

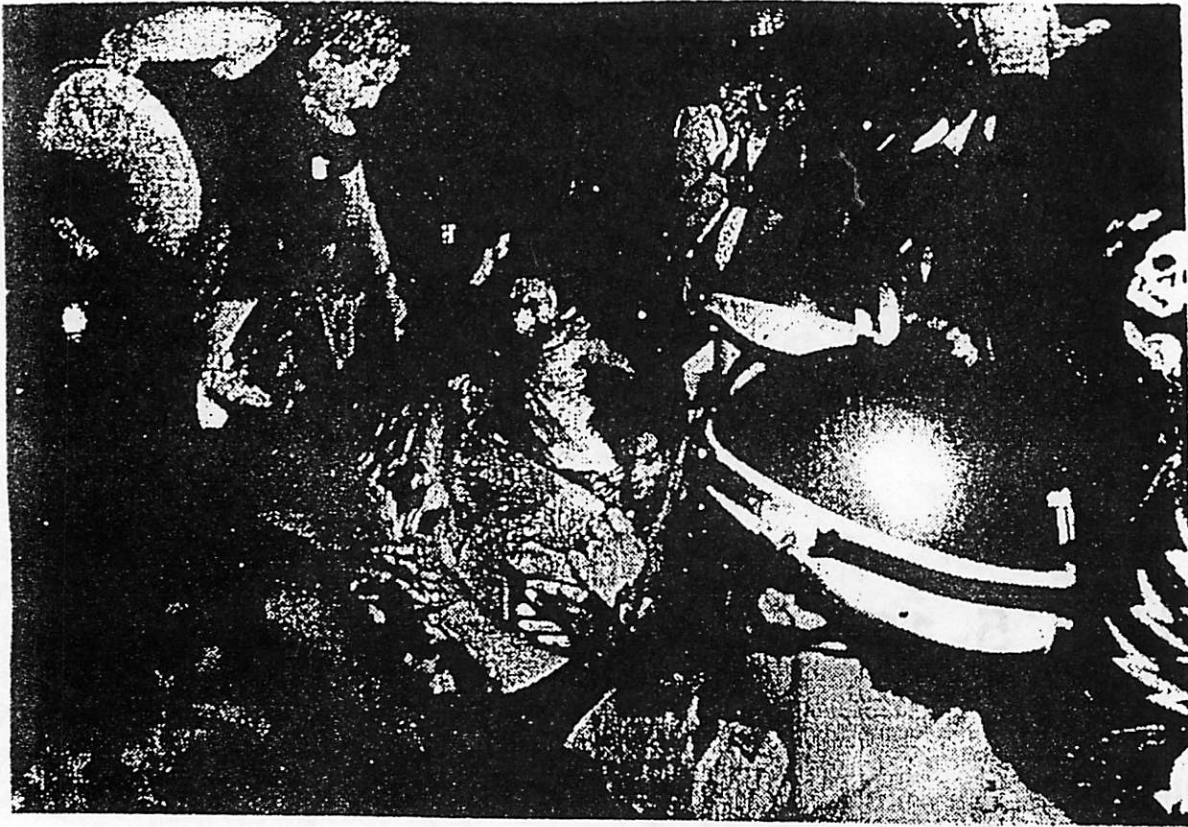
"TENT-CITY"  
A DIARY OF  
TOMPKINS SQUARE PARK

SUMMER 1989



**JULY 5 1989**

**Two hundred riot cops were called to  
Tompkins Square Park on Wednesday,  
July 5 as sanitation workers removed  
shanties allowed to accumulate over the  
past month by the Parks Department.**



