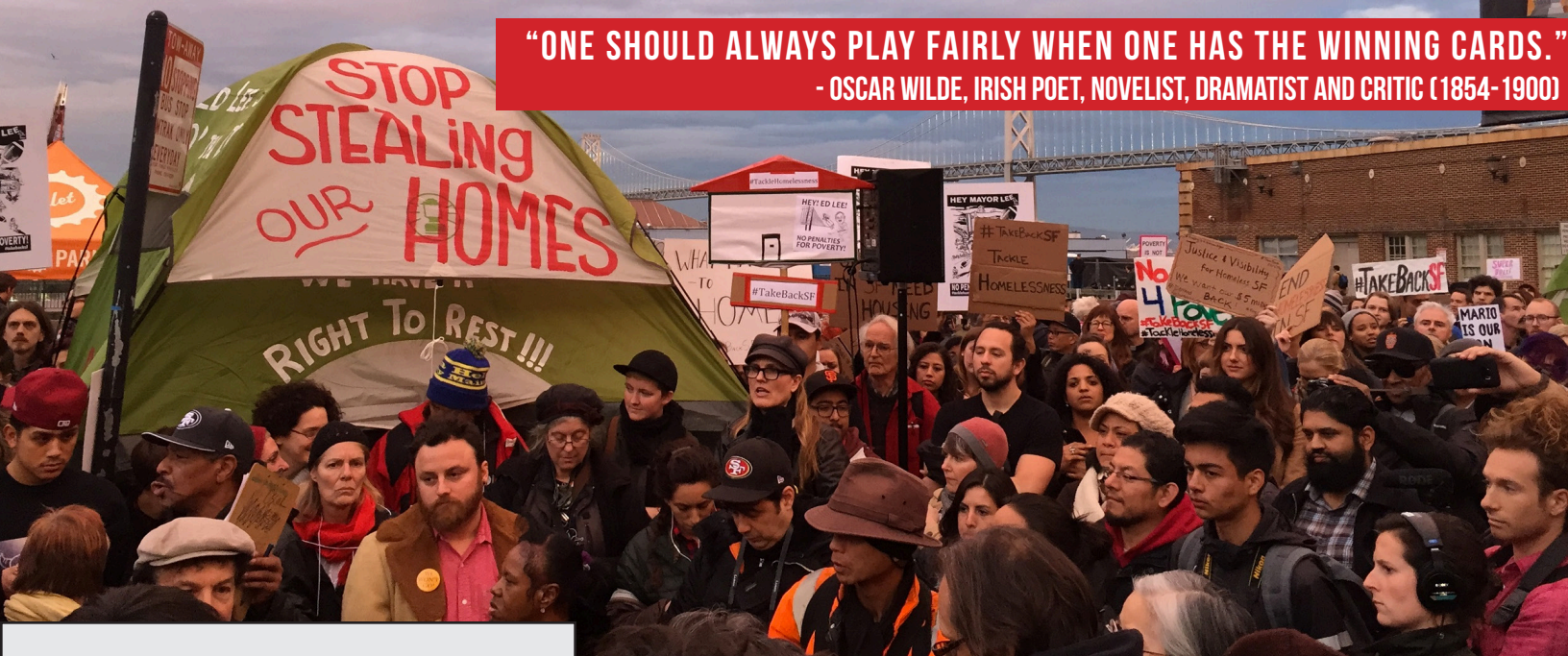


# BEATING THE ODDS

**"ONE SHOULD ALWAYS PLAY FAIRLY WHEN ONE HAS THE WINNING CARDS."**  
- OSCAR WILDE, IRISH POET, NOVELIST, DRAMATIST AND CRITIC (1854-1900)



## 2016 AT A GLANCE

**SAN FRANCISCO IS IN CRISIS.** More and more people are being priced out or evicted from the places they have called home, being forced to leave town or to survive on unfriendly streets. Columnists, politicians, and tech bros have attacked our homeless neighbors with insults and assumptions, deepening the sense that our city is under siege.

But through it all, the Coalition on Homelessness has managed to build a growing successful movement to lift up the voices and actions of those surviving on street corners or in shelters. Bringing together people experiencing homelessness, frontline service providers, and advocates, we have made enormous strides towards ending poverty and homelessness in the city over the past year. Through theatric actions, press conferences, developing legislation, taking legal action, crafting solutions, meeting with officials, and facilitating gathering at encampments we have fought hard and saved the heart of San Francisco.



