

HOW CORRUPT SAN FRANCISCO INSIDERS PROFIT BY TURNING SF INTO A SHIT HOLE

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Scrappy local paper takes on San Francisco's homeless-industrial complex

By [Monica Showalter](#)

I got my start in journalism writing for the scrappy local community newspapers in San Francisco (The North Mission News/New Mission News), so I have a soft spot for these papers, given their capacity to ask questions the big papers never ask, not take activists' self-interested statements for answers, and report in minute detail what the mainstream papers never notice, or more likely, have too many conflicts of interest to "notice."

Not these papers. The greatest of them is the Marina Times, and this week they have not disappointed.

Editor Susan Dyer Reynolds decided to ask why San Francisco is inundated with drug-addicted homeless people and then she dug deep to find out who was behind it.

The result is [here](#), starting with this powerful beginning to a long, satisfying cover story:

When CNN announced that former Bay Area reporter Sara Sidner would be coming to delve into San Francisco's lethal cocktail of fentanyl and homelessness, I knew what to expect.

For the May 2023 special, Sidner asked people living on the streets why they came to San Francisco to be homeless and got the same answers I've gotten for years: It's easy. Easy to get drugs, do drugs, put up a tent, steal to support your habit — and San Francisco will pay you more than \$600 a month for the pleasure.

It may not come as a surprise, but cities that offer general assistance payments have more than twice the rate of homelessness as cities that don't. For example, San Francisco and New York City have the highest rates at 10.4 and 10.9 per 10,000 people respectively, while Las Vegas has the lowest (2.3), with Columbus, Ohio, and Indianapolis tied for second lowest.

Still, San Francisco's homeless advocates believe money is the answer, with organizations coaching new arrivals to say they're "from San Francisco" while helping them navigate the system. The "nonprofits" themselves complete what has become a billion-dollar industry chasing its own tail, with 59 providers receiving \$240.6 million in fiscal year 2019–20, according to the latest audit by the city's budget and legislative analyst.

She found that the system in place to "help" the homeless isn't there to help the homeless at all — it's to perpetuate its own bureaucracy, sounding just like my old editor, Victor Miller, from the New Mission News over drinks at the Fat Chance Belly Dance show one night long ago in the Mission.

She found an ace quote from Willie Brown summing the matter up very well:

When Sidner sat down with former mayor Willie Brown to ask why he believed San Francisco couldn't make a dent in its catastrophic homeless problem, Brown was succinct: "It is not designed to be solved. It is designed to be perpetuated. It is to treat the problem, not solve it."

And unlike CNN, she did the digging to illustrate just what the old political powerbroker meant.

She came upon one particular NGO kingpin who stood at the top of the rat-king hierarchy of San Francisco homeless-advocacy NGOs, a character named Jennifer Friedenbach, who serves as longtime executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness, who seemed to be holding the city hostage to the perpetuation of her NGOs interests in keeping homelessness expanding and permanent.

I remember these guys were feared and powerful even in the early 1990s when I was reporting the community news.

They've only gotten richer and more powerful ever since. They not only are light on qualifications other than political clout in their personnel, they also are none-too-transparent in their federal filings, as well as rather subliterary, Dyer's report notes.

But their crowning achievement seems to be in getting laws passed, and worse still coopting wokester billionaires from the Silicon Valley crowd to back them in order to get the government to shell out for more homeless programs.

I've referred to Friedenbach as "CEO of the city's de facto homeless marketing agency," spending their money on Sharpies and cardboard to make the handwritten signs they hold up at City Hall protests, but her crowning achievement actually goes back to fundraising: "crafting Prop C Our City Our Home, a tax on corporations that pays for homeless housing and will double San Francisco's efforts to address homelessness."

She got one her minions, a trust fund baby named Christin Evans, to rope in Marc Benioff, the founder of Salesforce, and a Silicon Valley billionaire, to support her proposition to shovel money to NGOs to "solve" homelessness for the voters, which his money managed to do.

One evening while scrolling through Twitter, Evans came across a post from Marc Benioff, the founder and CEO of software company Salesforce, referring to San Francisco as the "Four Seasons of homelessness." Outraged, she tweeted back, "Did @benioff just compare SF's homeless services to a luxury hotel chain? How out of touch can a billionaire be?!?!"

Intrigued, Benioff reached out to Evans and the two exchanged private messages. While Benioff attributed the quote to somebody else, Evans saw an opportunity to reel in the CEO of San Francisco's largest employer.

By the end of their chat, Benioff supported the measure, despite the fact it would cost his own company millions. He and Salesforce donated a combined \$8 million to the campaign (the most ever spent on a local ballot measure so near to election day). Benioff became Prop. C's biggest champion, chastising fellow CEOs for "not caring about homeless people." Even his celebrity friends, comedian Chris Rock and singer Jewel, came onboard, shooting endorsement videos for Evans and COH. "We call her the CEO whisperer," Friedenbach boasted at the time.

Which is ironic indeed. All that tech expertise to supposedly make life more techy and advanced and efficient, and what it pays for in the end is more bums on the street urinating in people's doorways and criminals breaking into people's cars.

The report goes into how the homeless advocacy groups make money from the city by dipping into its vast pots supposedly to fix the homeless crisis, and how this money only fuels more homelessness, as well as turns San Francisco into a magnet for bums looking for the state to owe them a living.

It also goes into the junk lawsuits against the city to ensure that Friedenbach's homeless "clients" get free everything, including permanent housing to their specifications, immunity from any law enforcement actions to sweep them out, and freedom to park their cars wherever they like while everyone else pays tickets. The bums, in fact, consult their lawyers for legal advice on how to squeeze more from the city's offerings.

It's a very well done report that goes into the innards and bowels of how the homeless industrial complex works, full of compelling storytelling. Thank goodness the Marina Times was there to expose this, because the big newspapers are never going to spot it.

Read the whole enlightening report [here](#).