The New York Times/Angel Franco

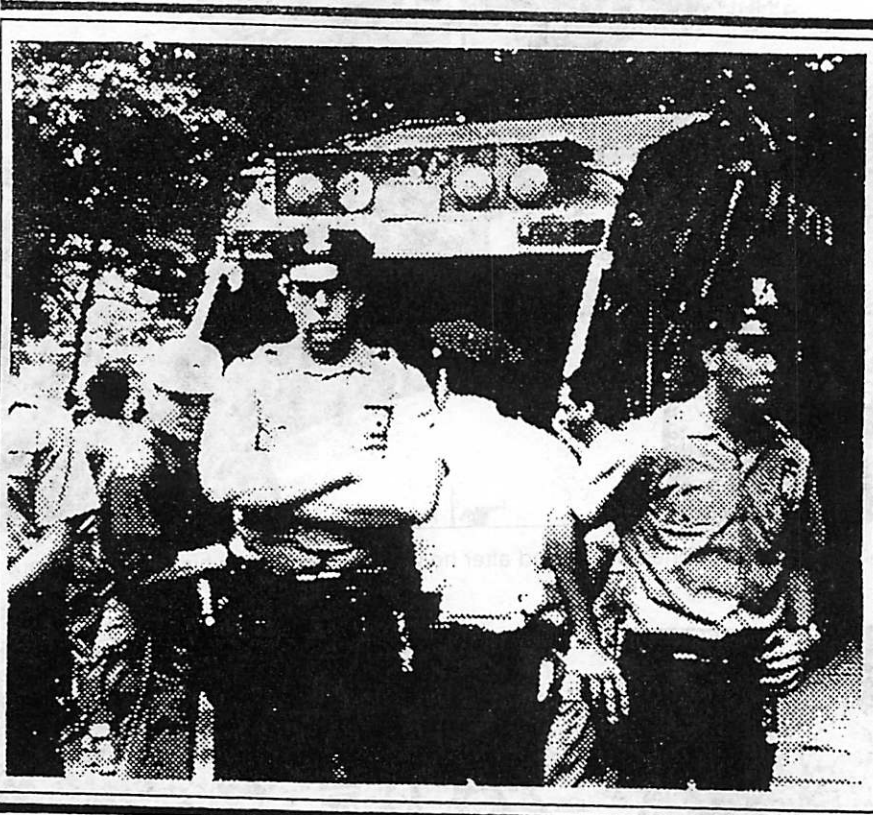
Squatters and local residents clashing with police officers late Wednesday night at Tompkins Square Park.



Photo by Ed Quinn

An undercover police officer, left, pulls a protester toward the police line yesterday at Tompkins Square Park.

PHOTO: R. Mesa



WHILE ARMED COPS STOOD GUARD, park employees fed the possessions of homeless people into the jaws of a garbage truck.

Medication, ID papers, clothing, and other personal belongings were trashed, while real litter was left behind in huge piles. A homeless woman who lost everything called it "punishment without trial for being homeless."

City Councilmember Friedlander released a statement on July 6 urging the city to "act quickly to replace all the possessions of the homeless in Tompkins Square Park, to immediately rehab all the city-owned buildings in the Lower East Side for low-income housing, and ... cease harassment of the homeless."



Homeless man Keith Thompson, right, is comforted by a friend after he was "evicted" from his spot in the park. Newsday / Jon Naso



Keith Thompson amid his possessions at Tompkins Square Park, surrounded by other homeless people, sanitation park rangers and police officers. The city knocked down shanties, leaving 200 people without their makeshift homes. The New York Times



*A bad day to be born: Spider's dog has puppies while Spider faces nightly eviction from his home in the park (Photo by Andrew Lichtenstein)*

# The Police Are Not About Crime They Are About Harrassment”



**SQUATTER PATROL** sends helmeted cops to Tompkins Square Park yesterday, where they walk past man on bench. **ROBERT ROSAMILLO** DAILY NEWS