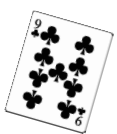
Won, alongside our community partners, 370 new rental assistance subsidies for homeless families and individuals, and saved 225 more.



Brought international attention to the city's inhumane homeless sweeps and launched a campaign to organize and cultivate leaders in our homeless encampments.



Led a powerful coalition to garner city funding for a right to counsel for tenants facing displacement, which will result in over 450 additional low-income households having a fighting chance of staying in their homes.



Played a leadership role in both halting SFPD from getting Tasers, which have been known to increase deaths in those cities in which they have been introduced, and also transforming the SFPD Use of Force Department General Order, which greatly limits justified use of force.



Succeeded in getting the city to fund an emergency hotel voucher program for those families that are turned away from emergency shelter.



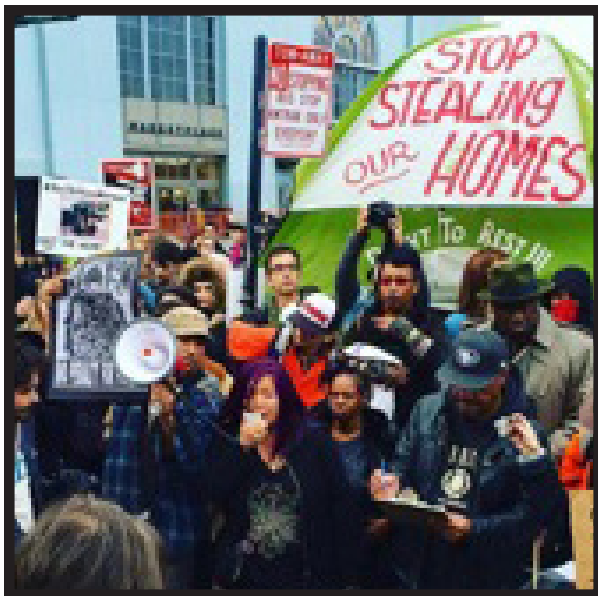
Conducted massive voter education on several ballot measures that would have helped solve or make homelessness worse, and managed to shift the policy debate towards a compassionate approach.



Worked with community allies to halt the building of a new jail.

## STRAIGHT FLUSH IN EMERGENCY SERVICES

While we are fighting for housing, we are struggling to make sure homeless people forced to remain on the streets have access to the basic services they need to survive. This past year, we worked hard to expand the number of navigation centers and transform a current shelter into a navigation center model. Part of this work meant pushing for access to be equitable, rather than prioritizing those in newer programs. We also helped solve the lack of showers in one of our family shelters, and expanded bathroom access across the city. To address complaints in the shelters we have also begun facilitating restorative justice practice sessions in publicly funded shelters. Lastly, we campaigned successfully for the city to fund an emergency hotel voucher program for families turned away from emergency shelter, which when implemented could help over 250 families.



## SFPD FOLDS ON TASERS AND USE OF FORCE

We have seen again and again that both officer involved shootings and in-custody deaths only increase when police get Tasers, so we were horrified when SFPD decided yet again to push for further militarization of its police force. However, using our political muscle and community support we were able to stop SFPD from adopting Tasers. As part of this process, we took a leadership role in rewriting the Department's Use of Force policy, which had not been updated in decades. The new Use of Force document greatly limited the justification for use of force across the board, adopting much stricter language.

## AT THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

Launched a series of assemblies that we hosted at homeless encampments around the city in order to involve homeless people in the work we do and find ways that our organization can serve those who are already organizing to end homelessness within the camps. These Homeless People's Popular Assemblies were led solely by homeless or formerly homeless advocates and attended by homeless people all over San Francisco. These efforts led to leadership development, encampment sweep monitoring and a homeless led petition drive with over 500 homeless signatories calling for dignity and human rights of encampment residents.







