

WOOD STREET COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

As politicians spend their time posturing, eviction defenses in Oakland ramp up.



Electoral Politics is a Dead End

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A fool who serves the interest of the capitalist class has won the presidency for a record 46th time in a row. Business as usual will continue in America. While many people choose to flaunt voting every four years as a method of fundamentally changing the system, the working people of this country understand that electoralism is not going to solve any of the problems that they face on a daily basis. Only a mass movement of working class people can win the world we want.

While the 2020 election brought out a record number of voters—much like the 2016 election did— it is clear that large swaths of the population is precluded from, or refuse to participate in, our electoral system. There are various reasons for this including widespread voter suppression, exclusion of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, and gerrymandering (a process where elected officials redraw voting districts to include a particular demographic of voter to ensure a favorable outcome

ELECTORALISM (cont.)

during elections). Others refuse to vote because they don't see the impact of voting in their daily lives, or just don't see the point.

There are various reasons for this including widespread voter suppression, exclusion of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, and gerrymandering(a process where elected officials redraw voting districts to include a particular demographic of voter to ensure a favorable outcome during elections). Others refuse to vote because they don't see the impact of voting in their daily lives, or just don't see the point. The truth is that there is no fundamental difference between Democrats and Republicans and neither party is capable of providing for the people.

If you are to examine the candidates in this election, which has been presented as the most important election of our lifetime, you can see that our two choices were not all that different. Among other items, both Biden and Trump rejected universal healthcare, supported fracking(a destructive form of natural gas extraction), defended the concentration camps at the border, and promised to expand America's foreign intervention. Both candidates and both parties are beholden to their corporate funders and the demands of managing an imperialist power. In the United States, there is no party willing to upend their donors' financial security, no party able to threaten capital, and no party that serves the people. Therefore, to engage in the electoral process is effectively to uphold the principles of capitalism.

This is evident not only in the farce that is the presidential election, but in nearly every facet of local government. Take for example the recent Encampment Management Policy in Oakland. This is a policy that further criminalizes, antagonizes, and displaces homeless people. The policy forces people out of their living spaces if they are too close to schools, houses, water, or parks. It was resoundly decried by the people of Oakland. It was passed unanimously.



Both parties serve capitalism.

ELECTORALISM (cont.)

Progressives, liberals, and undecideds on the city council all voted to pass this draconian measure. Why? Because the policy helps facilitate gentrification in Oakland. And gentrification is in the interest of the landowning capitalists in Oakland. The city council has proven itself incapable of standing up to business interests that threaten the livelihood of people living in Oakland. The situation seems bleak.

But we aren't nihilists, nor are we utopians who think that the future will be better just because we say it is. Rather, we know that a better future can be created through the people coming together. The ballot box has shown itself to be a fraud not as a means of revolution. Only a mass movement of working class people can win the world we want.

We have seen this happen right here in Oakland. The Black Organizing Project (BOP) was working for over a decade to remove the racist and authoritarian Oakland Unified School District police. BOP was interested in organizing through the approved channels. They presented their plans at school board meetings where they were met with disrespect. They implored council members and board members to do the right thing, and nothing happened. However, after two weeks of mass uprisings, including particularly active protests here in Oakland, the school board voted unanimously to disband the school police. It was the people, coming together that created change.



Mass protests, like the ones in Oakland in June 2020 often lead to change, not voting every four years.

There are other actors who purport to be revolutionary but who refuse to work outside of the electoral system. Take the Community Democracy Project and their decade long campaign to amend the Oakland City Charter to give people more input into the city budget as an example. This sounds good, until you realize it has been over a decade with no movement and when you realize that this group wants to work with NGOs and special interest groups to balance the budget, not just the people. They also propose “neighborhood associations” that would serve as working groups to create a more balanced budget. Instead of meeting the people and forming neighborhood associations now, they want to wait until a ballot measure gives them permission to organize. We must organize now and with the people, not special interest groups.

We have seen the effectiveness of mass movements here in Oakland, we recognize the ineffectiveness of voting to change our material conditions, and we acknowledge that power lies within the people. So when people implore you to wait for four years to look for change, don't wait, organize. Get connected with people who are working in your community, including the UFAD, and fight back against this backward system that seeks to hold us down.

