but also by the public. This issue features some of the powerful mothers who are fighting everyday to ensure that every family in San Francisco has a place that they can call home.



ANOTHER FLAWED PROGRAM FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES

Earlier this year, San Francisco's Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) implemented a program known as 'coordinated entry' for homeless family shelter, which prioritizes families trying to get stable shelter based on where they are staying at time of requesting shelter. A coordinated entry program, per federal law, should be low-barrier, fair access, inclusive, housing first, and full coverage, but advocates and providers for the homeless, such as Homeless Emergency Service Providers Association (HESPA), say that San Francisco's coordinated entry program is failing to meet these basic program guidelines.

During the lead up to Coordinated

consensus (on the program)," writes Director of the HSH, Jeff Kositsky, "but it is time to implement."

HESPA disagrees. There are still major issues, they say, such as the inability for pregnant homeless women to gain access to family shelter until their third trimester. During the first two trimesters, the mother will be forced to sleep outside or, as Director Jeff Kositsky writes, "are welcome to stay in the single adult shelter system," a waitlist that is currently over 1000 people long and an average of five weeks, risking the developmental health of her unborn child in the meantime.

The coordinated entry program also requires homeless families to regis-

our resources on San Francisco families and not encourage others to come to the City given the high cost of housing and limited resources. To do otherwise would be guaranteeing long stints of homelessness of families; we find this to be unacceptable given what we know about the impact of long-term homelessness on children."

But, as HESPA notes, homeless and poor families are often forced to move, even if they still work or at one time lived in San Francisco. Perhaps adding a simple question to the program, such as "Have you been employed in the City of San Francisco or lived in the City of San Francisco in recent years?" could fill in the cracks that many families may



PHOTO BY DARIN HUGHES.

Entry, most homeless families said there was little consistent, up-to-date information about next steps for housing post-discharge. One participant said that the disorganization made the whole thing seem "hopeless," adding that, "Sometimes you have to fill out the same form over and over. It seems like they are throwing your forms in the garbage." This is the premise for Coordinated Entry — that and a system to ration scarce services.

When this rationing system is used on shelter, many problems present. For one, the system has a set of preferences that do not take into account the reality homeless families face and since they are moving around, it does not make sense to base preferences solely on where people are staying. For example the new system gives top preference to families out on the streets. Homeless families have often experienced trauma, such as domestic violence or trading sex for a place to stay, and in order to get priority for family shelter, they must first be living on the street, forcing them to choose to move outside and prove their homelessness to gain access to services. Domestic violence survivors are also required to recite their story but in both these situations families do not care to, because they fear loss of their kids to child protective services.

"We understand there is not full

ter their child(ren) in San Francisco's Unified School District, violating the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH) of 2009 — specifically the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act. According to the McKinney-Vento Act, homeless children and youth have the right to continue their education in their "school of origin" — e.g., the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which they were last enrolled. 42 USC §11432(g)(3)(A).

As noted in this earlier article, Jennifer Friedenbach, director of the Coalition on Homelessness, the organization that publishes Street Sheet, wrote that mobility between school districts is common among homeless children and youth, which is why the McKinney-Vento Act establishes the right of students to remain in their school of origin, regardless of school district boundaries, as they move. Children who change schools fare worse on academic assessments, are more likely to repeat a grade or to drop out and have their emotional and social well-being compromised. One study found that youth aged 11 to 17 were twice as likely to attempt suicide if their families moved three or more times compared to those who had never moved.

In response, Kositsky writes, "HSH will not be making this (school origin) change. We believe it important to focus

fall through. Out of over 650 homeless families in San Francisco, only 7 (about 0.1 percent) had come from outside San Francisco, and families move elsewhere temporarily due to extraneous circumstances, such as language barriers in service programs. One participant in the coordinated entry trial program noted that, "Most of the Spanish speaking staff work in Oakland, so you have to make a special trip if you are in San Francisco."

The coordinate entry program seems to be well intended and could work very well, HESPA says, but like other policies implemented by the City in recent years, the program may fail because those implementing the program have willingly chosen to close their ears. In 2011, 48 percent of homeless people in the City's lived on the street. In 2015, it was up to 58 percent. In 2011, 255 homelessness families found in transitional housing. In 2015, the number was down to 226. In 2013, the percentage of homeless youth and children in transitional housing was 10 percent. By 2015, it was 6 percent, a rate lower than the percentage of young people accepted into Harvard.

These policies aren't working. Something needs to change. Perhaps listening would be a good place to start. Words mean experience. Hearing these words mean helping each other. It's a better place to be than where we've been going. ■

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

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

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition's work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: They bring their agenda to us. We then turn that agenda into powerful campaigns that are fleshed out at our work group meetings, where homeless people come together with their other community allies to win housing and human rights for all homeless and poor people.