## TENANTS DEALT THE RIGHT TO COUNSEL

Through our advocacy for housing justice in our city, we were able to win \$2 million over two years in funding for local providers to provide legal counsel to tenants fighting evictions locally. We also worked alongside our community partners to secure \$200K in funding for mediation for tenants in publicly funded housing to avoid costly eviction proceedings and to help keep formerly homeless tenants in their homes. Lastly, as part of this same campaign, we secured over \$700,000 for community organizations to do outreach to vulnerable tenants to ensure they know their tenant rights; half of the time, tenants do not respond to evictions, as many of them are not aware of their rights. We worked through Homeless Emergency Service Providers Association (HESPA) in conjunction with dozens of other organizations to attend public hearings, meet with Supervisors, and rally our community to achieve these victories!

## HOUSING FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES IS IN THE CARDS

You may remember the report we published last year laying out our “Roadmap: A 5-Year Plan to End the Crisis of Family Homelessness”, which documented how 1 in 25 public school students are now experiencing homelessness, and the total number has doubled in the past five years. This year we partnered with the arts community to place an initiative on the ballot that would allocate \$17 million annually for the city to implement the recommendations in our report. We captured the hearts of an overwhelming majority of voters. If this measure is unsuccessful, we will still fight even harder this next year to end homelessness for San Francisco’s families!



## WE BEAT BACK Q & R DEUCE

Our opponents have worked hard to trump up hatred of poor and homeless people, putting measures Q and R. Through our extensive campaign work we were able to topple the house of cards they built by demonstrating that their arguments were lies. Measure Q would confiscate tents without any housing, but a measly one-night offer of shelter. Measure R would have allocated a segment of the police force to specifically target poor and homeless people. Despite massive funding disparities we were able to beat back these attacks and defend our homeless constituents. Measure R was the first anti-homeless measure to be defeated in 15 years, thanks to our organizing work. Proponents of Q spent over \$700,000 to demonize homeless campers and take away their tents, but we still were able to galvanize support for our community through advocacy work.

# COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS, SF

# 29 YEARS OF VICTORIES

## THE STRUGGLE AGAINST HOMELESSNESS

For decades, the Coalition on Homelessness has developed the leadership skills of homeless San Franciscans to forge true solutions to the housing crisis and beat back mean-spirited attacks against them. This list represents highlights of our collective accomplishments.

### 1987-1990

- A ragtag group of community activists and homeless folks, fed up with the lack of a response to homelessness that addressed the root causes, formed the Coalition on Homelessness.
- The Coalition established the most progressive welfare income disregard programs in the country, whereby cash aid recipients could retain funds to move into permanent housing.
- Founded the Street Sheet, now holding the double distinction of being both the oldest continuously published street newspaper in North America, and the paper with the largest circulation.

### 1991-1995

- The Coalition created the first supportive housing for homeless people in San Francisco in the form of Community Housing Partnership, which now provides over 1,000 units of permanent affordable supportive housing, and employs homeless people in the construction, maintenance, and support services at those housing locations.
- The Coalition designed and advocated for the McMillan Center, an innovative 24-hour drop-in facility for substance users, as an innovative strategy to reduce the number of street deaths.
- We developed the Uniform Grievance Procedure with other organizations to ensure shelter residents have due process rights and are not unfairly evicted from shelters.
- The Coalition advocated for and designed A Woman's Place, a drop-in center, shelter, and transitional housing program now assisting mentally disabled women, through the convening of the Homeless Women's Task Force.
- Fought back another electoral attempt to deduct rent from welfare recipients checks.
- Succeeded in passing a resolution at the Board of Supervisors to demand an end to the Matrix program, which broadly persecuted homeless people who were forced to live on the streets through ticketing, property confiscation and police sweeps.

### 1996-2000

- Thanks to Coalition pressure, the District Attorney dismissed 39,000 tickets issued by the anti-homeless Matrix program.
- The Coalition's General Assistance Rights Union became an independent organization: People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER). This eventually led to single adult welfare recipients earning a living wage and winning free Muni for youth in SF.
- We spearheaded the campaign for substance abuse treatment on demand, which resulted in over \$12 million dollars in new treatment funds.
- Low-income mothers organized by the Coalition designed the concept and garnered funding for a community-based 24-hour drop-in treatment center for families with children living in the Tenderloin, called Oshun, after the Yoruba Orisha of healing.
- The Coalition wrote and successfully campaigned for adoption of a "No Turn Away" policy for families seeking emergency shelter in San Francisco.
- We organized for and wrote legislation to create a single standard of care, whereby uninsured mentally ill people are afforded equal access to mental health treatment as those who are insured, saving 1,700 from losing treatment.
- Released groundbreaking report entitled Locked Out, which—through hundreds of interviews with mentally ill homeless people—found that contrary to popular opinion, homeless mentally ill people were by and large attempting to access mental health treatment, but were either denied access or subjected to a cumbersome process they were unable to navigate.