The People's Fight Against the EMP

On October 20th, the City of Oakland passed a new Encampment Management Policy (EMP). This represents the latest effort by the city government to increase the displacement of homeless people without making any additional efforts to rehouse them. The passage of the EMP should come as no surprise since there is nothing new about it. The EMP is simply a continuation of the City of Oakland's policy to criminalize and displace the poor working-class residents of Oakland. The policy categorizes encampments as being "high-sensitivity" or "low-sensitivity" areas in order to enact what they deem as emergency interventions. Those encampments that are deemed high sensitivity are to be removed and residents evicted, while low sensitivity encampments are to be monitored and managed by an Encampment Management Team (EMT).

Under this policy, there are no low-sensitivity encampments that meet the listed standards, making it likely that a great majority of encampments will be deemed high sensitivity. Furthermore, encampments are deemed high sensitivity if they are within 150 feet of a school or 50 feet within a protected waterway, residence or business, playground or tot lot, public park, soccer field, baseball field, basketball court, tennis court, or golf course. These restricted areas account for many of the homeless encampments across Oakland as many of these spaces are the only spaces where homeless people can reside. While the language of the policy claims these restrictions are intended to improve health and safety on the streets, without a clear plan to house those that are evicted, the policy is simply a stepping stone towards displacing more and more homeless people, which is in itself an extremely unhealthy, unsafe, and inhumane practice.

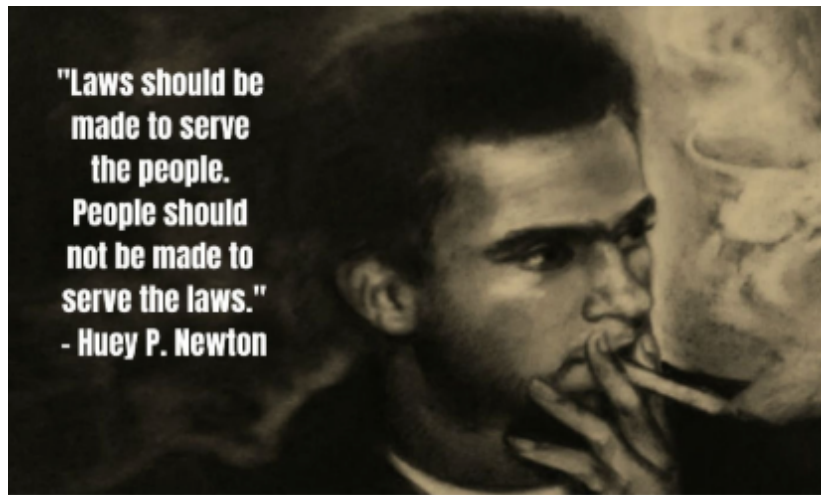
A major element of this policy is the concept of co-management. As a part of the EMP, the City of Oakland wants to incorporate high-sensitivity encampments that meet its stringent requirements into its shelter system. It seeks to do this by having non-profits and other organizations "co-manage" the encampments on their behalf. These organizations would provide services that are supposed to be provided for by the city, such as sanitation, as well as enforcing the EMP on a day-to-day basis. In exchange, the city would not intervene as much in the affairs of a co-managed encampment, leaving most of the work of intervention to the co-managing organization.

While we haven't seen this in practice yet, what it will likely result in is the designation of privately-run city-sanctioned slums to push newly displaced people into. This will only worsen the conditions that people are living in as these newly-sanctioned slums become increasingly overcrowded, with the task of dealing with the problems in these encampments being passed from the city onto a privately-run "co-manager", washing their hands of any responsibility.



Dayton, a member of the UFAD, speaking at a recent protest about the city's inability to serve the people and its disregard for human life.

The People's Fight Against the EMP (cont.)



Huey Newton, founder of the Black Panther Party, understood that the system must serve the people. If the system is not doing that, we must dismantle it and create our own.