WORKGROUP MEETINGS

AT 468 TURK STREET

HOUSING JUSTICE WORK GROUP Every Tuesday at noon

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

HUMAN RIGHTS WORK GROUP Every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m.

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

To learn more about COH workgroup meetings, contact us at : 415-346-3740, or go at : www.cohsf.org

STREET SHEET STAFF

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

Editor, Sam Lew

Lead Reporter, TJ Johnston

Vendor Coordinator, Scott Nelson

Our contributors include:

Lisa Marie Alatorre, Bob Offer-Westort, Jennifer Friendbach, Lesley Haddock, Jason Law, Jesus Perez, Miguel Carrera, Vlad K., Mike Russo, Arendse Skovmoller, Julia D'Antonio, Chance Martin, Irma Núñez, Paul Boden, Lydia Ely, Will Daley, Nicholas Kimura, Matthew Gerring, Jim Beller, Robert Gumpert, Art Hazelwood, the Ghostlines Collective, Dayton Andrews, Kelley Cutler, Raúl Fernández-Berriozabel, Jacquelyn Evans

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LIVING IN SAN FRANCISCO'S EMERGENCY FAMILY SHELTER

MEADOW SYLVESTER

In 2010, my husband and I succeeded in graduating a drug program and closing our Child Protective Services (CPS) case. Before our case was allowed to close, the courts mandated and assisted our family in acquiring a housing subsidy, which we put to use in the Bayview. At that time, the cost of our two bedroom apartment was \$1,800 per month. For four years, we resided there and barely ever saw the property management. But in 2014, the gentrification and the invasion of the techies raised rents and our property manager suddenly took interest in us and our apartment.

She took us to court five times and lost. We spent months in and out of the courtroom before agreeing to terms to leave. But having nowhere else to go we'd violated the terms of our agreement, causing it to become an eviction, which meant we lost our housing subsidy.

The first week we were homeless began on November 22, 2015. My son and I slept in Providence shelter, an emergency shelter in the Bayview, while my husband slept in the park because of his social anxiety disorder. To stay at Providence, you have to arrive there early—6pm being what I was informed. My son's after school program ended at 5pm. That first week, my son and husband did not see each other once, after having spent my child's entire lifetime with both parents in home. Thanksgiving weekend arrived,

**“THERE ARE NO
SHOWER FACILITIES, NO
MICROWAVES, NO BEDS.
WE ARE PROVIDED WITH
THE MINIMAL BASICS:
A MAT, BLANKETS, AND
SMALL MEAL.”**

and I decided to stay in the park with my husband so that we could spend the holiday as a family. To accommodate my child, we gathered a ridiculous amount of cardboard, a tarp, subzero sleeping bags and built a shelter at Stow Lake with the cardboard beneath us. There was more cardboard along the sides to protect ourselves against the wind. We slept there for three nights. It wasn't much, but at least we could be together as a family.

Ten minutes before my alarm went off for my son's school, we were awoken by a park ranger and told to tear down our shelter. While he stood there, we complied, leaving the area and hoping he would be satisfied and leave, but that was not the case. The moment he saw my son, he called the cops without asking any questions about our situation. There was no drug paraphernalia. We had food, warm clothing, and had provided wind



MEADOW SPEAKING ON THE STEPS OF CITY HALL. PHOTO BY DARIN HUGHES.

and waterproof shelter as best as we could, but he took notice of none of that. I tried to take my son to school, but was told I could not. I wasn't even permitted to take him to the restroom. We were made to wait for the arrival of CPS. Knowing what would transpire when CPS arrived, we put up a front for our son and acted as if everything was going to be okay.

The worker arrived, and it was time to try to explain to my son that he was going to be going to be taken away from us temporarily. It wasn't our choice and there was nothing we could do to stop it. Terror and tears filled his eyes and he tried to run, but the ranger had a hold of him. He clung to me, crying and screaming, NO! The ranger attempted to drag him from me, kicking and screaming, but I told him that I would put my son in the car in an attempt on my part to minimize the trauma. As I placed him in the backseat and buckled his seatbelt, I looked him in the eye and made a promise that this would not be a long separation and that I would do whatever I had to make it so.

That was December 1, 2015.

As they drove him away, I collapsed to the ground and broke down. Two days later in court, the judge said that if I went into another drug program, he would be returned to me immediately. Without ever receiving any evidence of recent drug activity, I was required to go to a drug program simply to be off the streets.

December 9th, I entered the Women's HOPE, a residential treatment program for women with children run by Healthright 360. During that time, I was separated from both my husband and my child. My child was placed back into my care on December 21st.

