

# State of the art displacement

**California Pacific Medical Center is proposing to build a hospital that isn't really needed, in a community it isn't really geared toward**

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**OPINION** What does the loss of 11 residences and a few jobs matter if it means a state-of-the-art hospital will be built?

That's the question Examiner columnist Ken Garcia asked Oct. 20. The line cut like sharp knives into my eyes and heart as I read about Sutter Health/California Pacific Medical Center's proposal to put a billion-dollar hospital subsequently displacing elder and disabled tenants and low-income workers at Geary and Van Ness streets, on the edge of one of the poorest neighborhoods in San Francisco.

As I read and reread the hypothetical question, I knew it could only have been written by someone who hadn't witnessed countless low-income elders die or become seriously ill after they were evicted or displaced or hundreds of poor migrant workers and their families struggle and go hungry because they couldn't find a steady job with a living wage.

How do you quantify the importance of even one decent job for a poor person struggling to survive? Or one business owned by a small business owner who treats his or her employees with respect and love? Or the loss of one long-term residence of a disabled and elder tenant?

How do you rationalize the pain of relocation and job eradication in lieu of the building of a huge structure supposedly there to "heal people?"

And then there is the question of the building of a "state of the art" hospital - read: rich people's hospital - in a community where the majority of people are poor. And the issue of how the corporation funding the building made another, perhaps more devastating, decision to leach resources and support from St. Luke's, a truly community-based hospital.

"I won't be able to sit in Mama Dee's chair anymore." My six-year-old son looked down as he spoke. We were sitting in the Van Ness Bakery & Cafe at the corner of Van Ness and Geary, one of the many small businesses facing displacement.

When my son and I heard about the pending proposal to demolish and build, not only did we know that the spirit of my Mama Dee, cofounder of POOR Magazine who passed on her spirit journey in March 2006, was very angry with the demolition of her favorite spot. But more important, as someone who struggled

with poverty, racism, and gentrification her entire life, I knew my mama was also mad, as I was, at the lie of California Pacific Medical Center, for proposing to build a hospital that isn't really needed, in a community it isn't really geared toward, and in the process dismantling the jobs, homes, and livelihoods of tenants, poor workers, and small business owners.

"This is a bad economy, and I really have no other job options. I don't know what we workers will do" said Ruthie Seng and Oy, two of the workers at the family-owned and humanely-operated Van Ness Bakery.

As we consider granting the plans for this \$1.7 billion dollar hospital proposal, perhaps we should reassess what hospitals are there to do and whom, they are doing it for.

**Tiny a.k.a. Lisa Gray-Garcia is a poverty scholar and daughter of Dee, coeditor of POOR Magazine and the author of Criminal of Poverty: Growing Up Homeless in America.**