

Conversation with Mayor Victoria Woodard.

Group Discussion Summary • Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness • 8.25.23

Ella's Song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6Uus--gFrc>

We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes
Until the killing of black men, black mothers' sons
Is as important as the killing of white men, white mothers' sons
That which touches me most is that I had a chance to work with people
Passing on to others that which was passed on to me
To me young people come first, they have the courage where we fail
And if I can but shed some light as they carry us through the gale
The older I get the better I know that the secret of my going on is when the reins
are in the hands of the young, who dare to run against the storm
Not needing to clutch for power, not needing the light just to shine on me
I need to be one in the number as we stand against tyranny
Struggling myself don't mean a whole lot, / I've come to realize That teaching
others to stand up and fight is the only way my struggle survives
I'm a woman who speaks in a voice and I must be heard
At times I can be quite difficult, I'll bow to no man's word
We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes

— *Lyrics and music by Bernice Johnson Reagon, Sweet Honey in the Rock*

WOOT: Rob Huff, Lived Experience Coalition Ally of the Year!

Comments Summary

- Several outreach workers said people they are coming across are much more sickly and weak, due to the increased isolation and stress of sweeps.
- The Tacoma Camping Ban is city-sponsored cruelty,
- People will take more drugs with more harm done by the people that pretend to help them (heal) then will not work with those of us that can help and want to .
- We were in an encampment 2 weeks ago and there were only 3 people. One man came out to us and stated they all ran as they were afraid of us. Once they learned who we were they ran back down into the woods and about 20-25 people came out and engaged with us. Lots of fear out there in the woods.
- The ongoing harm of sweeps is discussed here with dismal regularity.

- I'm glad you are here trying to bridge differences and a difficult conversation
- Always good to reach out to people who are still not aware - unfortunately those are the people LEAST likely to show up for such an event. Is there some way to bring this out (to engage) rather than trying to get people who are not interested to engage?
- Creating status-based offenses creates status based criminals
- Mayor Woodards, I would recommend the excellent book Homelessness is a Housing Problem as well. <https://homelessnesshousingproblem.com/>
- RE: criminalization of homelessness No arrests or fines have resulted from Tacoma's camping ban because the "ban" is not actually enforced. Thus the myth of 100% compliance.
- If the City wants to not arrest people, then continually harassing them and taking their possessions is just a cruel alternative.
- The City does not have the money to solve this by itself. People who will vote to not raise taxes are voting to keep rates of homelessness high. There is not enough subsidized housing for the 0-30%, which is a primary cause of homelessness.
- Homeless enforcement is best handled with HOUSING. Meaning, MORE affordable housing. Heck, probably half of the U.S. population needs a rental subsidy.
- The people I take water to are not mobile enough to run away so they lose their possessions over and over and over. Often taken by contactors hired by the City to "clean up." It's appalling.
- The invisible unhoused population (individuals with full time jobs, but do not appear to be experiencing homelessness) is growing.
- Does mayor woodwards want to respond to the report we heard earlier about police following the needle exchange to enforce sweeps?
- How do we face our abuseres when it is the officials out to help us?
- From Manni Valenzuela, previous Rapid Rehousing case manager with multiple agencies in Tacoma, and current Park Guide with Metro Parks Tacoma. I have to agree with Rob and with Rosemary regarding the negative impact the sweeps have on our access to support and reach folks as well as extreme damage to community trust.
- Remember that the camping ban just barely passed in the Tacoma City Council - there are a number of council members who opposed the ban. There may be room for reversing the ban after seeing the impacts of the ban IF there is an honest appraisal of that impact. Thank yo Mayor Woodard for entering into this space and being vulnerable yourself.
- The sweeps have left us somewhat demoralized. Is much more difficult to connect with and provide the supplies people need. Outreach is less effective. Relationships more difficult to maintain.
- Jay and Courtney, your continued advocacy is so important. We know it comes at a significant cost to you.

Calls to Action

- This conversation is needed AND the city lacks the credibility to host this conversation, at this point.
- The money you put into moving and harming this community can go to social housing and fix this
- Mayor, I invite you to join our outreach teams as we talk with folks who are being beaten and shot by NIMBYs targeting tents.
- The remedy: rational policies instead of wishful thinking and a TRUELY unified regional approach that is guided by the needs of the community - particularly people with lived experience
- The jurisdictions who make up the possible "unified regional approach" could start by telling the City of Tacoma to stop the Sweeps, in a unified message that Sweeps are counterproductive to the goals of the Plan to End Homelessness..
- We need to go to open comment at city council en masse, write letters and call our representatives. We must get loud.
- CM Gunther here, Ms Woodards. Attended your AWC speech this summer. What is needed is homeless cultural competency training for us politicians. During Council meetings I rarely hear about the unhomed's heroes and accomplishments -- only their deficiencies. This 1960's mindset creates skewed decisions like it has for other minority groups through history. The homeless deserve equal treatment by cities under God and the law.
- Ms. Woodards, please talk about our heroes at Council meetings. Change the narrative. Dr. King said much about this area. People look up to us. We are not a bunch of drugs and needles and trash. Politicians need to do better, instead of taking pages out of 1960's playbooks.
- Thank you Mayor for coming onto to the call. It is evident we need more discussions and you including us as a voice for the community of unhoused individuals. Thank you!

