

RESOURCE GUIDE

S5 E6: Punished and Persecuted for Being Unhoused, Part 2



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70 Million is made possible by a grant from the Safety and Justice Challenge at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.



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ONE JAIL AT A TIME.

story

PROJECT NO KEY: INTERIM HOUSING WITH CARCERAL REGULATIONS

According to data provided by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) over 28,000 people live outdoors throughout the city. But living in public areas is considered a crime according to SEC. 63.44 of Los Angeles Municipal code which states, "Prohibition on Erecting a Tent in a City Park. Except for areas expressly designated for camping, no person shall erect, configure or construct a Tent in any Park."

In 2020, unhoused residents who made a home in Echo Park asked the city to provide hotel rooms where they could safely ride out the pandemic. It was only after housed residents complained about their encampment that they were offered interim housing through city-wide emergency projects such as Project Room Key (PRK). Project Room Key was funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and provided rooms to more than 10,000 unhoused residents in Los Angeles, but often under carceral regulations. All 'participants' (not residents) had to adhere to the 7pm curfew or would be locked out of the building, there were no guests or congregation in common spaces allowed, and participants' rooms would be subject to random searches or temperature checks at the staff's will. Many unhoused residents complained that staff entered their rooms while they were sleeping, in the shower, and even naked. Many unhoused participants complained that staff entered their rooms while they were sleeping, in the shower, and even naked. Many of the participants started calling it "Project No Key" since they didn't get a key to their rooms and had to ask the staff for permission to be let in. The participants were only allowed the equivalent of a 60gallon trash bag's worth of personal items, and if items that could be considered weapons were found, or any other rule had been broken, the staff was able to penalize residents at their own discretion with the threat of being terminated from the housing program. Participants would sometimes receive eviction notices on their doors telling them the hotel was closing, even if it wasn't. Only about 40% of those participants moved from the program into permanent housing. Those who could not find permanent housing were battling against landlords who would not accept housing vouchers due to background checks that revealed their past criminal history or because they could not prove they had a stable income. And so many unhoused residents returned to their encampments in public parks and areas throughout Los Angeles.

REFLECTION QUESTION:

Why do we treat unhoused residents like criminals? How do we change the rental culture to provide more acceptance of housing vouchers and opportunities for residents seeking long-term housing to be safe? What legislation in your areas are in place to protect the rights of people seeking housing?



SENS HAD A ROOM AT THE HOTEL AS PART OF PROJECT ROOMKEY. ALTHOUGH SENS HAD A PLACE TO STAY, HE SAYS THERE WAS A HEAVY FEELING OF INSTABILITY AND THE STAFF WHO RAN THE PROGRAM WERE OFTEN CHANGING THE RULES. PHOTO BY ALISHA JUCEVIC



ADRIENNE “WALL STREET” SEGURA, AND HIS PARTNER, JESSICA “QUEEN” MENDEZ, WERE BOTH PART OF THE COMMUNITY OF UNHOUSED RESIDENTS AT ECHO PARK WHO WERE FORCIBLY SWEEPED FROM THE PARK IN MARCH OF 2021. PHOTO CREDIT: ALISHA JUCEVIC

PEOPLE DOING THE WORK

Ground Game LA

Ground Game LA is a horizontally-managed, grassroots group, building community & electoral power in Los Angeles

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

To drive the collaborative strategic vision to create solutions for the crisis of homelessness grounded in compassion, equity, and inclusion."

Street Watch Los Angeles

Street Watch is a coalition of organizers concerned about tenant rights.

Father Joe's Village

Our mission is to prevent and end homelessness, one life at a time.

Reentry And Housing Coalition

We are a broad coalition of advocates promoting safe, stable, affordable, and accessible housing for vulnerable people, including people who have been involved in the criminal or juvenile justice system.

Housing Not Handcuffs

Housing Not Handcuffs was initiated by the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty and the National Coalition for the Homeless, and more than 100 participating organizations,

NationalHomelessness.org

The National Coalition for the Homeless is a national network of people who are currently experiencing or who have experienced homelessness, activists and advocates, community-based and faith-based service providers

Unhoused Tenants Against Carceral Housing

UTACH is a grassroots organization run for and by unhoused tenants in Los Angeles. UTACH's mission is to fundamentally transform Project Roomkey and other forms of carceral shelter. It is time that OUR voices be at the center of services and solutions being offered.

The Los Angeles County: Homeless Initiative

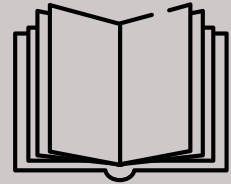
The Homeless Initiative is the central coordinating body for Los Angeles County's ongoing effort – unprecedented in scale – to expand and enhance services for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of losing their homes.

AN UNHOUSED MAN WHO GOES BY “SI PUES” SITS WITH HIS BELONGINGS AFTER MOVING THEM AROUND THE BLOCK DURING A SWEEP IN VAN NUYS, CALIF. ON JULY 29, 2022. ONCE THE SWEEP WAS FINISHED HE WILL MOVE BACK TO THE SAME SPOT. PHOTO CREDIT: ALISHA JUCEVIC



LEARN MORE

Reading



(DIS)PLACEMENT: THE FIGHT FOR HOUSING AND COMMUNITY AFTER ECHO PARK LAKE

by UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy

City of Inmates

by Kelly Lytle Hernández

No Safe Place: The Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities

by the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Housing Not Handcuffs 2021: State Law Supplement

by Housing Not Handcuffs & the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Los Angeles' War on the Poor: A Case Study in Militarism, Displacement, and Public Space at Echo Park Lake

by Ina Morton, Occidental College Senior Comprehensive Project

Websites



Know Your Rights Training by The Civil Liberties Defense Center

Los Angeles: Affordable housing, Understand the City of LA budget, and Operational Analysis

by Kenneth Meija



A FENCE IS SEEN AROUND ECHO PARK LAKE IN LOS ANGELES, CALIF. ON SEPT. 6, 2022. AFTER THE COMMUNITY OF UNHOUSED RESIDENTS WAS SWEEPED FROM THE AREA IN THE SPRING OF 2021. PHOTO CREDIT: ALISHA JUCEVIC

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