While the EMP does not explicitly criminalize people for being homeless, it certainly criminalizes the ways in which homeless people are forced to live. The policy codifies a practice where legislators can continue to restrict the space and manner in which homeless people have to live without offering real solutions to the problems that lead people to be homeless in the first place. Safer conditions for people to live in would be ideal but that is not what this policy is about. The EMP is intended to push homeless people further out of sight and out of mind so that developers can continue the gentrification the city in order to facilitate the expansion of their wealth. This cannot be allowed to happen, but we must recognize that history has shown this to be a long term struggle.

The U.S. has long criminalized those who are homeless and unemployed. For example, after the Civil War, Southern states passed Vagrancy Laws, otherwise known as the Black Codes, which were laws targeted towards ex-slaves who were without work or a place to live. Vagrancy Laws essentially made it illegal to be homeless and unemployed. While these laws were eventually countered by Congress with the Civil Rights Act of 1866, the legacy of this type of hostility towards homeless people, particularly Black people, lives on today. Various different laws that have been passed in recent years throughout the U.S. have made being homeless a criminalized act. According to a study but the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, following the economic crash of 2008-09, 30% of U.S. cities put into place laws that prevented sitting or lying in public areas. 33% prohibited camping in particular public places and 17% had full prohibitions on camping. 47% prohibited loitering in particular areas and 19% prohibit loitering citywide. 47% prohibited “begging” in particular public places while 49% prohibited aggressive panhandling. Similar to the EMP, these types of arbitrary laws and policies are presented as laws to keep the public safe and healthy. In actuality, they only serve to perpetuate unhealthy and unsafe living conditions of homeless people while criminalizing them for being homeless.

Violators of these kinds of laws are subjected to harassment and expensive fines. For example, in San Francisco, it is estimated that the police department issues about 10,000 citations a year for quality-of-life crimes such as camping, blocking sidewalks, and drinking in public. In cities across the country, local governments have a formal policy of having police act as the main responders to different calls around homelessness and people in the midst of a mental health crisis.

The People's Fight Against the EMP (cont.)

This constant interaction with the police also leaves many people on the streets living in a state of constant terror from police violence. At the beginning of the year, a report released by the Los Angeles Police Department found that over a third of the time when the police use force it is against people experiencing homelessness.



A protest held by the UFAD against the EMP on October 20th.

These are just a few of the ways homeless people are criminalized and terrorized simply for being homeless. The conditions that people are forced to live in subject them not only to physical and mental health risk, but also to societal stigma, harassment, fines, imprisonment, and even death. Homelessness is always going to exist in our present system, as the issue is not that there is not enough housing, food, or other essential resources, but rather that people can't afford these things. The capitalist system is not designed to ensure that all people have their needs met. Capitalism is intended to facilitate the accumulation of greater and greater wealth into the hands of a few at the expense of the masses. Without a strong movement capable of overthrowing the capitalist system, there will always be homeless people. All other efforts to reform the system through law enforcement, re-distribution of resources, or voting in more progressive candidates will fall short of making sure no one has to be homeless. In understanding this, the UFAD has attempted to collaborate other organizations and individuals to build such a movement. Through recent efforts to resist the EMP and an eviction on Wood st in collaboration with other organizations, we have learned several key lessons that we will break down

After the proposal of the EMP, several more liberal homeless advocacy organizations came together to form a coalition to stop the EMP. While the decision to form a coalition was the right choice, ultimately this coalition failed to take the necessary steps to effectively oppose the EMP. Unfortunately, there were negative forces in the coalition which advocated for a "diversity of tactics" approach to the resistance efforts which essentially allotted time and energy on tactics that have been proven not to work. A diversity of tactics is a liberal approach to political organizing as it leads to actions which appeal to politicians and see attending city hall meetings as a strong pathway forward. It operates under the mindset that simply "doing something" is enough and that sustained collective discussion about the merits of different tactics is unnecessary.

The People's Fight Against the EMP (cont.)

