

Justice News Around California



Detail of People's Park mural, an art project of the Chaplaincy to the Homeless.

Berkeley merchants have called for a police crackdown on homeless youth. Others are trying to build positive programs for young people.

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ed a police/UC/merchant "clean-up" program targeting the young and the grubby. Vance's new publication, the *Berkeley Bark*, soon to have its third issue published, sounded the alarm against joint UCB and Berkeley police patrols harass-

ing street kids and homeless folks for sitting, standing, or leaning against or next to a building.

Berkeley cops are using bullying and bluster as well as ancient and irrelevant city codes 13-52-010 and 13-52-020 to sweep away the "unsightly" at the behest of upscale merchants. The police attacks on

poor people in public spaces seeks to override a successful fight by Berkeley human rights activists to remove the sitting and panhandling prohibitions of Measure O (stayed by federal court order, then eliminated by the Berkeley City Council last year). Under pressure, merchants, police, and city officials are talking about long-needed public restrooms, expanded youth services, and more trash cans.

Pressure from Berkeley's Copwatch, and from civil rights activists such as Osha Neumann, Denney, and Vance, is serving as a counterforce to the inevitable undertow of business, UC, and City interests. Whether Berkeley will take positive action to decriminalize sleeping in vehicles, as Eugene, Oregon, has successfully done, or act to safeguard basic rights for poor people may depend on whether warring factions can unite and break through the late '90s apathy and discouragement.

Denney notes that the City of Berkeley has proceeded with a Civic Center Plaza project that has removed the Vet Home Services and Berkeley Oakland Support Services (BOSS), which used to be close together near BART and the bus lines, in another "evict the poor" concession to the Downtown Berkeley Association.

Micro-broadcasting radio, regularly used by poor people to communicate concerns suppressed by mainstream media, is

under renewed attack by the California arm of the National Association of Broadcasters, Denney reports. NAB is opposing Free Radio Berkeley's use permit because they don't have a broadcasting license, even though the city attorney has ruled the issue irrelevant and the city council has unanimously waived use fees. A May 28th hearing will tell the tale.

The "no license" complaint was put on hold by Federal Judge Claudia Wilkin several years ago, freeing microstations across the country. The FCC denies licenses to any stations under 100 watts, though it has recently floated a ridiculously inadequate plan to allow one-watt stations to broadcast.

Denney also publishes the wildly satirical broadside *Pepper Spray Times*, now in its 12th issue (to subscribe: write PST at 1970 San Pablo Ave #4, Berkeley, CA 94702 or e-mail cdenney@igc.org) and contributes to the Jolly Roger Comedy Troupe, a series of sharp radio lampoons on 104.1 FM, 8-11 p.m. on Sunday nights.

Vance promises a detailed analysis of the latest anti-homeless sitting ban ordinance in his forthcoming June issue of *Berkeley Bark*. (Contact: First Amendment Center, PO Box 4851, Berkeley CA 94704; 510-287-9406).