

# Santa Cruz Authorities Stonewall Homeless Beatings

by Robert Norse

**F**ive homeless people in Santa Cruz have reported beatings within a three-week period, and that could be just the tip of the iceberg. The beating of homeless people as a form of sport — what was dubbed “trollbusting” in the mid-’80s — has returned to Santa Cruz with a vengeance.

When two men were so seriously savaged that they went to the hospital, they filed police reports, leading to the first-ever story on these homeless hate-crimes in the local monopoly daily, the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* — a wholly owned subsidiary of the *Wall Street Journal*. Even then, Santa Cruz Police Sergeant Steve Clark, notorious as a longtime harasser of the homeless, tried to downplay the recent atrocities by claiming that one incident

reported was the first “in several years.”

Homeless victims don’t usually report these assaults. And Santa Cruz police usually don’t investigate these incidents, or even respond to police calls. Mark Bohrn, who was beaten bloody about the head

near the Homeless Services Center, police were called but failed to respond to three separate calls.

Larry Cessna, who publicly criticized the police department for ignoring a beating that put him in the hospital in January, soon

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**The beating of homeless people — dubbed “trollbusting” in the ‘80s — has returned to Santa Cruz with a vengeance, and city officials appear determined to ignore these crimes against the poor.**

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and suffered fractured ribs and a broken finger, waited seven hours at the hospital emergency room, but police never arrived to take a report. In January, three people were beaten, including an elderly man and a woman. When the suspects were spotted

received a citation for an “open container,” which threatened him because he was on probation. Though he raised the issue before three members of the Santa Cruz City Council supposedly investigating the Sleeping Ban at hearings held in the

Homeless Dining Area, police never found any suspects and the beatings continued.

Civil liberties attorney Kate Wells’ attempt to get the City Council to set up an emergency sleeping area as a safety zone got no support from the council.

Mayor Katherine Beiers, who sits on the board of the Homeless Services Center, responded to recent reports of a gang of skinhead assailants prowling the homeless sleeping areas with clubs and pipes, by suggesting that she might put the matter on the council agenda in late June for discussion, leaving those without shelter to dodge police and thugs in the month ahead.

Sleeping and covering up with blankets is still a \$54 crime in the city limits; the County recently ruled that vehicular sleeping on public property was illegal in