---

NEWS FROM

COUNCILMEMBER MIRIAM FRIEDLANDER

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
JULY 6, 1989

CONTACT: MARC SINGER  
212-566-1324

---

FRIEDLANDER CONDEMNNS POLICE ACTION IN TOMPKINS SQUARE

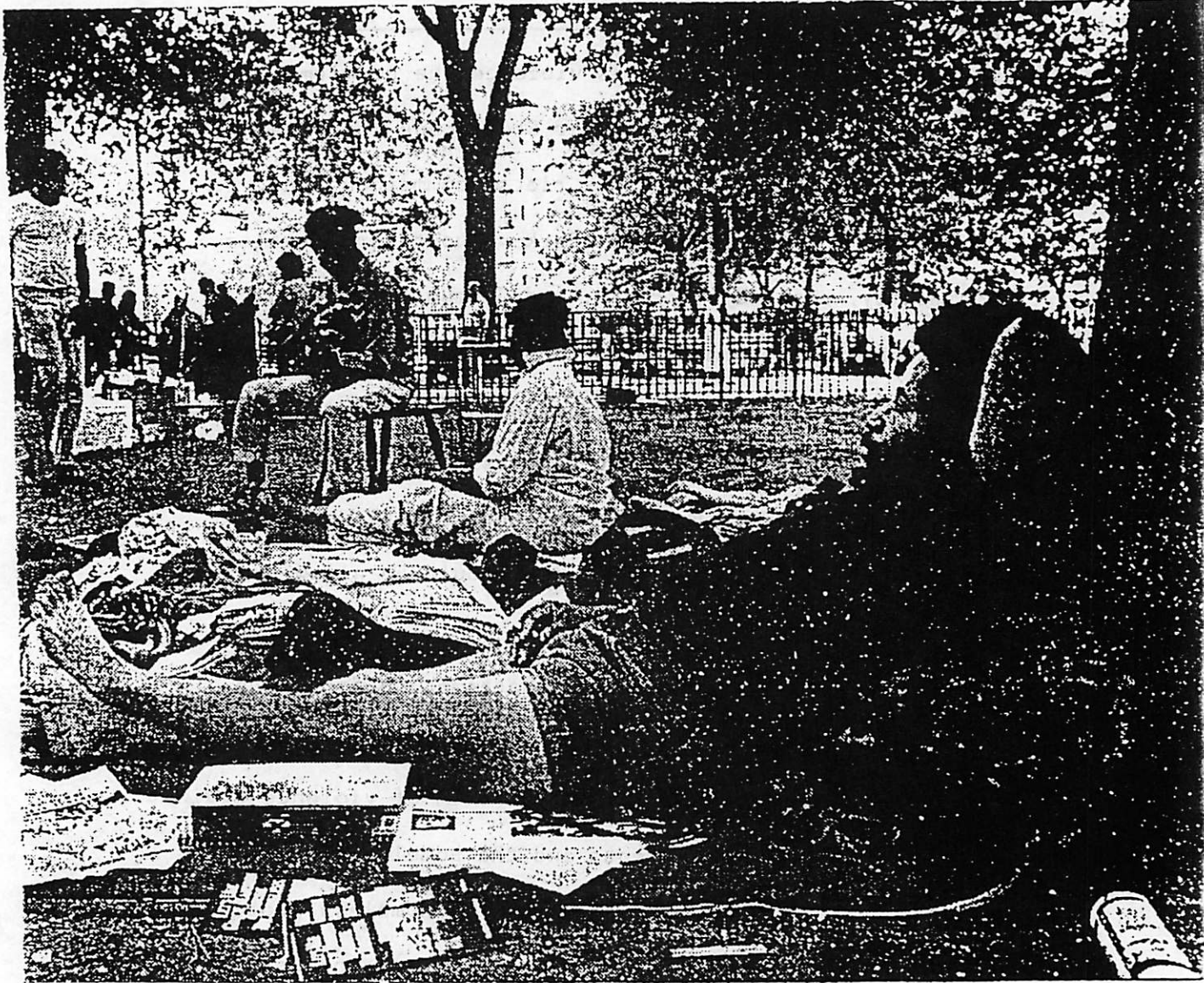
---

---I am shocked that the city has violated the commitments that Mayor Koch and Parks Commissioner Stern made last year in response to the Tompkins Square Park riots, commitments not to make any changes in Tompkins Square Park without consultation of the community, elected officials, and Community Board #3. The city violated that commitment when hundreds of police in riot gear and dozens of parks workers descended on the park and removed the private property of the homeless. This community had received an agreement that Tompkins Square Park would be open 24 hours a day and that the homeless would be allowed to remain.

These tactics represent the city's attempt to force the homeless into city shelters which they fear due to violence and other problems. This surprise attack is a form of violence against the commitment to consult residents and the homeless.

The city administration cannot solve the homeless problem with such sneak night attacks on the homeless at Tompkins Square. It will only lead to greater hostility and violence instead of working out difficult community problems. I urge the city to act quickly to replace all the possessions of the homeless in Tompkins Square Park, to immediately rehab all the city-owned buildings in the Lower East Side for low-income housing, and above all the Mayor and the Parks Commissioner should honor their commitments to the community, elected officials, and Community Board #3 to consult them and cease harassment of the homeless.