The Village, a homeless advocacy group based in Oakland was particularly antagonistic to the UFAD's call for more collective discussion about devising the best strategy to oppose the EMP. The Village essentially dominated the strategy of the coalition and dictated how they wanted to run the show. They became hostile to the UFAD's efforts of emphasizing collective leadership and our refusal to waste time appealing to the Oakland city council. In addition to this, The Village recently became incorporated as a non-profit in an attempted bid to become an organization that could meet the requirements for the city's new co-governance policy. This is something we strongly oppose as an organization because non-profits are where revolutionary organizing efforts go to die. Non-profit organizations are often forced to appeal to corporate and state interests for funding and they place barriers between organizers and working class people. As a result of these various issues, the UFAD decided to leave the coalition and lead separate actions.

In response to the EMP, the UFAD organized actions on October 10th and October 20th in front of Oakland City Hall to voice opposition the policy and the ongoing assault on homeless people in Oakland and across the country. Speakers at the events discussed the ways in which the EMP is simply a codification of the long-standing relationships between the city and homeless people in Oakland. Activists from New York and Boston also spoke on the ways in which displacement and gentrification are occurring across the country, making the point that what is happening in Oakland is not an isolated occurrence. The long legacy of resistance against the city's continued negligence and brutality was also discussed as speakers remembered the Black Panther Party and the need for revolutionary organizing. The people of the Bay Area must come together and recognize the shared interest between tenants and people experiencing homelessness. City officials, developers and landlords share an interest in evicting, displacing and criminalizing working class people. Without collective resistance the plans to clear out poor people to make room for swanky apartments, upscale restaurants, cafes, and other facilities designed to make the rich richer will be successfully carried out. The protests organized by the UFAD addressed these broader issues while also focusing on more specific things such as the EMP and the lack of trash removal at encampments such as the one on Wood Street.

As a part of the October 10th action, protestors marched to the Department of Public Works office in Downtown Oakland to hold a demonstration addressing the lack of trash pickup at the Wood st Homeless Encampment and different encampments across Oakland . At Wood st, there is continuous illegal trash dumping that residents are forced to live amongst, and the city fails to enforce its restrictions against dumping at the site. The city has also failed to provide proper trash disposal for residents. As part of the action against these injustices, protestors placed bags of trash and other debris in front of the office as a symbolic way to bring the issue to the institution supposedly designed to deal with this. Addressing specific issues such as the inability of the city to manage trash is important. But we must keep our central focus on how mounting piles of garbage are but one symptom of a broader system that consistently works to keep people in poverty and without housing. The threat of evictions is another pressing issue that places extra burden on homeless people.

The People's Fight Against the EMP (cont.)

At the Wood Street Homeless Encampment in West Oakland, the sheriff department has been attempting to carry out an eviction of homeless residents staying on an empty private lot owned by Game Changer LLC. Game Changer LLC has been trying to clear this lot for over a year and through the threat of eviction have been able to dwindle down the residency from dozens of people to 6. Game Changer LLC stands to make millions of dollars once the lot is clear by developing a bio medical research facility which will serve as the first steppingstone towards wider development in the area, leading to the displacement of the larger homeless encampment on Wood st. This latest eviction attempt by the sheriff department which serves the interest of Game Changer LLC had been delayed for weeks by activists and residents who have come together to protect the people on the lot and their belongings. The UFAD has been able to prevent evictions on this lot in the past but the recent eviction defense had a turnout of dozens of people who ardently oppose the city's efforts to evict homeless people from where they stay during a pandemic where there is a statewide moratorium on evictions. While this eviction defense is not sustainable in the immediate future, it has been an inspiring show of force which demonstrates the power that people have when we come together.



An encampment getting shut down in 2018. The EMP doesn't create any new policy, it just codifies the harrassment carried out by the city of Oakland for years.

In order to carry out effective actions in the future in terms of protests and eviction defenses, more homeless people need to get involved. There are many barriers keeping homeless people from getting more deeply involved in these types of struggles such as fear of losing their belongings, work, mental and physical health challenges, addiction, and fear of the state suppression. But without greater involvement of homeless people these struggles are unsustainable. We also have to find ways to build coalitions against things like the EMP that do not depend on appealing to the city or piecemeal reforms. We can demand that the city take basic steps to improve the living conditions of homeless people, but we cannot sell out and jeopardize the people by making concessions and jeopardizing a movement capable of mounting a greater challenge to the capitalist system. Even reforms that benefit the people only come when movements demand change.

