



## **EVICTED WITH NO PLACE TO GO**

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Far too often cities and states try to deal with the homeless population with an out of sight and out of mind mentality, a tactic that solves nothing other than forces those with nowhere to go out of areas where they are considered a *problem* or a *nuisance*. On May 1, 2018, Caltrans, California's transit agency along with Highway Patrol and a group of social workers evicted approximately 60 people from a homeless encampment off of California's Highway 80 near Coachella.

When all of the agencies arrived they told the transients that they had only a couple of days to clean up their shelters and remove their belongings before the site was bulldozed. Anything that remained would be buried.

Just prior to the demolition of the location, Highway Patrol would conduct a walkthrough to ensure that everybody had left.

Caltrans stated that they are trying to develop the area "for the future" and that the encampment is causing health and safety issues, even though it is in a mostly barren desert, the state still decided to push people away from the area as it often does with no services or resources for employment or housing. Only a few of those forced out of the area were placed in temporary housing while others said they would simply find another vacant lot to call home. Area emergency shelters say they have enough beds to accommodate all 60 people but often shelters separate families and don't allow animals and most people are unwilling to leave their loved ones, human or otherwise.

This is not the first time that Caltrans has razed an encampment, they did so in 2016 at the expense of \$500,000 that left 20 people with nowhere to go.

Only recently has a city in California made the decision to invest in homeless shelters and to getting people off of the streets. In April, L.A Mayor Eric Garcetti announced that he would commit to a total of \$20 million to fund programs to accomplish just that all across the city, a huge increase in homelessness spending.

Naming his plan A Bridge Home, Garcetti has pledged tents, trailers, and other forms of emergency shelters, asking communities to address the “greatest moral and humanitarian crisis of our time.” This is a reversal of Garcetti’s previous stance which was to build new housing instead of temporary shelter.

Unfortunately, L.A is one of the few places in the state that is taking any drastic steps to battle homelessness and get people off of the streets. Other cities such as San Francisco and the resort town Palm Springs and its desert neighbors are pushing the homeless out with no resources and no assistance with Sacramento backing their decisions, even supplying the funds, manpower, and machinery to accomplish this sad goal.

It’s going to take more than just one city to take a stand to convince others to do what is right. And with the cost of destroying encampments and chasing people away like pests, that money could be used to provide shelter and employment for the homeless.

Sadly, the homeless population in California continues to grow. Localities and the state government seem to think it’s easier to push people away instead of helping them while ignoring the underlying causes of the issue. Even at the federal level, there is little action being taken from the current administration to help those on the streets. Eric Garcetti is right, this is the greatest humanitarian issue of our time and how we choose to address it or whether we choose to continue to ignore it, will determine what kind of country we truly are.

#### Sources

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