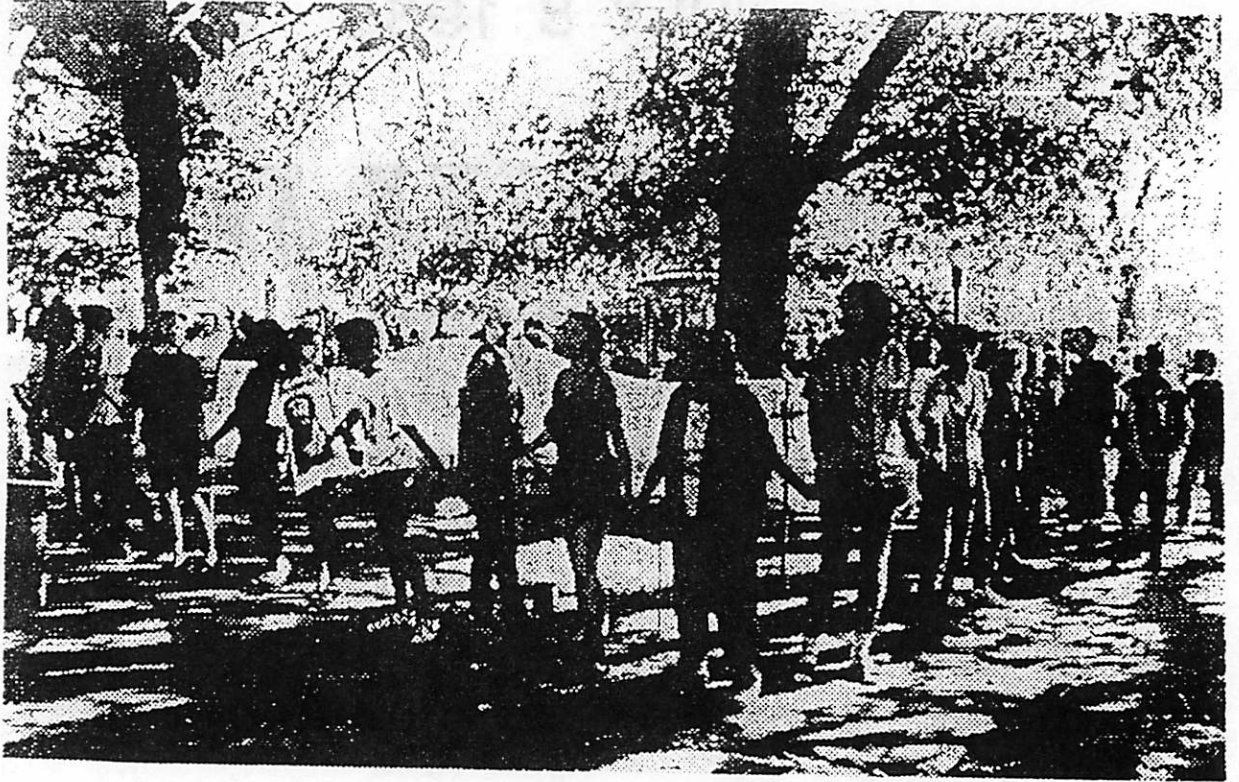




**NO PARKING.** Squatter who gave his name as Cassanova (above) was one of many homeless ousted from Tompkins Square Park last week in new police strategy.

JULY 8 1989

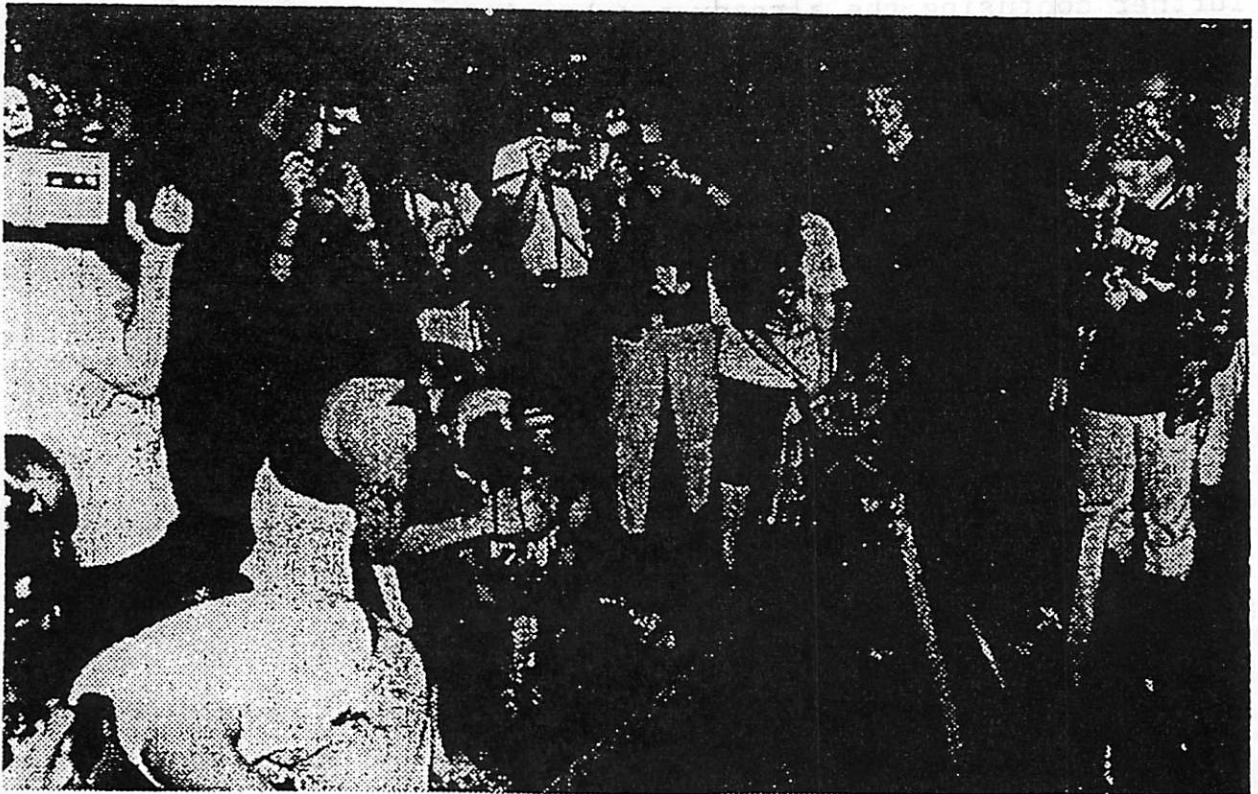
**REBUILD  
TENT  
CITY**



People form human chain to protect Tent City  
just before first wave of riot pigs--7/8



Parks pigs rip down tents in Tent City--7/8



7/8 People rebuild tents after raid by pigs.

