

Treatment of Arrestees

Genevieve Southwick

Good morning, my name is Genevieve Southwick and until recently, I was a non-profit event organizer. Currently, I'm unemployed, on Disability Insurance, and housing insecure sleeping on a friend's couch in West Oakland. My presence at Oscar Grant Plaza last Sunday was in solidarity with all unsheltered folks everywhere, as well as for all of us that are one missed check or emergency away from joining you. Our traumatic arrests should be seen as a direct indictment of the State, the City of Oakland, the Alameda County Sheriff's Department, and the Oakland Police Department's abuse of power and the law.

In violation of our constitutional rights, 22 of us, 10 of whom are unhoused, were arrested for exercising our first amendment rights by the Oakland PD on the morning of Monday, November 25th. 60 Oakland police officers, an excessive number, waited for media agencies to leave Oscar Grant Plaza that evening, then they illegally entered tents locked from the inside without a warrant, dragging us from them — inflicting trauma to all, and injury to some, including what may be permanent shoulder damage to one of our organizers. When our sister demanded that her pat down not be conducted by a male officer, the responding female officer crossed the line in her search, to the point of molestation.

From inside my tent on the Plaza that night I heard my neighbor screaming in pain, as she was physically removed from her tent, while other voices yelled for the cops to stop hurting her and to let her go. Eventually I heard a voice identifying themselves as Oakland Police, directly outside my tent and I was requested to step out. I asked if they had adequate housing available and they offered me a bed at St. Vincent de Paul for less than 6 hours, with no assistance beyond that. Not only is this not adequate shelter by any mean, but from would I've heard from the experiences of other non-binary folks, that is not a safe or welcoming space for gender non-conforming humans.

After being searched and cuffed, we spent some time on the plaza steps awaiting transport to Santa Rita. While we waited, we watch DPW throw our tents and everything in them, into dump trucks and drive off. Laptops; backpacks; last mile transportation; prescription meds; cell phones; cash; bank cards and wallets —easily several thousand dollars' worth of our lives and livelihoods— and all of it is still missing. None of us were given claim receipts or information on how to retrieve our property. Even one of our housed allies is having difficulty locating it for us.

Our trans sisters were misgendered, separated and subjected to cruel and unusual treatment, to the point of one of them being dressed out in reds, meaning they were deemed high-risk—simply because their pronouns didn't match their outward appearance. This high-risk designation also placed them in solitary confinement for the majority of their stay, which can be extremely traumatic. Our only Black brother arrested, Ayat, was dressed out in yellow and put in

medium security, which insinuates to other incarcerated folks and jail staff that he wouldn't back down from a fight.

The rest of us were processed through without too much hassle, other than the expected psychological abuse. We were given meals barely passed as food.

The Sheriffs did their jobs and told us to shut-up, alot. They seemed 50% professional and 50% condescendingly snarky.

Processing us through Santa Rita taught us a lot, including that by arresting 22 protestors without real cause, the jail's processing system was so backed up, weekenders and others being processed out, were hung-up for hours in the backlog, violating their due process rights, as well.

Criminalizing the unhoused is illegal, immoral, unjust and inhumane. The City of Oakland and Mayor Schaff's Office, as well as the OPD, should be held accountable for their violation of our Rights, and the Rights of all unhoused Oakland residents!