I spent three months there before going to Ashbury House, another residential treatment program, where I stayed for one year. CPS stayed involved with me from December 2015 till January 2017. My case was closed three months prior

to me leaving Ashbury House despite the fact that where we would go once my time was up at Ashbury House was still a mystery. But I was no longer CPS's problem. They'd successfully pushed me onto someone else, who openly admitted that they did not—and would not—find housing for their graduates. At the same time, I'd been working with Homeless Prenatal Program and was waiting until I had one month left at Ashbury House before I could get onto the waitlist for a 3-6 month stabilization room for me and my family at Compass Family Services.

At Compass, it was explained to me that I could not be placed on the waitlist until I was literally homeless. Despite being legally acknowledged as being homeless, when you are still staying at a treatment facility, that's not enough. I had to actually be outside before I could even be placed on this list. After I left Ashbury House, we were forced to stay at an emergency family shelter called First Friendship. First Friendship happens to be closest to my son's school. I wasn't told how long we would have to stay at the emergency shelter before the mental health and medical verifications we provided for priority access to the 3-6 month stabilization room would be accepted. It wasn't until we'd been staying at First Friendship for three weeks that we were

informed that the paperwork we'd provided wasn't good enough for processing. There was a specific form that we need our healthcare providers to fill out. We've since done that and are still awaiting the reply from Compass.

Compass has also informed me that the families who are sleeping in tents or vehicles are given first priority. Second priority are the emergency shelters like First Friendship and so on. The six to eight month wait for a stabilization room being so excruciatingly long as it is, families who hear this are actually doing this and sleeping outside, which endangers their children, not just from CPS, but also thieves, murderers, rapists, and other dangers from the streets. They only move a maximum of four families a week into the 3-6 month stabilization room.

Did you know that if you decide to stay at a hotel or on a friend's couch and you tell Compass you are doing so, you are temporarily removed from your spot on the list? This is one of the things that me and my family does to get some respite from sleeping in the emergency family shelter. At the beginning of the month, when my husband and I receive our SSDI government checks, we rent a cheap hotel room until our money runs out after a week or so. It's an escape from the horri-

SEE FAMILY SHELTERS PAGE 6



MATS AT FIRST FRIENDSHIP SHELTER.

My name is Irma. I am the mother of three children. I came from Mexico more than ten years ago with the hope of unifying my family for my son. Like many women in Latin America, our husbands come to this country in order to provide us with a better life. But it is very difficult for our children to understand that their parents did not abandon them, they went out to support them, to try to give them a better life. Better in the economic sense because emotionally, that does not happen. It is very difficult to raise a child alone, educate them, and get ahead. So after many years of waiting for him to come back, we came to live here, in the United States. My son at that time was 9 years old. I brought him with my best intentions, but I never thought he would have to go through so many barriers: First, the language, as he did not speak any English, and then, the culture, which is very different from what we knew. I do not say that the culture is bad, just different.

In the beginning when he started his new life, he never thought that he was different from the others, that he would not have the same opportunities as the others. But when he became a teenager, he realized that he could not travel freely in this country, that he could not apply for benefits, that he could not work. These, among many other things, undermined his mental health and his happiness. But one day, something amazing happened for him and for many young people in his situation: a window of opportunity and the hope of living like any other young man of his age. It was an application for DACA, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, an executive order that provides undocumented students with the opportunity to apply for things like a social security number and a work permit. This not only changed my life, but my whole family. He now has the opportunity to travel, to work, and to feel more part of this community which has adopted him and of which he feels is his.

Deferred Action for Youth has been a great help to



PHOTO BY DARIN HUGHES.

many families like mine that for different situations had to bring our children to live in the United States. Our children have every right to demonstrate that they are as capable as anyone of contributing greatly to this Nation that has seen them grow. I no longer feel so guilty for having ripped him out of his country because I know he now lives as part of this country. I just hope they do not take away from them this great opportunity that they have given these young women to demonstrate how great they can become!

I started volunteering at the Coalition on Homelessness almost nine years ago, and I have had the opportunity to learn many things in this community. Something very important is that I was able to know my rights as an immigrant and how to defend myself and fight for

them. And now I feel the moral obligation to pass on that knowledge to other families so that, like me, they can become leaders in their own lives and in their community. Thanks to what I learned at the Coalition, I became part of the school leadership that my children attend, and I am encouraging more immigrant mothers like myself to be encouraged to take the plunge and be leaders not only within the school but also in our communities. A great barrier in my path is the different culture, language, education, migratory status or fear of racism that immigrant mothers face in the U.S. I know that I still have a long way to go to get more mothers to join me in the struggle for our rights, but I will continue to stand up for my family and all families like mine! ■

IRMA NUÑEZ IMMIGRANT. ACTIVIST. MOTHER.

