

Fight the “New Normal” This Winter

There’s a nasty “new normal” setting in around us. . Today Lancaster’s City Council votes on outlawing free food distribution (banning groups like **Food Not Bomb**) on the sidewalk. Same old NIMBY pretexts. You know-- obstructing the sidewalk, litter, visual blight, and undefined “hazards” to public health. The real reasons: those unsightly tents and the unsightly people sleeping in them.

Next Friday the reactionary Robert Court, Trump’s Supreme Court, will consider whether to reconsider the *Boise v. Martin* decision. That case and the realities of Santa Cruz’s “rich folks only” rents has forced cops and rangers to dig deep into their ticket books for other laws than Camping Bans to drive away visible homeless people. Interfering with property value and Xmas business are the traditional seasonal reasons for driving them out of sight. As rents and real unemployment have worsened, homeless numbers have grown. New myths have become accepted dogma. People outside are rebranded as addicts, alcoholics, or loonies instead of displaced renters. They are required to relabel themselves to get basic services.

Survival tent cities in Salem, OR? So City Council there trots out a new Homeless Ban. Which they call a Camping Ban. Like in Santa Cruz-with no shelter option provisions. At least there’s more brutal honesty there. Here we saw in May when Vice-Mayor Cummings and the Watkins majority buy the Susie O’Hara-Meagan-Bunch “plenty of shelter” lies. Same fake narrative was used to close Camp Phoenix at Ross recently and to duck any Winter Shelter action tonight.

Believe your own eyes. They tell the tale each night. Elderly and disabled women and men huddling in doorways. “Friendly” police driving homeless out of parking garages into the rain. It’s a tightening noose for them. Ultimately for many of us. As the cliché goes, if we do not hang together, we will all hang separately.

