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During the 1993-94 truce, Taylor said, the homeless population stayed steady. He reports a significant rise in the last eight months. Last year 38 homeless deaths were reported in the Santa Monica/West

L.A./Venice area. Taylor works with Children Helping Poor and Homeless People, and says lunch bags given out have jumped from 180 in March to 300 in June, with more and more people on the streets, more folks cut off assistance, more "illegals," more runaway kids.

Waggoner recalled how the City undermined and weakened the private charitable teams of people feeding homeless people regularly in city parks under the organizational name Faith. Eager to disperse the homeless, the City offered money to Faith and a building to go indoors, making the feedings less visible, less accessible, and smaller. Faith complied, moving its meals to the Salvation Army, Ocean Park Community Center, and Step Up On Second. Within six months, the City cut funding completely, ending all meals. A small splinter group called Hope continues to feed outdoors.

Police frequently harass homeless people in food lines, checking IDs and warrants, and turning meals into ordeals. In the last few years, Waggoner said, police harassment has reduced the numbers in food lines from 350 down to 200. But the numbers began to rise again as desperation from welfare cuts hits the street.

Councilmember Genser insisted it is not illegal to sleep in Santa Monica and that he is not aware of any police harassment. "It's legal," responded Waggoner, "if you levitate." She recalls that when she lived in her bus, she was repeatedly denied a parking permit since you can't be homeless and get one. Cops now regularly use the Vehicle Occupancy law to harass homeless vehicular sleepers — particularly activists like herself, she said.

In August, 1996, after a blitz of selective parking tickets, Waggoner recalls Officer Von Achen first passing over her jeep, presumably because it looked upscale, and then, on learning it was hers, citing it. Soon afterwards the same cop towed her vehicle in the midst of a protest where she and others had drawn their vehicles up in a circle, wagon-train-style, to demand the right to park at night in an unused beach lot without harassment. "Lone cops cite elderly people and folks with disabilities who are choosing between eating and paying a fine," she said.

Discussing the Memorial Park closure of showers for the homeless, Margie Ghiz, Midnight Special Bookshop owner, snorted, "One person complained they didn't want their kids even seeing homeless people, not that they were bothering them. There was just one complaint."

Waggoner and her soap-slinging friends invite everyone to join them to turn up the hot water on the City Council on July 22 and to urge the muddied-headed lawmakers to come clean and restore water, health, and security to homeless people in Santa Monica.