Me llamo Irma. Soy madre de tres hijos. Vine de México hace más de diez años con la esperanza de darle una familia completa a mi hijo. Como muchas mujeres de Latinoamérica, que nuestros esposos se vienen a este país con el fin de proporcionarnos una mejor vida. Pero es muy difícil para nuestros hijos entender que sus padres no los abandonaron que salieron para apoyarlos, para tratar de darles una vida mejor. Mejor en el sentido económico porque en lo emocional—eso no pasa, es muy difícil criar una sola a sus hijos, educarlos y salir adelante. Así que después de muchos años de estar esperando que él regresara, nos venimos a vivir para acá, mi hijo en ese momento tenía 9 años. Lo traje con mis mejores intenciones, pero jamás pensé que él tendría

que atravesar por muchas barreras; primero, el idioma: él no hablaba nada de inglés y segundo, la cultura es muy diferente a la que nosotros conocíamos, no digo que sea mala, solo diferente.

En un principio y cuando él se acopló a su nueva vida, jamás se puso a pensar que él era diferente a los demás, que no podía tener las mismas oportunidades que los demás. Pero cuando llegó a ser un adolescente se dio cuenta que él no podía viajar libremente en este país, que no podía aplicar por beneficios, no podía trabajar. Muchas cosas que fueron minando su salud mental y su felicidad. Pero un día pasó algo asombroso. Se abrió para él y para muchos jóvenes en su situación una ventana a la esperanza de vivir como cualquier otro joven de su edad. Aplicar para DACA, una orden ejecutiva que le da la oportunidad para que apliquen los jóvenes que cubren ciertas características, por un número de seguro social y un permiso de trabajo. Esto no solo le cambió la vida a él, sino a toda mi familia. Él ahora tiene la oportunidad de viajar, de trabajar, de sentirse más parte de esta comunidad la cual lo ha adoptado y de la cual se siente es suya.

La Acción Diferida para Jóvenes ha sido una gran ayuda para muchas

familias como la mía que por diversas situaciones tuvimos que traer a nuestros hijos a vivir en los Estados Unidos. Nuestros hijos tienen todo el derecho de demostrar que son tan capaces como cualquiera de contribuir grandemente a esta nación que los ha visto crecer.

Ya no me siento tan culpable por el hecho de haberlo arrancado de su país porque sé que ahora vive como parte de este país. ¡Solo espero que no les quiten esta gran oportunidad que les han dado a estas jóvenes de demostrar lo grande que pueden llegar a ser!

Yo comencé como voluntaria en la Coalición de Desamparados hace casi nueve años y he tenido la oportunidad de aprender muchas cosas en esta comunidad. Algo muy importante es que pude conocer cuáles son mis derechos como inmigrante y cómo defenderme y pelear por ellos. Y ahora me siento con la obligación moral de transmitir esos conocimientos a otras familias para que al igual que yo puedan convertirse líderes en su vida privada y en su comunidad. Gracias a lo aprendido en la Coalición formó parte del liderazgo de la escuela a la que asisten mis hijos y estoy impulsando a más madres inmigrantes como yo a que se animen a dar el paso y ser líderes no solo dentro de la escuela sino en nuestra comunidad. Me he encontrado con una gran barrera en mi camino pues muchas madres inmigrantes por cuestiones de cultura, idioma, educación, estatus migratorio o por miedo al racismo. Se que aún tengo mucho camino que recorrer para convencer a más madres de seguirme en la lucha de nuestros derechos pero seguiré en pie de lucha por mi familia y todas las familias como la mía! ■



PHOTO BY DARIN HUGHES.

JACQUELYNN EVANS

FROM HOMELESSNESS TO ADVOCACY

JOSHUA GILL-SUTTON

While she shares stories from her troubled upbringing, and her time living on San Francisco's streets, there isn't a hint of resentment in the voice of Jacquelynn Evans. Relaying her tales of loss and abuse, Evans speaks calmly, almost objectively. It's obvious that she has truly made peace with her past, a past riddled with dark chapters and difficult lessons. Through the telling, it becomes clear that she draws strength from the challenges she has overcome, and endeavors to use that strength in the service of others.

Evans, a San Francisco native, lost her mother at the age of 5. She was taken in by her grandmother, whose love and wisdom remains a source of inspiration to this day. Her grandmother passed away when she was only twelve, leaving Evans at the mercy of the foster care system after a brief period as a runaway.

"When they finally caught up with me, I was 13, almost 14. From there, they kept putting me all over the place." During this time, a young Evans was confronted with harsh realities that, according to her, "No child should have to endure." She felt like the people who were meant to guide and protect her betrayed her trust.

"They broke that trust, and it made me not trust anybody." While this was admittedly a difficult reality to accept, it shaped the sense of self-determination that has become a defining aspect of Evans' character.