# JULY 12 1989

## TOMPKINS SQUARE PARK ACTIVISTS MARCH ON RESIDENCE OF CITY PARKS COMMISSIONER HENRY J. STERN

A rally at the residence of Henry J. Stern at 510 East 84th Street on July 12th by residents of the Tompkins Square area and others angry about the new parks regulations imposed by Stern led to 100 cops cordoning off the block between York and East End Avenues. After a march to Mayor Koch's residence at Gracie Mansion where cops tried unsuccessfully to corral demonstrators, they were led on a merry chase through side streets as demonstrators walked quickly away, jogging a little. Almost all of the cops looked like they would have heart attacks as their faces turned red while they huffed and puffed, trying to keep up. The group then split up, doubled back and zigzagged through the streets, further confusing the already perplexed cops. This really freaked out the white shirts (officers) who were trying to deploy their men. Deputy Inspector Merryman was heard saying "I can't figure out where they're going!!"

Finally, the demonstrators marched to the United Nations on their way to Tompkins Square Park, escorted along the way by many cops. On 47th Street and First Avenue, they connected with a group of Chinese protestors who have created a camp of their own to protest the recent insanity in China. They gave their support to the Tompkins Square demonstrators who then rallied in front of the UN, where, as a rule, demonstrations are not permitted.

Back at Thompson Square Park that night, Tent City was back in action again as Lt. McKenna, Sgt Marron, and POs Esposito, Kid and Hernandez stood nearby observing. As a Gesture of goodwill, they were offered some of what was being served - caviar on crackers and stuffed mushrooms!!! They declined, but everyone else ate well that night with food, music and singing for all.

**JULY 22 1989**

**Homeless erect flag shelters**



JULY 23 1989

JULY 23 1989

# Tompkins Park Flags



Police in riot gear face protesters at Tompkins Square Park yesterday morning as parks officials began removing shelters.

## Captured



# JULY 31 1989

Last evening on July 31st about 11:30 PM, 40 to 60 police in riot gear attacked T.S.P.'s homeless, once again, with 40 park enforcement officers and 15 to 20 HRA employees who were there to offer shelters to the inhabitants. We were told earlier in the day that we had until 6 AM before any confrontation would take place.

4 American flags were used once again to make temporary shelter from the rain. When the park's department was not willing to compromise on a proposal to open the bathrooms on a 24 hour basis, 8 or more structures were also built. The park's department then went into what is known to us as police state and gentrification.

You must also remember that next Sunday is the anniversary of last year's riot. A move on us at this time was to give them a consensus of what will happen on August 6th. As a result of the attack the homeless people do not feel safe in the park any longer and feel they are being targeted. But because of people in the neighborhood, our faith in each other is strong. The shelters and or structures are to protect us against the elements.

