

# WOOD STREET COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Coronavirus pandemic worsens while the city drags its feet to support homeless people, residents and activists work to respond



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## **THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AND THE POTENTIAL FOR MARTIAL LAW**

The coronavirus continues to spread rapidly across the globe. Currently there are over 1.4 million cases and 80,000+ deaths worldwide. The U.S. has more cases than any other country, with close to 400,000 confirmed cases and over 12,000 deaths. Even these recorded numbers are low, considering most of the world's population has not been tested, and symptoms of the virus sometimes do not occur until up to two weeks after infection. As these numbers have risen, California and other states across the U.S. have implemented restrictive measures in an attempt to halt the spread of the virus. Currently, all **six major Bay Area counties are enforcing a shelter-in-place ordinance until May 3rd**, but it is likely to be in place for the foreseeable future. *(continued on p. 2)*

# THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AND THE POTENTIAL FOR MARTIAL LAW, CONTINUED

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Though the current laws in place supposedly don't apply to people experiencing homelessness, the reality is that **laws are *always* selectively enforced, with poor people bearing the weight of injustice.** Right now, being caught in public doing "non-essential" activities can get someone slapped with a misdemeanor. Given that the U.S. has already eclipsed other countries in the total number of infected people, the U.S. government will likely employ martial law at some point in the near future.

**Martial law is the use of direct military control over civilians' everyday activities.** It is typically only evoked in response to a temporary emergency, like the one we are seeing now with the COVID-19 outbreak, and can be implemented at the state or federal level. For homeless people, **this could potentially mean being displaced from their current places of residence.** Many fear a situation where homeless folks are stripped of their belongings, rounded up, and forced into FEMA camps. In San Francisco, there are already signs of measures like this, as Mayor London Breed planned to cram homeless people into the Moscone Center downtown. The "beds" being provided are small mats which are now starting to be filled by folks being moved from smaller local shelters, while folks sleeping outside continue to have their tents and belongings stolen and are left with next to nothing. This is yet *another* half-ass measure taken by Mayor Breed to "solve" the homelessness crisis.



Many homeless people fear the potential of being put in a FEMA Camp like the one shown above



Here is a shot of the "beds" being provided by Mayor Breed at the Moscone Center in downtown San Francisco

As cities across the country begin to take similar, meager steps to protect homeless people during the coronavirus pandemic, it is important for folks to come together and demand better. **The city of Oakland has long neglected its homeless population; shelter-in-place orders *combined* with a declaration of martial law will only work to further threaten the lives of the homeless by criminalizing them.** During this time of acute crisis, **it more necessary than ever for housed and unhoused people to join in solidarity.** We must demand at minimum that homelessness is not further criminalized, and that the city provides homeless residents with basic services like access to clean water, showers, handwashing stations, proper garbage disposal – and most importantly – housing.

# COVID-19 SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

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As an evolving pandemic, the novel coronavirus is still being studied. Contrary to many rumors, it is not just "like a flu", especially because the chance of complications like pneumonia (and subsequent death rates) from the virus is *much higher* than a typical seasonal flu.

The following is a list of signs & symptoms of how the COVID-19 *differs* from a "normal flu":

- **high fever** – the biggest indicator, in 88% of cases
- **chest tightening** / pain / pressure
- labored breathing & **shortness of breath** beyond normal fatigue – e.g. having trouble just getting across the room or finishing a sentence
- **unusual lack of energy**, even beyond typical "tiredness"
- **losing acuity in taste & smell**

Of course, not every patient will present the same. There is much evidence to suggest a percentage of the population can be **asymptomatic**, which means they can carry and spread the virus, but not know they have it (because they don't experience any symptoms).

With the exception of a dry (unproductive, i.e. no mucus) cough, **things such as an itchy or sore throat, a runny nose, and a headache weren't actually found to be great indicators of COVID-19**. In other words, having more "traditional" cold symptoms does not necessarily mean you've got the virus.