### 2001-2005

- Together with community partner organizations, we formed, and later staffed, the People's Budget Collaborative, which identified alternative City budget savings and revenues and over the years has staved off tens of millions in cuts to poverty abatement programs.

- The Coalition led the work that created the Mission Neighborhood Resource Center (MNRC)—the first resource center in the Mission District. Everyday, the MNRC provides critical services to over 100 clients, most of them Latino.
- The Coalition identified hundreds of San Francisco Housing Authority vacant units and successfully pushed the Housing Authority to place 300 homeless families in those units.
- The Street Sheet was inducted into the Northern California Society of Professional Journalists.

## 2006–2010

- Our work led to the creation of the Shelter Monitoring Committee, which tracks conditions in shelters and resulted in exposure and correction of countless problems in the shelter system.
- The Coalition passed legislation that ensures vacant publicly owned surplus City property be turned over for the use of housing for homeless people. This has led to two large affordable housing projects targeting homeless veterans and families.
- Organizing work aided by the Coalition's Right to A Roof project, led to the creation of the San Francisco Community Land Trust, a nonprofit that will acquire land and preserve affordable housing in San Francisco.
- Together with organizations in the East Bay, Los Angeles, Portland, and Seattle, we collectively founded the Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP).
- Homeless families organized by the Coalition on Homelessness campaigned for a local rental housing subsidy and increased eviction prevention funding, protecting hundreds of families from homelessness and enabling hundreds more to exit homelessness.
- We released Shelter Shock—a report on human rights violations in the shelter system, revealing that 55% of all shelter clients reported experiencing some form of abuse, and bringing media light and legislative action to these problems.
- The Coalition pushed through legislation to mandate minimum standards in the shelters. For the first time, our shelters have enforceable minimum standards around health, hygiene, and the human rights of shelter residents.
- Halted the practice by the City of spraying homeless people with high powered hoses in the middle of the night.
- The Coalition handled more than 3,000 civil rights cases per year, connecting homeless folks who have received “quality of life” citations to pro bono legal representation through the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights.
- The Street Sheet increased circulation to twice a month, allowing for more current news and increased sales for vendors.

## 2010-PRESENT

- We passed legislation to still the runaround associated with accessing shelter, by lengthening shelter stays and reducing wait times.
- Settled a lawsuit that led to greatly improved access and conditions for people with disabilities.
- We gutted legislation that would have criminalized the very act of being homeless in two plazas in the Castro.
- We initiated a working group to move away from a system that requires individuals to stand in line for up to 17 hours. This led to a new very successful call-in system.
- We beat back the implementation of Tasers three times, which are known to increase fatalities at the hands of the police, and instead worked to get the police to implement a crisis intervention model to address people in psychiatric crisis.
- We won a local stimulus package of \$3,000,000 for new jobs in shelters and resource centers.
- Ensured all homeless people in San Francisco would receive preferences for public housing.
- We secured \$6,000,000 over three years in new homeless prevention funds, staving off displacement for over 2,500 households.
- After 25 years, reached the mark of over \$9,000,000 transferred into the hands of destitute vendors selling Street Sheet!. We celebrated with a re-design of the Street Sheet, increased the sales price to \$2, ran an powerful advertising campaign, and distributed vendor aprons.
- The Coalition won 663 housing subsidies for homeless families with children, elderly and disabled adults over four years.
- Secured \$2.7 million to fix up vacant public housing and turn them over to nearly 200 homeless households, and got both public housing and section 8 wait lists opened back up
- We halted San Francisco Library policies that would have excluded homeless people and trained Library staff.
- We released The Roadmap: A Five Year Plan to End the Crisis of Family Homelessness in San Francisco: a practical plan that the Mayor publicly endorsed and garnered \$1.5 million match of private funding for new housing subsidies.
- We collaborated with UC Berkeley Center for Human Rights to release Punishing the Poorest: How the Criminalization of Homelessness Perpetuates Poverty in San Francisco.
- Released in collaboration with SRO Families United ally organization an SRO Families report entitled Living in the Margins: An analysis and Census of San Francisco Families Living in SROs.
- Worked with ally organizations to bring “Right to Rest” legislation to the California legislature.
- Brought voter initiative to ballot to secure funding to end family homelessness in SF





