

Eng 50 AoW 1: “Homeless woman dies of exposure on skid row sidewalk during El Niño storm”

NAME _____

Directions: Print this form and the article that follows. Read the article first and then fill out this form. Staple it to the article and turn both in. You will need a **highlighter**, a pen, a stapler, and a dictionary.

1. Read the article carefully and **annotate** the story by writing on it. **Highlight** key passages; write in the margins to show evidence of a close reading, your reactions, or your confusion. (2 pts.)
2. Introduce this article by author and “Title” and explain in your own words what it is about. (2 pts.)

3. In your own words, explain what the penal code says law enforcement officers in California can do to protect homeless people during storms caused by El Niño. (2 pts.)

4. In your own words, explain what Angela Harper means when she says, “Once you're out here for too many years, you're brainwashed into thinking this is life.” (2 pts.)

5. Should homeless people have the right to live on the streets? Why or why not? (2 pts.)

Your points _____ / 10 = _____

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Los Angeles Times

Homeless woman dies of exposure on skid row sidewalk during El Niño storm

A homeless woman identified as Barbara Brown, shown in a photo taken Christmas Day, died of exposure on a skid row sidewalk, authorities said. (Photo by Paul Avila)



By Gale Holland

A 60-year-old homeless woman died of exposure on a skid row sidewalk during Thursday's El Niño storm, authorities said Saturday.

The woman, identified by friends as Barbara Brown, died without a tent, rain-soaked and wrapped in a wet blanket on a piece of plastic, witnesses said.

Los Angeles police Capt. Mike Oreb said the woman had refused an offer of shelter from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority the day before she died.

At an emotional street memorial for Brown on Saturday, Deacon Alexander, who lives on skid row, said he called the 911 emergency line that afternoon and said police should take Brown off the street or "she'll be gone by tomorrow."

The 911 operator told him the police couldn't take her in without her consent, Alexander said.

Oreb could not confirm the conversation but said that police would not have been able to order Brown off the street. "We cannot force her to leave or seek shelter," he said. "We can only encourage to seek shelter."

Brown's death came as the city and county, after months of deliberations, released the region's first comprehensive plan in more than a decade for curbing homelessness.

Officials said a task force had been making preparations to safeguard homeless people during the potentially deadly storms.

As the first El Niño rain arrived this week, Mayor Eric Garcetti said L.A. police officers could temporarily detain homeless people illegally camped near the Los Angeles River who are in danger but refuse to move.

Garcetti's staff later directed questions about the law under which they could act to the LAPD, which cited a section of the California penal code that allows law enforcement officers to restrict access to perilous areas during disasters.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo last week ordered that homeless people be taken to shelters in freezing weather.

A written statement Saturday evening from Garcetti's office said the city is "exploring what we can do to help those who refuse assistance. The Mayor's priority is keeping all Angelenos safe during this storm season and he is urgently doing everything he can to prevent these tragedies from occurring."

Peter Lynn, head of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, said protecting the homeless population is a "top priority among all Los Angeles leadership" and that the agency's winter shelter system, with 7,245 beds, is not yet at

full capacity. "We will continue to work daily to encourage people to come in," he said.

There was no argument from friends that Brown, who was described as having both drinking and mental health issues, often refused help. One mourner said Brown told police she wasn't homeless; another said Brown spit on her when she brought her a blanket.

Alexander said that on the day of her death, he threw a blanket over her but it quickly became drenched. "The rain just poured on her," he said during the street memorial on skid row. "I blame myself."

Angela Harper, a former skid row resident who volunteers to help homeless people, said Brown had been in and out of refurbished flophouses on skid row for eight years and no longer trusted anyone who tried to help her.

"Once you're out here for too many years, you're brainwashed into thinking this is life," Harper said. "I blame the system. What she needed from the beginning was help with the mental health and drug and alcohol problems."

Harper said that although it's too late for Brown, "there's hundreds of her down here."

Other skid row residents recounted bringing Brown food, clothing and a sleeping bag but said all such supplies seemed to evaporate.

Alexander said Brown's tent burned in a fire a year ago and was never replaced.

"General" Jeff Page, who is organizing a skid row neighborhood council, said officials should use Brown's death as a case study of how to fix the 50-block community

"Where's the communication with leaders so we can point out those in need?" Page asked.

Kevin Haah, pastor of New City Church Los Angeles and president of the downtown clergy council, handed out single flowers for mourners to place at the makeshift street shrine where Brown died.

"We don't think this is right," he said. "We pray the people of this city will do something about this place."

Glossary:

El Niño: Spanish for "the Christ Child," the term was used by fishermen along the coasts of Ecuador and Peru to refer to an unusually warm ocean current that appears around Christmastime and lasts several months, causing heavy storms in areas that are usually dry.

Source:

<http://www.atmos.washington.edu/gcg/RTN/rtnt.html#part2>