



A homeless senior is forced to move on by Santa Monica police.

Police Crackdowns Hit Santa Monica's Homeless Community

"They have already taken our safety away in the parks, they have chased us off the beaches, they have eliminated many of our food programs, reduced our budgets, and penalized us for being poor in one of the wealthiest cities in the nation." — Jennafer Waggoner, Santa Monica homeless activist

by Robert Norse

Homeless advocates will raid the restrooms at Santa Monica City Hall on July 22, dressed only in towels and shower caps to demand restored services at the only accessible public shower and bathroom in Memorial Park, severely cut back earlier this year. The "Shower Stall" protest, as activist Jennafer Waggoner calls it, is a colorful bit of theater by homeless people to regain rights and services reduced in a recent tide of repressive laws and police practices.

The latest blow against the homeless community in this seaside town of 90,000 near Los Angeles was a City Council vote on June 10 to expand the ban on sitting on the sidewalk in Santa Monica's

prime tourist area, the Third Avenue Promenade. Councilmember Ken Genser, who supported an earlier version of the law last August, called the latest attempt to ban sitting on railings "absurd."

Former City Attorney Bob Myers decried "the moral cowardice of the City Council that gives in to the cries of the mob. These ordinances are unconstitutional, but more important they are inhumane."

Michael Feinstein, a Green Party City Councilmember, lived in a car during the early '80s. He told fellow councilmembers that the sitting ban was being selectively enforced, but he was ignored by the council majority. Middle-class youths and moviegoers, said Feinstein, were allowed to sit unmolested. Homeless people, gutter