



The Consumer Voice Newsletter

Volume 2 | Issue 2 | National Consumer Advisory Board "NCAB"

Letter from the Chair – Art Rios Sr.

Good Afternoon *Consumer Voice* readers. I am coming to you from the corner of 4th and Northwest Davis in Portland, Oregon to talk about the criminalization of the homeless. We will feature some education on the fight against criminalization, our experiences being criminalized while experiencing homelessness, and spotlight a Consumer Advisory Board (CAB) in a city heavily criminalized. Here in Portland, our 2019 Point in Time Count showed that we had a 22% increase in homelessness, which means we have over 4,000 people on the streets every night. These people, families, and individuals are the most vulnerable, including elderly women, women who are escaping domestic violence, and unaddressed mental health issues that lead people to substance use. Sweeps will kill these people if we don't do something about it.

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House Keys Not Handcuffs

by T. Sukari Finley

Los Angeles, like many other cities in this country, has been raising rent on properties in low income communities. Gentrification is displacing low-income people and people of color. These practices are fueled by increasing commercial and real-estate development that dispossess residents, both housed and unhoused. Policies and practices are created to serve an elite development vision of a “Downtown 2020” in Los Angeles. Not only have people without homes been displaced by development, they are often sheltered in jails and prisons. These policing practices have made Skid Row the “most highly policed community” in the country. Skid Row community organizations and residents have responded to this gentrification-induced policing by affirming that people without homes still have a right to property.



Community organizations, like LA CAN, have transformed neighborhood politics by educating thousands of residents about their rights. Advocates launched the longest sustained police monitoring program in LA, Community Watch, which created a check and balance system between residents and private security/police. We are collecting evidence of illegal stops, searches, and confiscation of property, and providing citation defense for thousands of residents. This has led to several court injunctions against the Los Angeles Police Department, which prevents them from continuing this pattern. So far, tickets in Skid Row have decreased almost 50%. The Comprehensive Homeless Strategy announced by the Mayor and City Council Members must become reality and not just rhetoric. A Skid Row coalition of 130 organizations, service providers, religious and civic leaders are calling for an end to the criminalization of homelessness.

Learn more about California efforts to fight criminalization:

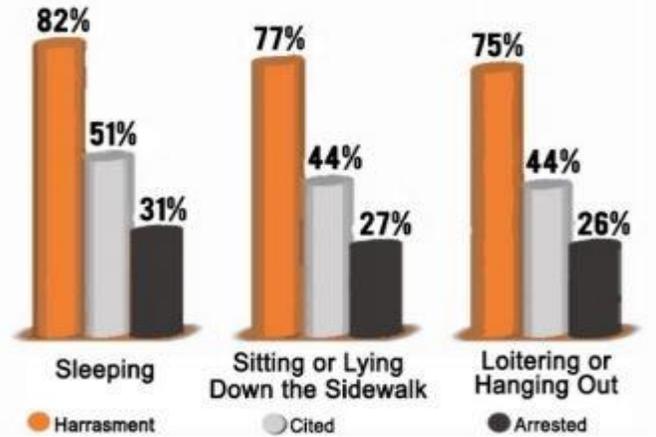
- LA CAN:
www.cangress.org
- Western Regional Advocacy Project:
www.wraphome.org
- Sacramento Coalition to End Homelessness:
www.srceh.org





Criminalization of People without Homes

WRAP is conducting a survey to document encounters with law enforcement. They began in 2010 and have 1657 respondents so far.



(Graphic from WRAP: National Civil Rights Outreach Fact Sheet, 2018)

Fighting the Criminalization of People Experiencing Homelessness

By Keith Belton

The Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) was created to expose and eliminate the root causes of civil and human rights abuses of people experiencing homelessness and homelessness in communities. They have supported Homeless Bills of Rights legislation, which override local laws that remove people from public spaces and criminalize life-sustaining activities people are forced to do in public. These bills have been passed in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Illinois, and are regularly proposed in California and Colorado. Organizers in California say that in order for these bills to pass, support at the local level must be extensive.

My Experience Being Criminalized

When I was homeless in 2008, the Chicago Police Department and the City of Chicago Sanitation Department would come around and tell me I couldn't have more than 1 blanket when I had 3. When I was sleeping on a park bench I was arrested for trespassing, along with the people sleeping in tents. They would come in and do sweeps, checking IDs and the bags we had. Then when I started sleeping in abandoned buildings, they would come there too, and locked me up for trespassing. It was 0 degrees outside. One time I lost all my identification, clothes, and property when they arrested me. They wouldn't let me take my belongings with me to jail, and when I got back they were all gone. I had to start all over again. This happened to me and many others. We had nowhere safe to sleep. When I was sleeping in doorways downtown or in abandoned cars, they would tell me to move or they would arrest me.



CAB SPOTLIGHT

The CAB Spotlight looks at Consumer Advisory Boards around the nation. In this issue, we interview Elving Carabello, a member of the Consumer Advisory Board of Camillus Health Concern in Miami, Florida.



