

I don't know how the city expects people to ever find stability in their lives if they are not allowed to pitch a tent or another structure without people in surrounding homes calling the city so the city will come clean them up and throw them out like the trash they treat them as. The City of Portland's solution to homelessness is either putting people in jail or waiting for them to die of frostbite in the winter or sickness and hunger the rest of the year. The Right to Rest Act is miles below the bare minimum that a government should do for its people. I feel something that is often cited is that "cities around the country bus their homeless populations to Portland, so how are we expected to fix it? There are so many houseless people here, they can't possibly stay." The truth is, if our city officials cared about people living on the street, they could be working with attorneys to receive settlements from these cities to help aid Portland's homeless people or help them receive aid elsewhere. Better yet and even more simple, they could divest money away from having Rapid Response Bio-Clean and the Portland Police Bureau harass and traumatize folks living on the street and use that money to help people find stability and autonomy in their lives. A refusal of the Right to Rest Act is a refusal of any ounce of our humanity. Just because homeless people don't have houses to hide their things in doesn't mean they should be forcibly displaced and their things taken from them where the chances of the person getting their things back are slim. If you are in tune with the people of the city at all you know that the 30-day holding warehouse that Rapid Response uses for people's items is vastly flawed. Are people supposed to choose bus fare to get their items over food for the day? How can they be expected to move their items with no energy in their bodies? What about elderly and disabled folks who are literally unable to get their items? The city and rich Portlanders don't care about these invisible problems, they only want rid of the visible problem of people's belongings and their trash on the street. We are in the middle of a deadly pandemic and police not wearing masks are kicking houseless people out of their homes, possibly spreading COVID to them and opening the chances to a COVID cases spreading out instead of being semi-contained within a camp. I can personally testify to being present at sweeps and watching maskless cops bark orders at houseless people to move more quickly.

Another experience I've had was helping Laurelhurst campers with the sweep in November. I helped folks move a few blocks to a new camp. A month and a half later, I'm at that new camp moving folks back to Laurelhurst because of another sweep. We all know how stressful and disheveling moving is. This is an incredible waste of city resources. Unless the city likes using their resources on traumatizing houseless people for literally no reason. There is nowhere for these people to go. Shelters are almost always full or have restrictions about pets, belongings, or drug use, or a person has already had a traumatizing experience at a particular shelter and doesn't want to return. Sweeps are not only inhumane but pointless unless your point is to evict people who have almost nothing so you can have a less cluttered morning walk and not have to think about wealth disparity and the dark and disposable underbelly of capitalism everyday.