## FIGHTING THE SIDEWALK SHUFFLE

This February our community members were violently pushed from their neighborhoods because Mayor Ed Lee said they “have to leave” for the 50th Super Bowl, which San Francisco spent \$5 million to host. Our public action at Super Bowl City as well as our persistent resistance to sweeps of homeless encampments catapulted our work and our city’s crisis into international discourse, building support from allies in San Francisco and around the world. As an ongoing part of this work we are collaborating with the legal community to take legal action to halt the practice of the city and state destroying homeless people’s property.



#NOONPUQR

## PLAYING OUR CARDS RIGHT, WINNING HOUSING

We won 595 rental assistance subsidies for homeless and at-risk families, people with disabilities, youth, seniors and single adults. In the past year our housing activists have helped move nearly 200 homeless households into vacant public housing that had been refurbished using funding we secured through our advocacy work last year. We worked with the Housing Authority to make sure homeless families have preference for federally funded housing, and got them to open up the Section 8 waiting list, for the first time since 2000.





# STACKING THE DECK IN 2017

Homelessness is NOT a necessary part of our city, but a decision our policy makers have made. Since 1987 we have insisted that there is an end to poverty and homelessness, and it starts simply with giving people homes. In the coming year we will continue to push for a San Francisco that everyone can call home, despite the onslaught of vitriol from the city's elites and politicians. And we know that we will win because we are moving toward victory, little by little, year after year.

## HOUSING JUSTICE

- Advocate that \$67 million in homeless housing funds in Props J and S are spent on just that.
- Make a host of homeless policy changes with new Homeless Department that remove the barriers to success that homeless people currently face in the homeless system.
- Improve the emergency shelter system including the replacement of the emergency shelter for families to one that has beds instead of mats, is open 24 hours and has showers, and push for 24-hour access to other shelters, and expand capacity in the shelter system in underserved communities.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

- Ensure lessons learned from the navigation center are applied in shelters citywide, including increased services and relaxing of rules.
- Ensure people living on streets and in encampments are treated with dignity. This includes a halt to property confiscations and destruction, and homeless sweeps and work instead for folks to move into temporary accommodations leading to permanent housing.
- Continue our leadership development work among homeless people, including conducting extensive outreach, holding homeless people's popular assemblies, and our annual free school. We will work hard to ensure the new homeless departments listens to the voices, and ideas of un-housed people.
- Develop a strong budget campaign with our community allies to fight for more housing, improved and equitable emergency services, and homeless prevention.
- Realize full implementation of Crisis Intervention Team, moving police away from using force and instead de-escalation techniques.



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COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS, SF

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## STAY INVOLVED!

### BECOME A SUSTAINER:

By giving as little as \$20 a month, you can ensure the Coalition retains an independent voice unrestricted by government funding. Visit [www.cohsf.org](http://www.cohsf.org) and click "Donate Now" to place a donation through Network for Good.

### SPREAD THE WORD:

Host a house party or birthday party and invite our staff and/or volunteers to come speak and donate the proceeds to the Coalition on Homelessness. Contact our Development Coordinator at [development@cohsf.org](mailto:development@cohsf.org) for more details.

### DONATE GOODS:

Donate your old car through Vehicles for Charity in the name of the COH. Call 1-800-574-0888 for more information. Donate items to Community Thrift store and pick COH as your charity of choice. Call (415) 861-4910 for more information.

### JOIN THE STRUGGLE:

We always need more people to join our campaigns, conduct outreach, contribute to the Street Sheet, or help out in the office. You can also join a workgroup: Housing Justice meets on Tuesdays at noon and Human Rights on Wednesdays at 12:30, both at our office.

### STAY INFORMED:

Keep up to date on homeless issues and policy in San Francisco by purchasing the Street Sheet. Educate your friends, family, and co-workers on poverty issues in San Francisco. You can also sign up for our mailing list at [www.cohsf.org](http://www.cohsf.org).