Research on the impact of sweeps/abatement

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2667321522000269?via%3Dihub#bib30>

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11606-022-07471-y>

<https://nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/NHCHC-encampment-sweeps-issue-brief-12-22.pdf>

Notes and Resources List

New and Notable

Shelter RFP closes September 12th

https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city_departments/finance/procurement_and_payables_division/purchasing/contracting_opportunities/services_solicitations

Elevate Health is hosting a 4-hour workshop, "Navigating Overwhelm" Oct 5. Register at [BIT.LY/3Q8WFOF](https://bit.ly/3Q8WFOF). This is geared toward community health workers (includes those who bridge the gap between folks in need and those who can access resources, especially healthcare). The topic is to show how we can build resiliency to deflect the risk of burnout.

The information from Rob's presentation may be seen on this page from Pierce County: <https://www.piercecountywa.gov/8125/Select-Committee-on-Homelessness>

Todd McKellips CEO - [Seattletinyhomes.com](http://seattletinyhomes.com) Todd@seattletinyhomes.com - 253.353.1417 cell

Paul LaKosky, Tacoma Needle Exchange Paul@nase.org: <https://www.tacomaneedleexchange.org/>

Dave Purchase Project is a committed partner in this work <https://www.davepurchaseproject.org/>

Covid is still here.

<https://www.tpchd.org/healthy-people/provider-resources/homelessness-providers-toolkit>

Those who need masks or box fan filters may contact Isiah Cocroft at icocroft@tpchd.org

If you need help getting someone a safe place to isolate when they are COVID positive, I&Q info is on our webpage but here is the direct link: <https://www.tpchd.org/home/showpublisheddocument/10666/638013593623900000>

Free online screening of Love in the Time of Fentanyl in connection with the opioid awareness week. August 31. Sponsored by Meaningful Movies. Sign up at <https://meaningfulmovies.org/events/love-in-the-time-of-fentanyl-4/>

ACP: federal connectivity resources: Terrell Taylor 206-209-8001 acptabletsandphones@gmail.com

Do you have any outreach items you need or to share? Post them in the chat and I'll grab them, or enter them here: Outreach Supply Need and Share form: <https://forms.gle/2zfK8Y5JvC1K5eXLA>

Community Spotlight Opportunity: Tell the coalition about your organization's good work. Contact tpdrutis@nctacoma.org to schedule a brief presentation. 🙏

Recent Press

First NARCAN Machine arrives at Tulalip Reservation

<https://www-king5-com.cdn.ampproject.org/v/s/www.king5.com/amp/article/news/regional/native->

america/first-narcan-vending-machine-tulalip-reservation/281-b0678d2d-728d-4a63-bbdd-e085508c398d?amp_gsa=1&_js_v=a9&usqp=mq331AQIUAKwASCAAgM%3D#amp_tf=From%20%251%24s&aoh=16929816006341&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&share=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.king5.com%2Farticle%2Fnews%2Fregional%2Fnative-america%2Ffirst-narcan-vending-machine-tulalip-reservation%2F281-b0678d2d-728d-4a63-bbdd-e085508c398d

Ongoing Resources and Needs

Free Food and Resources, 4819 South 12 th st Tacoma 10-12, Saturdays. Everyone welcome. No requirements.

Wildfire info:

<https://www.tpchd.org/healthy-homes/outdoor-air-quality/wildfire-smoke>

More information on inclement weather response is available at

https://www.cityoftacoma.org/inclement_weather

Everyone should connect with Isiah to get masks for air quality. Email him at: icocroft@tpchd.org As you know, masks help with poor air as well helping reduce the transmission of cough cough, COVID and other diseases.

Outreach Supply Need and Share form: <https://forms.gle/2zfK8Y5JvC1K5eXLA>

How to sign up for Coalition listserv:

You can sign up for the email lists here: <http://pchomeless.org/Home/Listserv>

Pierce County Comprehensive Plan to End Homelessness can be found here:

<https://www.piercecountywa.gov/7309/Comprehensive-Plan-to-End-Homelessness>

Please sign up to the inclement weather listserv at

<https://www.pchomeless.org/Home/Listserv>