The People's Fight Against the EMP (cont.)

We must come together to resist displacement and gentrification in all of its forms. This entails opposing the EMP and other initiatives the city puts forth to trick and manipulate the people. But this also means opposing the city itself, which works to serve the interests of the wealthy, not the poor. Although we have not been able to work with everybody in this struggle, The UFAD will continue to attempt to collaborate with other organizations and individuals to put together actions to oppose the policy and build a long-term movement against displacement and gentrification. Our position is that our efforts will not be productive if we appeal to city officials and wait for permission to act. We cannot spend hours at a city council meeting or put all our chips behind a political candidate. We must build a movement ourselves, free from the shackles of city hall meetings and electoral politics. We must stop evictions where they pop up as well as understand the different struggles homeless people and housed tenants are dealing with, while recognizing the different contradictions that exist amongst the people, as tenants and homeless people are not a monolith. Only through struggling through the contradictions between the city and its agents and the people and the contradictions between the people themselves will we be able to carve the best pathway forward to revolutionary action that can overthrow the capitalist system and create one that actually serves the interests of the people.

Evictions in West Oakland

In late September, members of the United Front Against Displacement were informed about tenants being served eviction notices in Peralta Village (commonly known as Cypress Village), a public housing project in West Oakland. These notices are illegal, as there are current federal, state, county, and city eviction moratoriums that protect tenants who can't pay rent from being evicted due to loss of income from the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these protections, evictions have been happening throughout the pandemic in Oakland. This shows us that people in power will create laws like these eviction moratoriums that appear to be in the interest of the people, but enforce them only when it serves their own interests, at the expense of working class people. Even for tenants who aren't currently being evicted, once the moratoriums end— which they eventually will— people will have to pay months of back rent. Half of all American's don't have enough money saved for a \$1000 emergency, and we've just had a year-long emergency, so a wave of evictions is sure to come.



The Oakland Housing Authority office at 935 Union Street. Many tenants have described how difficult it is to get an appointment or someone to return their calls.

Evictions in West Oakland (cont.)

Everyone deserves a safe place to live. Now more than ever, during a deadly and unprecedented pandemic, no one should be evicted. Because of COVID-19, unemployment skyrocketed in 2020 and now 1 in 5 renter households are at risk of eviction by the end of the year due to failure to pay rent. This is the situation in which the Oakland Housing Authority is sending eviction notices to tenants at Peralta Village.

Peralta Village is one of the largest projects in Oakland with 389 HUD units, which house approximately 736 residents. The majority of residents come from minority backgrounds, with 98% of head of households self-reporting as non-white. Some residents have lived there for decades.



Despite supposed moratorium protections, many residents in West Oakland are receiving eviction notices.

Today, residents report illegal raises in rent, ongoing and serious plumbing issues that can lead to deadly black mold, and illegal trash dumping around the area. While the Oakland Housing Authority has always been slow to respond to tenants' needs, their neglect combined with the coronavirus pandemic has led to endless waits just to have basic issues fixed. The OHA office right next to Peralta Village at 935 Union has been closed during the pandemic, and some tenants have tried to email and call OHA with no response for months. It seems that the Housing Authority is hiding behind the pandemic instead of supporting tenants through it.

The Housing Authority has, however, spent their time harassing tenants with threats of eviction. The Housing Authority seems to follow a pattern as they send these eviction notices out. First, they send vague and threatening letters demanding that rent be paid soon. It should be noted that information about the eviction moratoriums is not located anywhere on these letters. Next, when residents call to make appointments, they are told that appointments are limited because the office is closed due to COVID-19. This leads to long delays and frustration. Finally, the Housing Authority sends an official eviction notice, demanding tenants pay within three days or face eviction.

For some tenants, this process never moves past the first step. Tenants receive that first letter and are rightfully frightened, going to great lengths to pay their rent, even if they have lost their job. Those who decide to go through the process of fighting the eviction or want to wait it out end up frustrated, with no help from the Housing Authority.