How is the Miami CAB structured?

We have up to 11 CAB Members with full voting rights. We also have a group called CAB Ambassadors. Anyone who attends three consecutive CAB meetings can become a CAB Ambassador. They'll get a special CAB t-shirt and they take leadership roles in all our activities. When a CAB Member slot opens up, we select new members from the ranks of the Ambassadors. Our Miami CAB operates through internal committees where we give everyone opportunities to take the lead in all projects and activities.

What activities has your CAB facilitated over the last year?

We sponsor several monthly projects and special events. Through the Brownsville Project, named after a subsidized housing project in Miami, we help frail seniors clean their apartments every month. Also every month, under the Good Neighbor Project, we clean up the streets surrounding our homeless shelter. We serve lunch to shelter residents and attendees of the Camillus House Day Center every month. Special projects include our annual Jacket and Blanket Drive in which we distribute clothing and warm blankets to folks who are sleeping on the streets during chilly winter evenings. Yes, it can get cold during certain winter evenings in Miami when temps can dip down into the 40s!

We also put on an annual Summer Solstice Celebration to mark the successes and light in our lives. We observe Homeless Persons Memorial Day in which we remember those who passed away during the year. And we've conducted voter registration drives and worked with the ACLU to help decriminalize homelessness.

What are your responsibilities with the Camillus CAB?

I'm the chair of the Miami Camillus CAB, and have served in that position since January of 2018. As CAB chair, I work with the clinic's management to set our monthly meeting agenda and I work with our various committees to promote CAB activities. I also sit on the Board of Directors of the clinic and on the Board of the affiliated homeless shelter known as Camillus House.

What's your biggest challenge and most noteworthy success?

Our biggest challenge is to recruit new members and Ambassadors, as folks tend to stop coming to meetings when they get stable housing. I'm most proud of the successes of our Brownsville and Good Neighbor projects because we give back to the community. And I'm also proud of our work with ACLU lawyers to decriminalize homelessness through informing folks of their right to conduct life sustaining activities on the streets when no shelter is available.



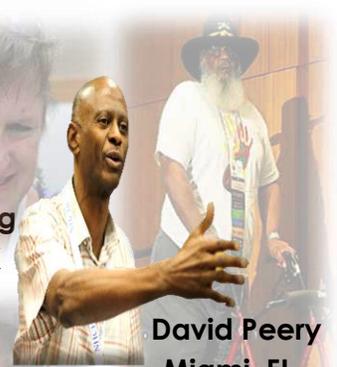
National Consumer Advisory Board Steering Committee 2019-2020



Art Rios Sr.
Portland, OR
Chair



Deidre Young
Houston, TX
Co-Chair



David Peery
Miami, FL
Co-Chair



Valarie Dowell
Cincinnati, OH
Peer Advocate



Joanne Guarino
Boston, MA
Member at Large



Kendall Clark
Newark, NJ
Member at Large



Derek Winbush
Boston, MA
Regional Rep 1&2



Sarah Lombard
Worcester, MA
Member at Large



Elving Caraballo
Miami, FL
Regional Rep 3&4



Oliver Coleman
New Orleans, LA
Regional Rep 6&8



Keith Belton
Chicago IL
Regional Rep 5&7



Sandra Delorosa
Portland, OR
Regional Rep 9&10



National Consumer Advisory Board

The National Consumer Advisory Board (NCAB) is a committee of people who have experienced homelessness and been clients of Health Care for the Homeless projects across the country, and who are involved in the governance of those HCH projects. NCAB is a vehicle for consumers of HCH projects to become a collaborative voice on national issues. We hold central the priorities of assisting consumers in the development of CABs and serving as a clearinghouse for information and assistance to consumers.

Upcoming Events	
NCAB Steering Committee In-Person Meeting	October 2 and 3, 2019
Consumer Voice Volume 2, Issue 3 released	December 10
Homeless Person's Memorial Day	December 21
2020 Conference subsidies open	January 2020
NCAB Steering Committee nominations open	January 2020
Ellen Dailey Award nominations open	January 2020
Subsidies and nominations close	March 2020
2020 Conference in Phoenix, Arizona	May 11 – 14, 2020
Summer Solstice	June 21

Consumer Voice 2019 – 2020

	Theme	NCAB (Art Rios Sr.)	Council (T. Sukari Finley)	Education (Keith Belton)	CAB Spotlight (David Peery)
Spring	Medical Respite	Summer Solstice	Respite Care Providers's Network and Willie Mackey	Medical Respite	Boston
Fall	Criminalization	Our experiences	Housing Not Handcuffs	Western Regional Advocacy Project	Miami
Winter	Mortality	Protecting your health on the streets	Homeless Person's Memorial Day	Peer Support at Central City Concern	Portland

The Consumer Voice is created by consumers for consumers. Please reach out to ncab@nhchc.org if you would like to write something for an upcoming issue.

