

## Tekst 9

## Battered and bruised – by the city

By Alice Callaghan

- 1 A PERVASIVE FEAR occupies the corners of Los Angeles' skid row<sup>1</sup>), where it seems the homeless are everywhere, heaps of human despair sleeping in doorways and on the public sidewalks. However, it is not men wielding baseball bats, as happened last week, leaving one man near death, that frightens the poor of skid row. Using the bat assault as an excuse, police and private security guards have escalated efforts to clear the area, ordering the homeless to move off city sidewalks for their own good. The two 19-year-olds allegedly responsible for the beating are in custody, probably in the same jail that houses the homeless who are arrested for the high crime of being homeless.
- 2 For more than a year now, police have been enforcing a law against sitting, sleeping or lying on public sidewalks. Security guards hired by property owners order people off public sidewalks and take the belongings of the homeless when they go inside a mission to eat. It is, the guards insist, abandoned property. The homeless must choose between losing their precious belongings and eating. Street maintenance workers, in violation of city policy, remove the belongings of the homeless, insisting that backpacks and rolled-up bedding stashed against a wall are abandoned. Shopping carts laden with belongings are dumped in the street and scooped into city trucks for disposal.
- 3 A self-appointed action group walks the row once a month to "take back the streets." The marchers hand out leaflets that promote drug and alcohol recovery programs and list shelters for the homeless, as though warm, safe beds await all who choose to take advantage of the city's generosity.
- 4 If a shelter does have empty beds, it says more about the shelter than about the person who refuses to sleep there. In fact, few beds are available on any given night. There may be an appearance of a lot of space, but most shelter beds in skid row have been designated for use in long-term programs. The police can lean on a shelter on a particular night to take in one or two more people, but that doesn't begin to meet the need.
- 5 Every affordable permanent housing unit on skid row has a waiting list. A shabby hotel in the downtown area rents for upward of \$750 a month. The monthly general relief payment to this city's poorest is \$223. Even if skid row residents found employment at minimum wage, they still would not be able to afford housing.
- 6 Two men wielding baseball bats are not nearly as frightening as a city that fails to address the serious lack of affordable housing for its poorest and most vulnerable.

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*Los Angeles Times*

noot 1 skid row: the poorest part of town, where homeless people live

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- 1p **32** “A pervasive fear occupies the corners of Los Angeles’ skid row” (first sentence)  
Who are the homeless of skid row afraid of, according to paragraph 1?
- A** “heaps of human despair”
  - B** “men wielding baseball bats”
  - C** “police and private security guards”
  - D** “the homeless who are arrested”
- 1p **33** What is the aim of paragraph 2?
- A** To analyse what makes the Los Angeles fight against homelessness successful.
  - B** To illustrate how life is being made difficult for the homeless in Los Angeles.
  - C** To prove that the Los Angeles police need more manpower to control the homeless.
  - D** To stress that Los Angeles is right to remove the homeless from its streets.
- 1p **34** What is the point made with respect to the homeless of Los Angeles in paragraphs 4 and 5?
- A** The city lacks the financial means to take proper care of them.
  - B** The city refuses to help them find ways to make a living.
  - C** They have little chance of ever getting decent accommodation.
  - D** They should learn to spend their money more sensibly.
- 1p **35** How can the tone of this article be characterised?
- A** As critical.
  - B** As neutral.
  - C** As sarcastic.