

## **“Safer Cities” for Whom?**

### **The Safer People’s Initiative**

#### **Declaration of Crisis**

Extremely poor, and especially homeless, people throughout Los Angeles are under attack due to the Mayor’s Safer Cities Initiative. Venice, Hollywood, and Downtown have been specifically targeted by the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Police Department for increased enforcement of “quality of life” crimes. The City is attempting to “clean up” these areas, making way for urban redevelopment and gentrification by removing homeless and poor people from view using police actions. We ask, then, who is really safer within the Safer Cities Initiative?

It is well-documented that affordable housing, homeless shelters, services and public facilities are grossly inadequate in Los Angeles. However, jail and temporary detentions seem to be the City’s only solution to our homeless problem. The Corporation for Supportive Housing has shown that it is less expensive to provide permanent, supportive housing than it is to continue our current approach to homelessness, which includes shelters, services, police actions, jail time, and other activities. The current law enforcement approach to homelessness and poverty is not only unjust and unfair, it is a waste of the City’s limited resources.

Many so-called “quality of life” offenses are selectively enforced to disproportionately effect homeless people and others who have no alternatives to their current condition and behavior. Such laws and ordinances are inequitable and inhumane and are counterproductive to truly ending homelessness. Our basic right to exist is being violated. ***Criminalizing everyday activities, such as sitting on the sidewalk, sleeping in a car, or public urination, without providing feasible alternatives places homeless people in Los Angeles in a state of emergency.***

## **In response to this crisis, we demand:**

We, the signers, on behalf of our organizations and thousands of homeless people, do hereby submit the following demands to the City Council of Los Angeles.

***Due to the lack of housing resources for the large homeless populations in the respective areas, Downtown Los Angeles, Venice, and Hollywood shall be declared in a State of Housing Emergency. Until the state of emergency is over, ordinances discriminating against persons due to their state of homelessness cannot be created or enforced.***

We further demand that the city of Los Angeles adopt the following policies relating to homeless individuals.

### **Relating to Sleeping:**

The City shall enact a pro-active ordinance authorizing overnight sleeping in public areas instead of creating more laws to criminalize outdoor sleeping.

NO anti-sleeping or anti-camping ordinance shall be enacted or, for ordinances such as 41.18(d), enforced.

NO ordinance forbidding a person from sleeping in a vehicle, such as 85.02, shall be enacted or enforced.

NO encampments on public property shall be torn down.

The City should tow illegally parked, inoperable vehicles in which people live to safe, legal locations agreeable to the occupant.

Persons with ticketed or booted vehicles due to inoperability shall be offered payment plans to keep their vehicles from being towed by the City.

### **Relating to Loitering:**

NO anti-loitering ordinances shall be enacted or enforced.

Ordinance 41.18(d) shall not be enforced.

### **Relating to the Distribution of Food to Homeless Individuals:**

NO ordinance forbidding or restricting the distribution of food to homeless or other hungry individuals shall be enacted.

### **Relating to Urination and Defecation:**

Until such time that there are sufficient public restrooms available, ordinance 41.47.2 shall not be enforced.

The city shall open restrooms in facilities that are city-owned to the public.

Police and security guards shall inform homeless people if public restrooms have become available or of any area businesses or government buildings which will allow homeless people to use their facilities.

### **Relating to Panhandling:**

NO person shall be arrested or cited for asking for money.

### **Relating to Conduct of the Police Department and Security Guards:**

Police officers shall not selectively enforce City-wide ordinances to specifically target homeless offenders.

NO homeless person's personal property shall be confiscated.

NO person shall be asked to show their I.D. unless there is "probable cause" of an offense having been committed.

NO person shall be photographed without their permission.

Police officers shall be held accountable for the same rules of engagement with homeless individuals as with anyone else.

Police officers and security guards shall undergo sensitivity training which has included the input of homeless individuals and their representatives.

Police officers shall not force homeless people to make life choices.

### **Relating to the City Council and the Resolution of Homelessness:**

The City shall identify and review all of its ordinances that disproportionately affect homeless people, including: existing ordinances, ordinances being applied incorrectly, ordinances being applied selectively, and proposed ordinances that would essentially criminalize a person for their state of being homeless.

The City shall assess the costs of the above ordinances that criminalize homeless people, including the cost of police labor, jail time, court administration, and property loss to the homeless person.

Based on the results of the above efforts, funds shall be redirected from the Safer Cities Initiative to housing and services that prevent and alleviate homelessness.

We the undersigned do hereby request a response from the Los Angeles City Council to these demands in a timely manner.

Sincerely.

**Organizational Signers (to date):**

ACORN

California Food Policy Advocates

Call to Action

Coalition Against Police Abuse

Coalition for Economic Survival

Downtown Women's Center

Eviction Defense Network

Hollywood Community Action Network

LAMP Community

Little Tokyo Fraternal Workers Association

Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger & Homelessness

Los Angeles Community Action Network

Los Angeles Food Justice Network

Mothers and Children for Health Access

Peace and Freedom State Central Committee

Renaissance Community Association

Saint Thomas the Apostle Episcopal Church

Skid Row Musicians Network

Social Model Recovery Systems, Inc.

Strategic Alliance for a Just Economy (SAJE)

United Coalition East Prevention Project

Venice Neighborhood Council Committee on Poverty and Homelessness