Evictions in West Oakland (cont.)

It's true that not all residents at Peralta Village have received eviction notices, but a threat to one resident is a threat to all. Peralta Village residents have often lived there for many years, but their housing situation is still precarious because they could be given an eviction at any time, for seemingly any reason. It's not a coincidence that this eviction campaign is prevalent in the projects. There is a nationwide push to privatize public housing projects. Look no further than across the street from Peralta to the Acorn Projects. It was formerly run by the Housing Authority but is now under the jurisdiction of John Stewart Company (who also manages the Campbell Village projects). This trend leads to obvious problems since the managing corporations care more about profits than people.

It is a lot easier for the Housing Authority to ignore tenants' demands when it's one tenant or household. Our only way to fight back against them is collectively. Oftentimes in this country, people do not know or talk to their neighbors. This only serves those in power, who benefit from individuals being isolated from each other. Tenants are facing different issues but are all antagonized in some way by landlords. Whether it's the Housing Authority, a corporate landlord, or a small time property owner, they are all seeking to exploit tenants.



The UFAD recognizes that the only way to stand up to these greedy landlords and the unjust housing system that exists under capitalism is through collective action. The UFAD has been involved in a number of eviction defenses at Wood Street and it is evident that when people come together, we can resist the sheriff and keep people in their homes. Therefore, we have been going door-to-door in Peralta Village for over two months, talking to residents and building connections. We welcome folks who want to get involved to join us on door knocking sessions. And we encourage everyone to talk with their neighbors and understand the larger gentrifying forces that are destroying Oakland.

The Housing Authority has used the pandemic as an excuse to ignore residents' needs but is still willing to evict people during it.

The Backwards Shelter System

The shelter system is presented as an important part of the pathway into permanent housing. The people are constantly told that there is a “shortage” of housing and so the best thing that we can do is provide people a temporary place to stay while they attempt to get housing through various service providers. Additionally, we are told that there are so many people living on the streets is because there aren’t enough shelter beds, and if there were more “resources” available to homeless people this wouldn’t be an issue. In truth, these are just illusions meant to obscure the brutal reality of the capitalist system.

Housing under capitalism is first and foremost meant to turn a profit. Which is hard when people can’t afford to pay market rates for rent. Therefore, it is often more profitable to keep vacant units off the market. These empty properties are seen as a longer term investment, rather than something that incurs operating expenses. The manufactured “shortage” of housing is a part of what causes rents to rise, allowing property owners to rent or sell them later on at a higher value. The result of this is that poor people who can’t afford exorbitant rents are regularly hung out to dry. But if rent is going up, why don’t wages keep up with it?

In order to turn a profit, employers pay workers not for the amount of value they create, but the amount that is required to be able to come to work the next day. This means that most workers are already barely scraping by. For example, the average rent in Oakland for a one-bedroom apartment as of this September was \$2456 a month. However, someone working full time for minimum wage in Oakland will only take home \$1864 a month (after taxes). This clearly hurts renters, and even with a second job, one is unlikely to be able to afford groceries, utilities, or healthcare, much less save for the future. If rent is increased in this situation, people often come up short, and could face eviction. Even if they are able to afford rent, many people are unable to afford an unexpected expense. For many Americans, a trip to the emergency room could leave them with thousands of dollars in medical bills they will never be able to pay off. All of this means that many working people could be just one paycheck away from living on the streets.



Long lines, unsafe environments, and lack of services define most people's shelter experiences.

Once people are homeless, the ruling class regards them with either indifference or hostility. The working class is seen as only being useful if it’s able to generate a profit. Many people living on the streets are unemployed, so their well-being is not considered valuable. Even if someone is lucky enough to have a job, they could easily be replaced (so the logic goes) so their well-being is not seen as an issue. Because providing everyone with decent housing is not an option under capitalism, the ruling class are at pains to find a “solution” to homelessness while still ensuring their profits. This dynamic is what causes the government to use different mitigation strategies which provide inadequate, temporary shelter to people in lieu of actually housing them.

