

## **Open Letter to Greg Gopman Regarding: San Francisco's Homeless Population**

December 13, 2013

Dear Greg:

Our San Francisco homeless population is made up of real people. Many struggle with the impact of life circumstances that are well beyond their control – women and children forced from their homes by domestic violence, veterans who suffer from PTSD or other mental illness, and individuals with disabilities or medical conditions that prevent them from getting or be able to pay for long term housing.

We believe that people who are homeless deserve not only our respect as people, but also our best and most creative efforts as a society to change the conditions that contribute to homelessness. One critical part of the effort to change the conditions leading to homelessness is to insure that low income people in San Francisco have equal access to justice and basic legal services.

We invite you to learn more about how access to basic legal services is changing the lives of our homeless men, women and children in San Francisco. In particular, we invite you to learn about the work being done by the nonprofit Justice & Diversity Center (JDC) of The Bar Association of San Francisco.

Our Homeless Advocacy Project, or HAP for short, has worked for 25 years to help families and individuals on the edge of homelessness. Our mission is to help people who are homeless, or who are at imminent risk of homelessness, while prioritizing individuals who have mental health disabilities.

HAP serves over 2,000 people a year, and with the assistance of JDC through the power of pro bono legal services provided by many of the 12,000 attorneys in San Francisco, serves thousands of others. Companies like Twitter; Hewlett-Packard; Google; Morrison & Foerster; Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe; and hundreds of others donate hours of their time helping people resolve legal issues that many times lead to homelessness. Please read the recent San Francisco Chronicle story about Twitter lawyers at San Francisco Superior Court negotiating with tenants and landlords through our Housing Negotiation Project.

You might consider volunteering at San Francisco's Project Homeless Connect and meet with our staff and pro bono attorneys that volunteer there so you can put a face on the homeless people you referred to in your Facebook post as "crazy, drug dealers, drop outs and trash." Our clients have names, families and reasons why they are in their current situations.



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Some lost jobs during the recession, some are veterans trying to adjust to life after the military, and some are simply people down on their luck. Please come visit us and join our efforts to provide basic legal services that can help these very real people change the course of their lives.

Anyone can be part of the solution by donating and helping us provide the critical legal services that change lives. Donate now to help! [www.sfbar.org/donate](http://www.sfbar.org/donate). Together, we can make a difference.

Sincerely,

Christopher C. Kearney

2013 President, Justice & Diversity Center and 2013 President, The Bar Association of San Francisco

Stephanie P. Skaff

2013 President-Elect, Justice & Diversity Center and 2013 President-Elect, The Bar Association of San Francisco