

Declaration of Campaign for the Human Rights of Landless People

San Francisco Bay Area Landless Peoples Alliance

“Today we demand an end to the criminalization of homelessness and say ‘Homes for All’”

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

TO OUR NEIGHBORS AND COMMUNITY:

We live in a diverse community comprising many struggles against oppression: first the resistance of the Ohlone people from genocide, then the resistances of all people of color from racism, the struggles of poor people against classism, the movements for the rights of woman, LGBTQI communities, people with disabilities, and other marginalized people. Throughout these struggles these systems of oppression have been integrated into the local governance to be rooted out by mobilizations led by communities confronting power. Today landless people in the San Francisco Bay Area and throughout the country have been denied basic dignity, and our human rights have been violated continuously. Our people have been denied housing, a living income, health care, land, and education. Our current political leaders have been complicit in the oppression of landless people either through directly advocating for criminalization or failing to act.

But today, we say this oppression must end!

We, the dispossessed landless people and those with overpriced and substandard housing are integral members of the community in the San Francisco Bay Area. Standing together we comprise the majority in this community fighting displacement as the insatiable greed of real estate speculators drive up the price of housing and thus drive our neighbors and families into the street, into substandard housing, or away from the neighborhoods we call home. We are the ones betrayed by our local leaders; mayors, city councils, city managers, city officials, and police who consistently ally themselves with those who extract wealth from our community without providing anything in return. These leaders have proclaimed states of emergency due to the lack of housing, yet as they spend millions of dollars and give away public land nearly none of those resources produce housing lifting our people out of homelessness. The same ones who collapsed our nations economy and displaced millions during the foreclosure crisis are the ones who continue to take everything away from our communities enriching themselves.

To prevent the continuation of the above and as our last hope, after having tried to utilize all other means based upon various local political processes we invoke Article 25 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which recognizes as follows:

“the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for [themselves and their family] including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.”

Therefore, according to Article VI of the U.S. Constitution as well as the rights enumerated in its Amendments we declare to the local governments in the San Francisco Bay Area that they must end their role within the systemic disenfranchisement and displacement of our community and proclaim themselves true allies of the community by ending the criminalization of homelessness and ensuring “Homes for All”.

We also ask that the U.N. Human Rights Committee (CCPR), Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Committee against Torture (CAT), Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), and the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights as well as the Organization of American States Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI), Secretariat for Legal Affairs (SLA), and Justice Studies Center of the Americas (JSCA) monitor the situation of the treatment of landless people and displacement of poor people and people of color.

Beforehand, we refuse any effort to disgrace our movement by falsely characterizing landless people by pathologizing, criminalizing, or attacking our character. Homelessness is a product of systemic classism and not a product of any individual’s character.

Therefore, according to this Declaration of Campaign for the Human Rights of Landless People we, the San Francisco Bay Area Landless Peoples Alliance, make the following demands:

First: All criminalization of homelessness must end immediately. All people who are sheltering themselves on public land will be immediately protected under the Eighth Amendment of the United States Constitution which demands that public authority provide for “safe havens” for all homeless people where they can shelter themselves with dignity. This will include provision by local governments of water, sewer, toilets, sanitation, and trash removal services.

Second: To live in dignity landless people in “safe havens” will be allowed to self-govern. “Safe havens” will be run by their residents, not outside agencies nor non-profits. Local governments will provide equivalent funding to train and hire residents to provide their own services rather than hire outside contractors.

Third: Collective punishment and all other activity designed to undermine “safe havens” will end. Local officials will not raid an entire “safe haven” based on the activity of one or a small number of residents. Local authorities will also not interfere with the internal composition of residents within a “safe haven” by removing individuals without probable cause nor forcing “safe havens” to accept new residents without their consent.

Fourth: All confiscation of landless people's property will end, and all property immediately returned.

Fifth: Officials will communicate to all public agencies the location and status of all sanctioned encampments to coordinate transitional housing services.

Sixth: Resolve that all landless people have the human right to assert self-defense against prosecution for activities necessary for survival. Prohibitions on sleeping, sitting, lying, panhandling, performing, and loitering in public will end. Individuals will be allowed to sleep in cars, and plans to reclaim vacant properties to provide housing will be put in place.

Seventh: All new housing shall prioritize housing for landless people including Section 8 housing and housing for truly low-income people such as those with an income below 30% of the Area Median Income. This goal shall include one or more of the following: eminent domain, community land trusts, housing cooperatives, affordability covenants, and changes to building, zoning, permitting, and other local codes to expand low-income housing opportunities.

To the People of the San Francisco Bay Area: We the landless people and our allies freely declare this San Francisco Bay Area Landless Peoples Alliance as a last resort for our community self-defense. The local governments have known for many years that our community is in crisis, yet they have failed to act in any meaningful way to address the needs of our community. Therefore, we ask for your participation and support for this plan that mobilizes for land, housing, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice, and peace. In return we declare that we will continue this Campaign for the Human Rights of Landless People until we have realized our vision: "Homes for All".

JOIN WITH THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA LANDLESS PEOPLES ALLIANCE

First They Came for the Homeless

Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute

The Village

Land Action

Berkeley-East Bay Gray Panthers

Dated: May 2018