"After that I had to find a way to survive. I had to find a way to make money, I had to find a way to stay dry. It wasn't easy. It was complicated, because nobody taught me any of those things. I had to learn them all by myself. But that's okay, because it made me the person I am today."

As a young adult, Evans worked a variety of jobs, sometimes providing in-home care, as well as canvassing for different organizations. While working constantly to earn a steady income, Evans struggled to find a stable living situation. She spent time on the streets, in and out of shelters, on the couches of friends and family, and was even briefly incarcerated. Through it all, she remained doggedly persistent in her pursuit of better opportunities.

"I literally applied to a housing place once a day. I applied for a job two or three times a week." By force of



PHOTO BY DARIN HUGHES.

sheer determination, guided by a self-taught sense of discipline, Evans was able to get herself off of the streets, and into a job she is passionate about.

Today Evans is the mother of two children, 21 months and thirteen years old, and works two jobs: one, as a peer organizer at the Coalition on Homelessness and the other, as a hotel desk clerk. As a peer organizer, she is able to draw from her experiences living on the streets and in shelters to help members of the city's ever growing homeless population regain stable housing. Her own experiences give her compassion and a deep knowledge of homelessness that those who have not experienced homelessness lack. While Evans is new to the job, she has jumped right into it, advocating for and with homeless families, attending policy meetings with City officials, and organizing rallies and direct actions. Evans uses the skills she developed during her years of homelessness, to be of service to others, which she feels is her ultimate calling.

If there is one lesson that her life story can convey as an inspiration to others, it is this: "Your own power and will is the most important thing. Nothing else matters. If you don't have the power to keep going, if you don't have the will to stick it out, nothing else will ever matter."

When asked if she harbors any bitterness regarding her past tribulations, Evans simply laughs. "I've done some bad, I've done some good, and I seem to have come out on top of it. I'd much rather stay here where I am than dwell on where I was." She would rather focus on the confidence she gained from her experiences and to be an inspiring example to people who are struggling as she did. She advises her peers to trust in their own power and says, most importantly, "Don't ever underestimate yourself." ■

We are Mothers.

We are women with thoughts and questions and shit to say.

We say we're beautiful, and we say we're strong. They will not determine our story.

We will.

So we raise our voices, not so we can shout, but so that those without voices can be heard.

We cannot succeed when half of us are held back. We are tough.

We are ambitious, and we know exactly what we want. As Michelle Obama says, there is no limit to what we as women can accomplish.

We need women at all levels including the top to change the dynamic reshape the conversation to make sure women's voices are heard and heeded, not overlooked and ignored.

We've all had it rough, and now is the time for the Mothers to fight together for housing.

For I conclude that the enemy is not women and children, but guilt itself. We deserve housing if we want it.

We deserve to be happy moms, safe from danger and taken serious or whatever we please.

We are entitled to have and hold the same luxuries as everyone else.

- Jacquelynn Evans

RED MOON BLACK SUN

BY LISA DEMB, STREET SHEET VENDOR

It's time to move on, and no longer run;
Time for the red moon and black sun.

Time to leave these fragile bodies;
Time to reveal our spiritualities.

No more stressors, no more horrors;
We're shining on, Jesus' adorers.

I seem to remember knowing this before;
T'was a vision had as a child forevermore.



ARTWORK BY LISA DEMB.

HOMELESS WITH A BABY

TJ JOHNSTON

Homelessness is hard enough for single adults, while family homelessness has its own set of trials, but these are compounded when women find themselves pregnant and without stable housing.

While numbers for homeless women experiencing pregnancy are hard to come by, San Francisco estimated 228 homeless families with 630 family members living in the city in its last homeless count in 2015.

In the same period of time, the city-based nonprofit Homeless Prenatal Project reported 322 clients of its Wellness Center giving birth to 322 babies.

Two peer advocates at the Coalition on Homelessness, which publishes Street Sheet, can attest to the challenges women face when homeless and pregnant. Julia D'Antonio and Jacquelynn Evans both delivered children while unhoused.

JULIA D'ANTONIO

D'Antonio said that sheltering herself was important. "When you're pregnant, it adds a whole new dimension. You're still protecting yourself, but there's a whole new layer," she said. "Eventually you're going to have to have a place."

Now 25 and living in a below-market rate apartment on Potrero Hill, D'Antonio gave birth to her daughter when she was 19 and almost four years on the streets. She found that the housing options that were available to her as an individual weren't as attainable when she was expecting.

In that time span, she stayed in a rental car, a hotel room in Antioch and the Star Community House at Seventh Avenue and Geary Boulevard. In the final stages of her pregnancy, she couch-surfed at a friend's place in the Haight. By that time, most of her family was already displaced from the city.