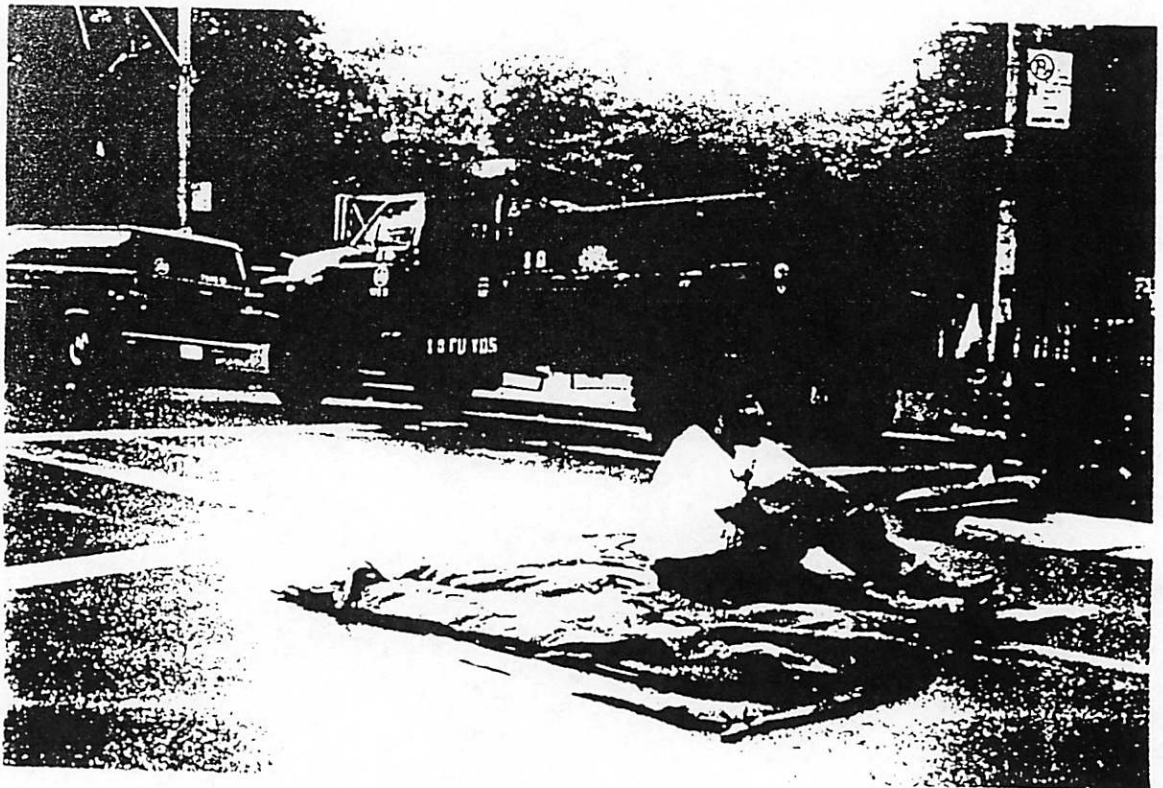
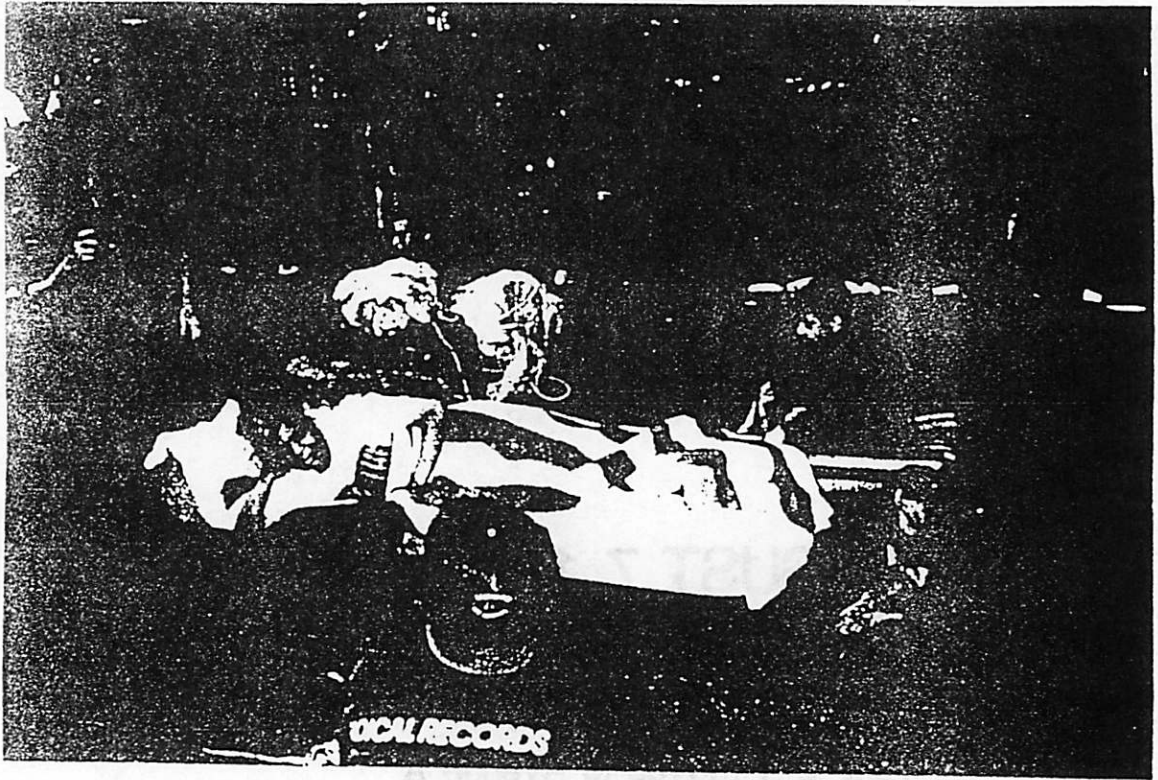
Last night the protection we needed was protection from the police and park enforcement officers. Furthermore, last night's action did not have the affect they thought, the affect of fear and no will of our own. Many will come but they will fall short.