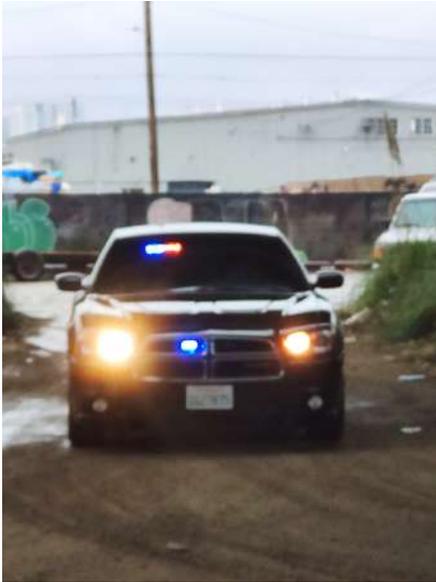
The biggest demographics at risk are **elderly folks** (> 60 yrs of age), the chronically **immunocompromised** (e.g., **HIV-positive**), and people who have pre-existing conditions like **bronchitis**, **diabetes** (both types), **COPD**, **asthma**, etc.

The number one reason to protect yourself, apart from trying to stay healthy, **is to protect the lives of others**. Asymptomatic carriers can endanger the community.

**Mask up and practice social distancing (standing 6 ft. apart) when you can!**

# INCREASED POLICE PRESENCE ON WOOD ST.

The police have been visiting Wood St. more frequently.  
This is not because people are committing more crimes.

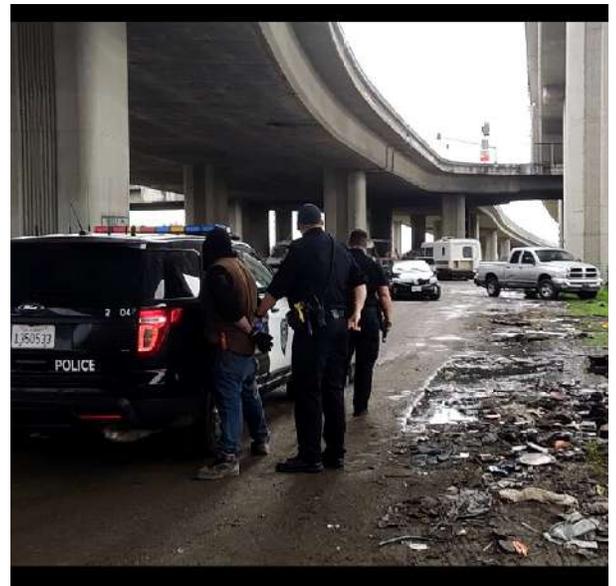


Backup police car arriving on scene on  
Saturday, 04/04

Recently, the Oakland Police Department has upped their patrolling and harassment of Wood St. residents. This is due primarily to the fact that OPD (indeed, law enforcement departments across the country) are being asked to not enforce many low-level infractions and offenses to ease pressure on jails in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. **As a result, the police have nothing better to do than to pick fights with and make up charges against anyone they think can't fight back.**

**Collective action is the key to facing increased police brutality.** We must fight back together! The police will only come out more and more. If there is a crackdown, it will affect homeless people first.

“They are employing an unlawful tactic,” said Tony. Tony is a Wood St. resident who left the “Safe RV Site” not too long ago. Recently, Tony had his RV stolen and has been living out of his SUV. Early in April, he decided it might be a good idea to see if he could try sleeping in an abandoned vehicle. **When he tried to enter the vehicle, a police cruiser pulled up and accused him of stealing the car with his girlfriend being an accomplice, despite the fact that she was nowhere near the abandoned vehicle.** Both of them got thrown in cuffs and Tony spent about 8 hours in Santa Rita Jail, with an impending court date in June. He is intending on fighting the unjust case.



OPD in the process of detaining two people  
on Saturday 04/04.

The reality of the situation is that even though hard working people with no criminal record like Tony are just trying to find a way to get by and get some sleep, even the act of trying to rest is viewed as a criminal act when the police are trying to serve their two primary functions: protecting private property and maintaining the status quo.

# UPDATE ON CORONAVIRUS RELIEF EFFORTS

Over the past two weeks, members of the United Front Against Displacement (UFAD) worked in tandem with residents of Wood St. to install **four handwashing stations** and **two water tanks**. The water tanks are located **behind the gate at W. Grand Ave. & Wood St.** and on the **border of Caltrans Land, directly behind the Wood St. water main.**

The two 55-gal. capacity water tanks contain **fully potable water** (treated with sodium hypochlorite) from the East Bay Mud tap, and are meant for residents to safely drink from.