Fortunately, D'Antonio had prenatal care at a teen clinic, which was paid for by insurance. However, no one told her about available services until a social worker provided her a list when she was in her seventh month.

"There's never housing offered over a long term," she said, recalling her housing

search. "I'm just passed from one organization to the next."

D'Antonio said that intervention would have helped her in her teens or even when she was a transitional-aged youth (TAY), but such outreach was scarce. "I thought being TAY would help, but it didn't," she said. "I think youth are ignored or go unnoticed, and we're scared to be placed in the system."

JACQUELYNN EVANS

Already the mother of two young children, Jacquelynn Evans, 29, left her friend's place when she no longer felt safe. She was pregnant with her now one-year-old son, Z'allah, and guidance was in short supply, Evans said.

"My whole journey, people treated me very awkward and judgmental once I asked everybody for help," she said.

Evans' pregnancy was complicated by an array of health issues, including diabetes, respiratory problems and anxiety. The effects of homelessness on a child's development — including low birth weight — has been well documented. When her son was born 34 weeks into her pregnancy, he didn't have enough fluid in his kidneys, so he spent three weeks in the hospital. Evans said she was able to move Z'allah past his developmental stage by breastfeeding him.

During her homeless episode, Evans stayed at a camping van that was eventually towed away, several transitional programs, single-resident occupancy hotels and her aunt's living room. The house mandated by a drug dependency court required her to leave the basement and enter the main entrance just to use the bathroom.

Now living in an SRO, Evans has signed up for 55 places so that all three of her children can live with her. Even when she met the requirements for the housing units, Evans said she suffered discrimination — one program told her she wasn't "emergency enough" with elaborating further.

In addition to working at the Coalition, she also works as a desk clerk at an SRO. Evans said that social workers discouraged her from working. "But I knew I couldn't because I had to provide for (my son)." ■

FAMILY SHELTERS

FROM PAGE 3

ble conditions of the shelter.

Those of us endure the emergency shelter with ten to fifteen other families all on mats on the hard linoleum floor. There are no shower facilities, no microwaves, and no beds. We are provided with the minimal basics. A mat, blankets, a small meal for dinner and sometimes breakfast. At 9pm we are made to turn off our cellphones and the lights are turned off. I pity the women who have toddlers or infants that aren't yet ready to be quiet and are made to go into the nursery with their children until they quiet down. The nursery is only a few hard chairs, a changing table, and a nightlight. We can still hear the crying in the main room.

As far as the staff go, I feel most of them are fair or try to be fair. They are not in any way warm or inviting; at best,

they are rather intimidating. The whole experience is, but as they get to know you they become less intimidating and more human. I imagine it's a difficult job witnessing children and families at the bottom of society's totem pole.

Sleep there is difficult to say the least. With so many in one room, you hear snoring, babies crying, staff moving about. You are woken up many times each night. Each morning, you are required to get up, clean your area, and take all of your belongings and leave by 7am, returning to the streets until the afternoon when you can again return.

I just would like to move forward. I may have made mistakes in the past, but I have been more than trying to make up for them. I did everything I was told I had to do and then some. I'm actively pursu-

ing opportunities of agencies and trying to get a hold of someone who will help me, filling out applications, going to appointments, and there is still no forward momentum. That's the hardest part about all of this. Our family puts so much effort into trying to get housing and still, we have nothing come out of it.

To Mayor Ed Lee, please stop ignoring families. We won't go away. If you ignore homelessness, it doesn't make it disappear.

The Coalition on Homelessness, along with the Homeless Emergency Service Providers Association, a group of 27 nonprofits that serve homeless folks in San Francisco, are calling on the Department of Homelessness and Mayor Ed Lee to create a new, full-service family shelter. Call the Mayor's office and demand that families need bet-

FAMILY HOMELESSNESS: QUICK FACTS

- ACCORDING TO SAN FRANCISCO'S 2015 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT, THERE ARE 226 HOMELESS FAMILIES LIVING IN SAN FRANCISCO, WITH 630 FAMILY MEMBERS

- ALMOST HALF (46%) OF FAMILIES REPORTED EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- MOST FAMILIES (64%) WERE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS FOR THE FIRST TIME

- THE WAIT TIME FOR A FAMILY IN SAN FRANCISCO TO GET INTO A NON-EMERGENCY FAMILY SHELTER IS 6-8 MONTHS

- EVERY YEAR, 600,000 FAMILIES WITH 1.35 MILLION CHILDREN EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS IN THE UNITED STATES. THIS MAKES UP 50 PERCENT OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION



MEADOW'S CART, WHICH SHE BRINGS WITH HER EACH DAY.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:
CALL THE MAYOR
415-554-6141**

Ask that he include in his budget a new, full service family shelter and provide more housing subsidies and affordable housing for families!



