

# Los Angeles Daily News

## California's homeless crisis is not performance art: John Phillips

John Phillips November 29, 2019 at 7:01 am



Homeless tents line the sidewalk along First Street in the shadow of Los Angeles City Hall Wednesday, June 26, 2019. (Photo by David Crane, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)

While it may be impossible to get more than 87 percent of the population to believe that Elvis Presley is dead, a new Los Angeles Times/Los Angeles Business Council Institute poll says that practically everyone thinks that homelessness is L.A.'s biggest problem.

A recent survey of 901 registered voters in Los Angeles found that 95 percent of respondents believe that homelessness here is a "serious" or "very serious" problem.

The other 5 percent, presumably, wanted to know if the guy taking the survey had any spare change.

The results of this poll should come as no surprise.

Thousands of L.A.'s homeless people live in tents, RVs or even in their cars — that is, if you consider a Toyota Prius a car.

According to Census data, about one-fourth of all the homeless people in the U.S. live in California. KNBC reports that 75 percent of L.A.'s homeless population lives on the streets, compared to only 6 percent in New York City.

Homelessness is such a daily reality in Southern California, it's only a matter of time before the 405 Freeway adds a Shopping-Cart-Only lane.

Homelessness isn't confined to Skid Row anymore.

I think it was just yesterday I exited my neighborhood grocery store and saw a guy holding a sign that read, "Will Work For Locally Sourced, Cruelty-Free, Farm-To-Table Food, Produced In A Sustainable Way To Promote People, Not Profits."

Additionally, the poll found that 75 percent of Los Angeles voters support passing a law requiring the city to provide temporary housing for anyone living on the street, also known as "Kato Kaelin's Law."

All of this is happening at the same time that the state of California spends about \$2 billion a year on the homeless, and voters consistently tax themselves more so that public officials have more resources to end the epidemic.

Get this, last year the city of Los Angeles spent \$619 million on the 36,000 homeless people who live there. That works out to some \$17,194 per homeless person, or enough to give each of them their own podcast.

Yet the problem got only worse.

The next time L.A. or the state passes another bond measure demanding yet more money for homelessness, they should be required to collect that additional revenue in paper cups.

At this rate our next professional sports team will probably be called the L.A. Homeless.

Of course, all of their games would be on the road.

However, the most fitting symbol of our region's acceptance and/or inability to deal with the issue came from the People's Republic of Santa Monica.

That coastal city recently replaced the historic Millard Sheets' "Pleasures Along the Beach" glass mosaic with something called "In The Image" that features the figure of a homeless man wearing baggy, dirty clothes, and badly in need of a bath and haircut.

Residents became enraged because they thought it was a statue of Nicholas Cage.

Nope.

The description says the sculpture was erected "so viewers and passersby could contemplate their views and elevate their discourse on the issue — one that has now come to affect us all where we work and live."

Because, after all, if the sculpture wasn't there, residents of Santa Monica would have no idea that homelessness exists.

This would not be the first time that artist Ed Massey has stirred the pot with his art.

The Santa Monica Mirror reports that in 1994 Massey and feminist activist Peg Yorkin installed life-size painted polyurethane foam figures depicting the

grisly aftermath of a sexual assault titled “Morality/Mortality” in a storefront window at the Wilshire Medical Building.

For some reason, Macy’s took a pass.

This sculpture is actually the perfect monument to the “slactivism” exhibited by our local leaders and one-party rulers — it’s okay to let people live in filth on the streets, as long as we convince ourselves that our enabling is actually compassion.

*John Phillips can be heard weekdays from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. on “The Morning Drive with John Phillips and Jillian Barberie” on KABC/AM 790.*