



CIVIL RIGHTS NATIONAL OUTREACH FACT SHEET

19 JANUARY 2012

Since September 2010, the Western Regional Advocacy Project and allies in eight other cities across the US started compiling information from homeless people about their daily interactions with local police, private security guards, and the criminal justice system.



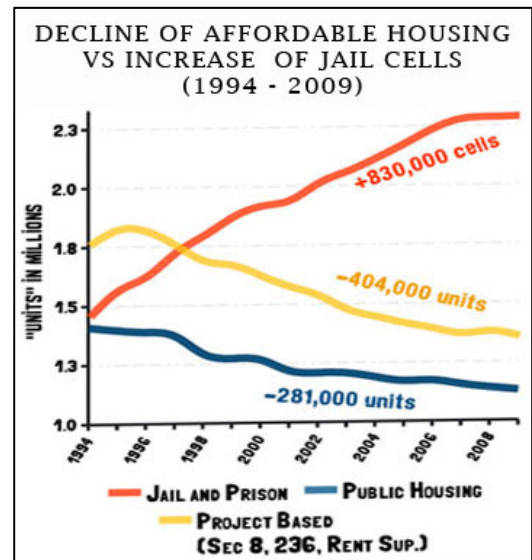
Phase 1 of this outreach effort focused on speaking with 336 homeless people self-identified as mentally ill. In phase 2, we spoke with an additional 332 homeless people, who did not necessarily identify as having a mental illness.

In all, we were able to document the experiences of 668 homeless people, all answering a consistent set of questions. All did so only for the opportunity to speak “unfiltered” to the broader community about what is really happening on our nation's streets to poor, disabled, and homeless

community members. This is an important opportunity to lay the foundations for a national organizing campaign.

There can be no more denying that “Broken Windows,” “Quality of Life,” “Civil Sidewalks,” “Public Commons for Everyone,” and “Safer Cities” initiatives are anything less than a reincarnation of “Ugly Laws,” “Anti-Okie laws,” “Sundown Towns,” “Bracero Treaty,” and “Jim Crow” when you hear directly the voices of those who are the targets of today’s laws and campaigns.

- 80% of homeless people reported being stopped, arrested, or cited due to “quality of life” offenses.
- 52% reported being harassed by private security.
- 57% reported having bench warrants issued for their arrest as the result of minor “quality of life” offenses.
- 22% reported having outstanding warrants at the time of the survey.
- 31% reported being incarcerated while 5% reported being referred to a program when brought before court.
- 30% reported losing their housing or being discharged from a program due to incarceration.
- 50% reported that their harassment, citation or arrested was because they “appeared homeless.”



The main “illegal offenses” that homeless people are being targeted with:

- 78% for sleeping, with 39% of these people cited and 19% arrested
- 75% for sitting or lying down, with 35% of these people cited and 18% arrested
- 76% for loitering or hanging out, with 36% of these people cited and 18% arrested
- 48% for panhandling, with 41% of these people cited and 22% arrested

We then asked:

- Do you know of places where it is safe and legal for you to sleep outside?
 - 75% No
 - 25% Yes

We also spoke to people about what the harassment and profiling looked like:

- Do you think that you have been ticketed because of your...
 - 47% economic status
 - 26% race
 - 14% gender
 - 13% disability
- Do police sometimes harass you without using the law?
 - 74% Yes
 - 20% No
 - 6% Don't Know
- Have you ever seen or encountered private security guards hassling people, ordering people away, or otherwise policing public sidewalks or parks?
 - 70% Yes
 - 20% No
 - 10% Don't Know



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