WHERE IS THE REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE FOR HOMELESS WOMEN?

GIANNI JONES

The care of women's bodies physically, socially, politically, and emotionally regardless of age, nationality, sexual orientation, ethnicity or socioeconomic background are essential. Many women's rights to reproductive health and family planning services are being violated through recent actions by the Trump administration plans to stop funding to programs such as Planned Parenthood. Eradicating women reproductive health services prove to be detrimental to the psyche of society as a whole. Furthermore, creating space to celebrate and protect the bodies of women are important.

It is the right of women across the United States—and across the world—to have access to reproductive health services such as sexually transmitted infection testing, fertility services and pregnancy care, as well as breast and cervical cancer screenings. Health care access represents more than just physical health needs: It also represents healing towards emotional and psychological health for many homeless and low-income women. However, the current actions under the Trump administration threatens these very rights.

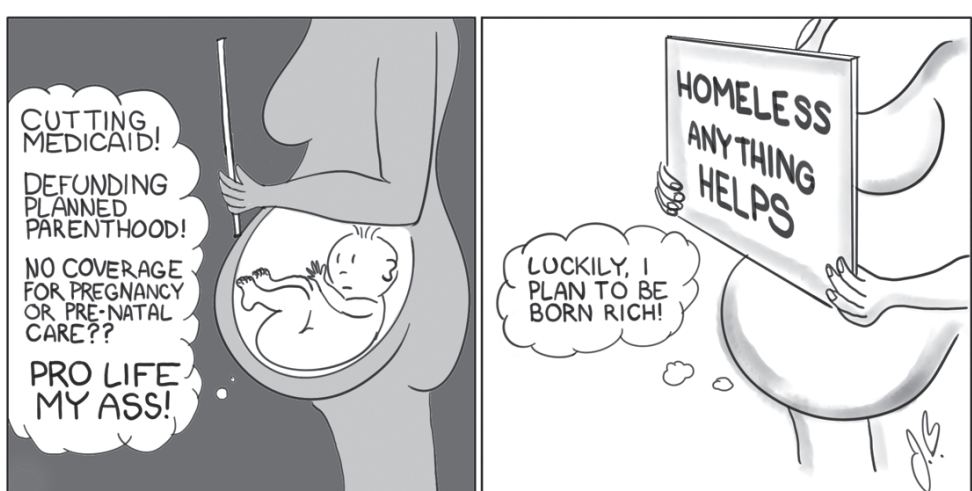
During the past month, the Trump administration announced its plan to stop funding a U.N. program providing reproductive health services to women across the globe. In fact, Trump has gone as far as to discontinue former first lady Michelle Obama's "Let Girls Learn" program. This initiative empowered girls to get the education that they otherwise may not have access to. Obviously, these are inhumane and targeted, violent actions against women and girls by the current administration.

Low-income and homeless women need access to services from organizations such as Planned Parenthood, Women's Community Clinic, and Women's Health Justice. Organizations such as these offer gynecology, primary care and counseling services to girls and women, many who would not otherwise have access to healthcare.

The ACCESS Healthline through Women's Health Justice helps women in California address reproductive health needs. The organization provides confidential referrals and peer counseling on various women's reproductive issues including pap smears, prenatal care, safer sex and relationships. In turn, such support in linking to family planning and reproductive health services can cultivates feelings of empowerment for women and their bodies.

In many cases, homeless women are not medically insured and face health issues surrounding unplanned pregnancy and limited menstrual cycle sanitation options. That's why health clinics that serve homeless and low-income women are so important: They provide much needed accessible reproductive health services. In fact, Planned Parenthood participates annually in a fair put on by Project Homeless Connect, a San Francisco social service organization.

Let's celebrate the beauty and diversity that each woman's body represents. Empowering others to address issues of sexually transmitted diseases, cervical cancer and family planning rather than creating additional barriers should be the goal. Homeless and low-income women, just as all women, have the right to make healthy decisions concerning their own bodies regardless of economical status. Organizations assisting women's health or education needs should not be defunded by federal or state governments to satisfy some sexist and patriarchal agendas. ■



VOICES OF THE ENCAMPMENTS: VIOLENCE ON THE STREETS

SHYENENE BROWN

I've been living here in San Francisco going on the last seven years, and I have had my fair shots of violence towards me, such as being in my tent asleep while someone burned it down with me inside. The San Francisco Police Department also had a few involvements as well, from Luís Góngora Pat and Jessica Williams, two homeless people who were killed in officer-involved shootings, just to name a few. And let's not forget the innocent individuals who also suffered from street-based violence such as Eddie Tate, Terry Hopkins and Joe Hum.