The (5-gal. capacity) handwashing stations are also filled from the same East Bay water mains. These are meant for washing only, *not* drinking. Both water tanks and handwashing stations are easily used by way of a footpump that dispenses water without the hassle of having to control the water flow.

Besides being a basic human need, fresh potable water & soap are the primarily line of defense against the spread of any bacteria or virus, especially in our fight against COVID-19. It is our collective hope that these stations remain accessible and usable **for all Wood St. residents**, for a long time to come!

UFAD plans to roll out more handwashing stations and water tanks in the coming month of April. **If you would like a station near you, want to get involved in building them, or are interested in maintaining them to be usable for all, email us at [wewontgo@riseup.net](mailto:wewontgo@riseup.net), or call/text at (510) 815-9978!**

Lastly, because the city of Oakland has neglected regular garbage service at Wood St., part of the UFAD build days are devoted to trash pickup. Please contact us (info above) if you are in need of this, or would like to join in our efforts.



Members of the UFAD on Sunday, 03/29 came together to help build two of the handwashing stations & a water tower which will allow residents access to clean water

# ENOUGH WITH THE TUFF SHEDS!

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When asked to describe her experience in what the city of Oakland calls their “Community Cabin Program” (commonly referred to as the Tuff Sheds), Freeway had some harsh words. **“Tough. Tough** is an appropriate word to describe these. Desperate. Hopeless is pretty fair. Primitive.”

Freeway and her husband Joel had been living in Mosswood Park for a few months before they decided they needed a change. “There was standing water (in our tent) every time it rained, every night we had to fight off rats, it was a bad situation.” After hearing that workers from Operation Dignity were offering people hotel rooms, they decided to try and go for one. After their initial conversation with the employee of the non-profit, **it took them almost a month from their initial move date for them to get off of the streets.** When they finally got into the Travel Inn off of Broadway, they were there for less than a week before they were forced to move into the Tuff Sheds.

The amount of help they’ve gotten from the workers there is miniscule. “I recently received my birth certificate in the mail... that’s pretty much the only significant tangible thing that I have to show for my time there.” **At the Tuff Sheds, even getting your basic needs fulfilled can be a huge challenge.** Freeway said in her interview that in order to get breakfast, “you basically have to go and beg them... if you’re lucky to find her early enough, she’ll give you a couple of packets of oatmeal and maybe a pack of cookies or something.” She also talked about how every “dinner” she has eaten there has ended up making her sick. “There’s no nutritional value. The way that they’re handled and not refrigerated they’re kept out for days at a time and re-served, over and over again.”

As if this wasn’t bad enough, **Freeway has had to deal with an immense amount of harassment from workers at the site and tenants.** One of the site managers decided to kick in her door after she refused to comply with their orders because they felt it 'wasn't in her best interest'. **She's also had her door kicked in by another resident who was threatening to rape her.** When she retaliated, she was given a probationary warning.

The reality of the situation is that people are **forced to live under dehumanizing conditions** in the Tuff Sheds. Many people on the streets accurately refer to them as concentration camps, and it's important that people like Freeway who were either coerced or forced to live there speak out about their experiences to not just put an end to the inhumane practices that are administered, but demand better conditions for all unhoused folks.  
**Enough with the Tuff Sheds! Housing for all!**



Freeway, a member of the so-called "Community Cabin Program"



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## Submissions:

The West Oakland Community Newsletter is a collaborative project by the United Front Against Displacement (UFAD) & the Wood St. Community, in an effort to spread news about the neighborhood and the struggle against the pigs & developers. If you would like to submit something, see something added to the next newsletter, or if there is something we got wrong, **LET US KNOW!**

Find someone on outreach, shoot us an email [ [wewontgo@riseup.net](mailto:wewontgo@riseup.net) ], or call/text (510) 815-9978



**General meetings, outreach, and community dinners happen weekly.**

General meetings:  
Wednesday, April 15th

Outreach:  
Please contact us via email for exact time and location.

Community dinners:  
Wednesday, April 8th  
Wednesday, April 22nd

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**A Publication of the United Front Against Displacement**  
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