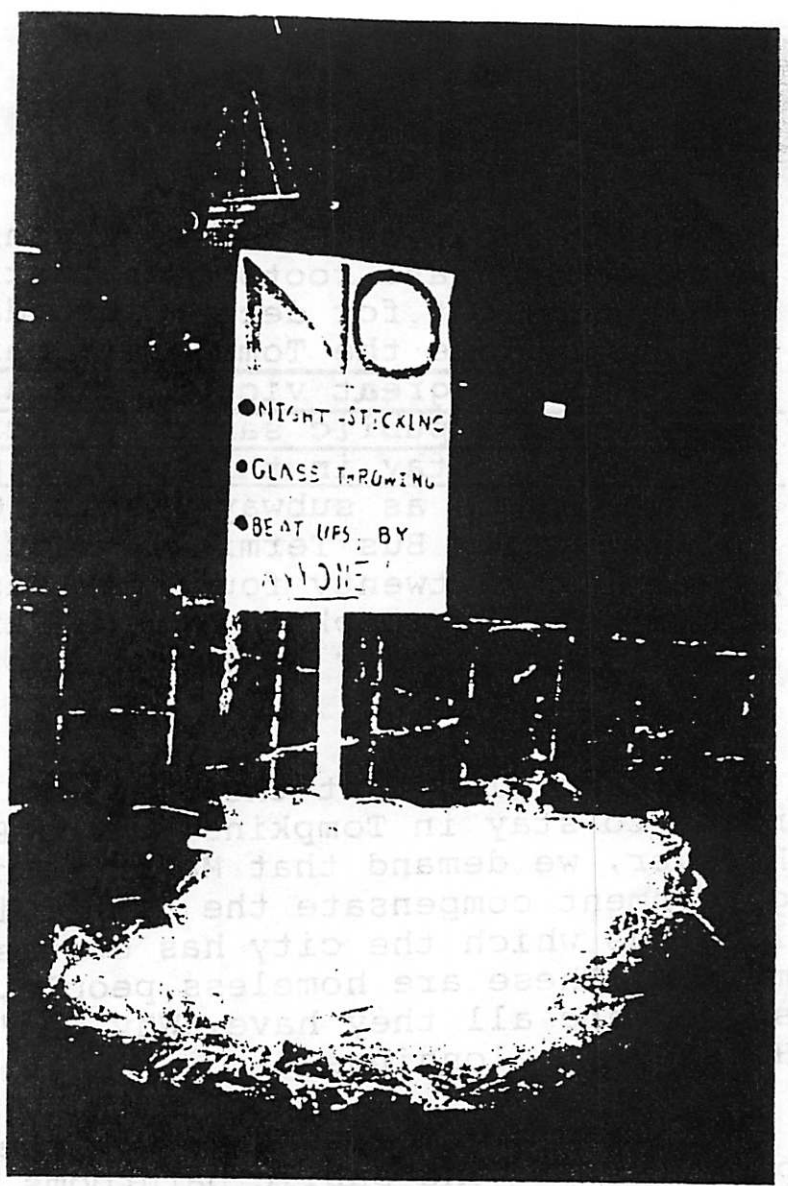
We are homeless and need more than a 15 minute warning to gather our possessions. As an overall result we feel that the revolution they want is here and will be televised.

**AUGUST 7 1989**

**Morning attack**

**\*Tent-City moves to Avenue A**





The Council of Homeless Organizers is an association of a number of grass roots organizations that have banded together to fight for decent affordable housing. We are here to congratulate the Tompkins Square Park - "Tent City" homeless in their great victory for all homeless. They have won access to the public sanitary facilities after - hours and the right to stay in this public park. The all public facilities, such as subways, Grand Central Terminal and the Port Authority Bus Terminal, should always be opened to the homeless on a twenty four hour basis. We are here in support of the Tompkins Square Park - "Tent City" homeless and their fight for homeless rights.

We are glad that the right to public facilities and the right to stay in Tompkins Square Park have been vindicated. However, we demand that Mayor Koch and the New York City government compensate the "Tent City" homeless for the belongings which the city has confiscated over the past months. These are homeless people, the items the city seized are all they have. Why don't they seize Leona Hemsley's belongings ?

Although homeless have won the right to remain in the park and use the public bathrooms, why should people live in tents in the richest country in the world ? We want decent affordable housing, not tents. We demand the city stop forcing homeless out of the subways, parks, the Port Authority Bus Terminal, and other public areas into dangerous city shelters. Shelters are not the solution to homelessness. We want the homeless to know that Tompkins Square Park "Tent City" is open to all who reject the city's solution.

Their fight is our fight. We know that only by fighting together will we win affordable decent housing for all.

HOUSING NOW !

UP AND OUT OF POVERTY NOW !

The Council of Homeless Organizers.

# **"TENT-CITY" ACTIVITIES**

# 'We have no choice but to strive together...'

'...and stay in Tompkins Square and fight. There is no place to go besides to God.'

*At the Survival Summit New York City homeless activists from Tompkins Square talked to the People's Tribune; these are their words.*

New York for the rich, poor people must leave" is the bottom line slogan for the gentrification, warehousing buildings, escalating prices to the point that poor people will not ever be able to afford to live in houses or apartments.

And the social service agenda is to cut people off. You can research this: The president of the United States told the mayor of New York, unless you cut some of these people off welfare, I'm not giving you any federal aid to hold up your welfare system. Therefore the mayor was forced to come up with rules and regulations that would cut people off and keep them off the rolls. And now they are homeless, or they will be.