These individuals were innocent individuals who were homeless and were victims of violent crimes committed against them. My brother who just passed away was stabbed and died from his injuries on April 21, 2017. The person who did it, whose identity is being kept secret, really doesn't understand who he took from us, and I feel that he really doesn't give a care about what he did. I also feel that the housed residents of San Francisco don't give a care either about homeless people either.

Believe it or not, some of us do have families who do worry and care for us. Even though we are not around our immediate families, it doesn't mean we haven't built extended families while being out here in the streets. And they mean just as much to us like the families we grew up with. Just recently, I was jumped by two guys for no particular reason.

See, I understand how people view us out here in San Francisco. But when are the housed residents of SF gonna have a heart for us? The violence against the homeless is NOT fair at all. We are human as well. Those innocent individuals became victimized and are no longer here with us, and all we are left with is the hurt, the pain and sorrow of our loved ones not being here with us.

So I challenge the Mayor, all City officials and lawmakers to come together and fight for justice for these families who have to go to sleep every night knowing that their loved one is never coming back to them. And let those who have passed away be put to rest with the justice they deserve.

Please stop sweeping these incidents under the rug like they don't matter to anyone and catch these people who are taking our loved ones away from us.

I am currently in the process of gathering up funds to help out the family of Terry Hopkins for his burial. If you have any questions on how you can help donate money to the family, please feel free to email Kelley Cutler at kcutler@cohsf.org or email me, Shyenene Brown, at shybrown1081@gmail.com. All donations and proceeds will go to the family of Terry Hopkins. ■

Writer's Corner

People often associate mothers and mother figures with the way they care for others (though we acknowledge not all mothers are caring).

In honor of Mother's Day, I want to take some time to acknowledge and celebrate the folks in your life that cared for you. List 10 specific moments you felt cared for.

Then, drawing on this list for inspiration, write a poem celebrating one or more folks who showed you love. If you need a place to start, you can use the ghostlines, "I found love..." or "Love lives..."

This writing prompt is brought to you by **GHOSTLINES**. Ghostlines is a Bay Area collective of poets, artists, and educators comprised of Ariana Weckstein, Gabriel Cortez, Isabella Borgeson, Jade Cho, and Natasha Huey. We are committed to using art to cultivate empathy. To disrupt violent systems and thought. To nurture and challenge ourselves and our communities to rise. www.ghostlinescollective.tumblr.com

IF YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE YOUR WRITING WITH THE STREET SHEET, YOU CAN E-MAIL STREETSHEET@COHSF.ORG OR MAIL TO STREET SHEET 468 TURK ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102.

REST IN POWER, ROBERT SCALLON

One of our dear vendors, Robert Scallon, passed away on April 27th, 2017 in Golden Gate Park.

"I used to encounter Rob several times a week as I walked down Larkin to the Street Sheet office on Turk. Rob would be manning his post outside Saigon Sandwich, cheerfully vending the latest issue," says Scott Nelson, Street Sheet vendor coordinator. "Sometimes his customers would give him a sandwich from the store, and on more than one occasion he offered the sandwich to me. Rob was a really friendly person, always in a good mood, and a true believer in the benefits of cannabis use. We will sincerely miss him at the Street Sheet."

Rest in power, Robert. You are already missed. The following is his vendor profile.

I'm on GA [general assistance], and it pays for my rent. But I don't have any money besides that, so I sell the Street Sheet to make ends meet. To buy dinner and whatever I need. Pocket change, basically. I've been selling for about three years now, and it's been able to feed me.

I was born in Miami. I grew up in Fort Lauderdale. I moved to Chicago when I was 21 and I moved out here in 2009 with my wife. It's like I moved west across the continent. I love it here in Cali. It's a great state and there are beautiful people. My wife wanted to come out here to California and I promised her I would take her, so I did, but she passed away two years ago.

I was working, but I got sick when I came out here. I used to sell advertisements for radio stations, and it was a pain in the ass. It was so cut throat, but I did well at it. That was when I was younger; I'm mellow now. I don't want to be hyped up like that anymore. I got a heart disease, a heart failure actually. I really just cannot work anymore and so I sit here and sell the papers. I love this neighborhood [the Tenderloin]; I love sitting here and meeting all of these people. One of my favorite things about the Tenderloin is that it's real. People here are real. They're full of love, you know? I appreciate that. You got some knuckleheads, of course, but people here are genuine, and I really like that.

Saigon Sandwich is my favorite spot in the Tenderloin. It's where I sell the Street Sheet everyday. I have a lot of regular customers—I had one guy hand me a hundred dollars for a paper! I just sit here and I conversate with people in my neighborhood. I'm just a cat out here selling papers.

If I could tell my younger self anything, I would tell him, think before you act, because when you go off and do something, you might screw up real quick.



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