The Backwards Shelter System (cont.)

The common approach, then, is to focus on providing “resources”—various programs run by the state or by non-profits that are supposed to help people find jobs, a temporary place to stay, meals, etc. But no amount of “resources” available to people on the street can resolve the basic function of the economy that creates homelessness in the first place. People’s needs aren’t met because it is not profitable. So instead of getting to the root of the issue, a relatively small portion of society’s wealth is set aside for managing the homeless population. For every handful of people who are able to find housing through homeless “resources”, dozens are pushed out onto the streets, so the problem is actually only getting worse.

This is where the shelter system comes into play. It is less profitable for the ruling class to have homeless people sleeping on every street corner, occupying vacant lots, parks and the like. A visible homeless population in a given area often has a negative effect on property values. In order to ensure that profits keep increasing, the ruling class feels they have to do something with these people—not in the sense of meeting their needs, but in the sense of putting them somewhere so they won’t be a problem. For the most part, the ruling class hopes that homeless folks will just die. But, as much as it helps their bottom line, they will deputize religious organizations and NGOs to warehouse homeless people apart from the general public. This, not meeting people’s needs, is the real purpose of homeless shelters.

In the past, there was a more robust “social safety net” in place for people living in poverty. During the great depression, the US government began a number of social programs that would provide for some of working people’s needs, in large part to stave off massive unrest and working class organizing. However, by the 80s, with many popular movements in decline, and facing an economic crisis, the US government began systematically gutting social programs in favor of private alternatives. This was when the modern shelter system emerged. With funding for public housing (which traditionally kept many working class people off the streets) being slashed, many more people found themselves struggling to find adequate housing. As a more “market friendly” option, the state started looking towards privately run, temporary shelters to fill the gap. Unfortunately, this gutting of public housing is still the reality today. Because the state doesn’t feel that their negligence will provoke widespread resistance, they tend to feel that funding for more robust social programs is a wasteful expense.

Naturally, because this system is not meant to serve people’s needs, shelters are woefully inadequate as a place for people to stay. These places often lack basic oversight and many people complain of rampant abuse by staff. Some shelters are exclusionary towards certain groups of people. For example, some women’s shelters to deny entry to trans people on the basis of their biological sex. In the time of a global pandemic, many shelters have also seen outbreaks of COVID-19, and the lack of adequate social distancing in them makes them relatively more dangerous for homeless folks trying to avoid getting sick. Finally, many shelters have long waiting lists for entry, meaning shelter beds are often just not available to people who need them.

The Backwards Shelter System (cont.)

In this regard a shelter is not much better than a prison. Like prisons, people residing in them are left to live a desperate existence, under constant supervision, subject to constant mental and even physical torment. And like a prison, people may get a place to sleep and food to eat, but they are stripped of their freedom. The same is true of city-sanctioned initiatives like the “safe” RV parking lots, which impose strict curfews on their inhabitants, and the Tuff Sheds, which former residents do not hesitate to describe as concentration camps. The “safe” parking lots and the Tuff sheds represent the latest form of the shelter system. As gentrification has escalated in recent years, these sites have been established in the Bay area to work to hide the exploding populations of homeless people. Many people are threatened with having their vehicles towed and/or their belongings confiscated if they do not relocate into these sites. Many more are falsely told that residing in these sites will lead to opportunities to move into permanent housing.

The solution to homelessness is to put people back into housing and prevent them from ever losing their homes in the first place. Working people create everything in this society, including housing. It is on the people to come together and fight back against landlords and the developers that push people around and leave them with nothing. Until working people actually seize power in this country, there will only be more people on the streets and conditions for all of us will only get worse.

Submissions:

The West Oakland Community Newsletter is a collaborative project by the United Front Against Displacement (UFAD) & the Wood St. Community, in an effort to spread news about the neighborhood and the struggle against the pigs & developers.

If you would like to submit something, see something added to the next newsletter, or if there is something we got wrong, LET US KNOW!

Find someone on outreach, shoot us an email [wewontgo@riseup.net], or call/text (510) 815-9978



**General meetings, outreach,
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United Front Against Displacement**