What this really means is to strip the neighborhood of poor people and rebuild it. Do not allow them to come back.

Genocide.

I've talked to people who participated in these types of things, who had that kind of money, and they're saying, well, if you're black, why don't you go back down South somewhere? In other words, go back to wherever you came from! Get out of our town.

I'm from New York! I ain't goin' nowhere.

We have no choice but to strive to-

gether and stay in Tompkins Square Park and fight. There is no place to go besides to God!

And a lot will die if they are still there in the wintertime.

Have you ever been to the shelter on Wards Island? It looks like a maze to run rats through. Then take a walk through Tompkins Square Park to see the difference.

Last time I was on Wards Island they stabbed a guy in the chest for his SSI money while he was asleep.

Tent City at Tompkins Square Park was beautiful. We wanted no money from them.

We had everything we needed, for temporary. They pushed the issue so it's not temporary anymore! They had

to push the issue because the people generally embarrassed the city government by helping themselves.

The people for the people.

These two systems side by side [system of taking care of people in a community like Tent City and then: system that just throws people out]; it's not just that they can't, they don't want to coincide with each other. They don't want to understand us.

Since the homeless reclaimed Tent City July 23, police have harassed them, confiscating their belongings, throwing away the community's donated food, shutting the public bathrooms. Twelve American flags were built into tents; these were torn down. Watch for a PT update next week.



New York City homeless fighters electrified the National Survival Summit. From left to right: "Mama" Darlene, Ronald Casanova, Justice Robles, of Tompkins Square Park

PHOTO: KATE NORTON

**BEWARE!**

a

**RAPIST IS PREYING**  
**ON WOMEN IN THE GENERAL AREA**  
**OF TOMPKINS SQUARE PARK**

*A recent victim described him as follows:*

- He drives a brown van with New York license plates. Says he is from the Bronx.
- He wears brown clothing that appears to be a work uniform.
- He is about 5 feet, 8 inches tall
- He wears his hair in a short afro, appears to be Hispanic
- He wears "mountain" type boots with red laces.

He has attacked several young women AT KNIFEPOINT in October. Women should be on their guard against anyone matching this description.

(This leaflet was initiated by homeless people who live in Tompkins Square Park) 11/04/88.



8/15/89

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

What our demands are; why the homeless are not going to stand back and wait for our so-called government to give us pennies when we need hundreds of dollars.

No longer will we be silent and take what they give us.

We all paid taxes before, the money we want is our money, we paid, now we want our due.

We want housing that we can afford, not \$1,000 a month, but \$400 to \$500 a month.

We do not want to live in the park, we want homes and jobs.

We need easier access to welfare, SSI, Health care, increase in minimum wage, etc. etc.

NYC has a \$1 a building program or adopt-a-building programs but not on the Lower East Side.

We are from the Lower East Side and do not want to live anywhere else.

There are plenty of abandoned buildings owned by the city of New York that we can use and the City can help.

But! We do not make money for the city we make it for ourselves.

One thing I learned, the City really does not want us to pay our own way, they want to keep us in their control, we will not accept shelters they are for the living dead we are living and far from dead and it's about time we fight and let our Mayor know we refuse to become zombies for anyone. We want peace. Give us what belongs to us. HOUSING.

Even if all of us in Tompkins Square Park were to get homes etc. the fight would continue, in Port Authority, Grand Central Station, City Hall, subways all over the USA.

The struggle will continue as long as one person is forced to live in the streets.

((USA there is something wrong with their way:))

We are able men, women and children we will work and take care of ourselves. We have men and women who work but it's hard living in the park and waking each morning to the tune of the NYPD or the Park's Department, fighting to go to work, fighting to go to sleep, makes you tired angry and very upset.

I, Casanova, if no one else ~~refuse to give up this~~ fight. I will not lay down unless it's in my grave, a prison cell or a home, preferably a home.

Our fight is not really with the pigs or the park cops and it hurts fighting them when they are but tools ((dangerous tools)) but just tools who are but one paycheck away from homelessness.

The Mayor and the Park's Commissioner think they can divide us but they do not understand that we keep our eyes on what we are fighting for even if we fight with each other we come together for a very important cause (homelessness).

We are having a press conference on Saturday, August 19th at 1:00 PM in Tompkins Square Park. All are invited.

Even if you do not realize it, this is also your fight, even if you have homes you can lose them, anything can happen, fire, eviction, burglary, loss of income, etc. Our struggle will continue for the rest of our lives as long as there are people in need, and there will be people in need, as long as we have people in government who do not give a damn. HOUSING NOW. UP FROM POVERTY NOW.

HOUSING NOW OCTOBER 4,5,6,7.

WASHINGTON D.C.

Tompkins Square Park  
Homeless  
Casanova