



September 22, 2020

## PUBLIC STATEMENT FROM SOUTHERN OREGON COALITION FOR RACIAL EQUITY

On the morning of September 22, 2020, officers of the Medford Police Department entered Hawthorne Park with the express purpose of forcibly removing members of the community who had been sheltering in place in tents as a direct result of the devastating fires that displaced thousands of people less than two weeks before. This was after a series of half-hearted outreach attempts and misinformation provided by MPD and the City of Medford to offer appropriate alternatives for the over 100 community members who have nowhere else to go. The actions leading up to this event include:

- On September 17, Medford City Council held their regularly scheduled meeting where numerous members of the community vocalized support for allowing people to stay sheltered at Hawthorne Park. While there were also residents who urged the City of Medford to remove those sheltering at Hawthorne Park, the Council meeting demonstrated that this was not a cut-and-dry issue at the very least.
- Early on Sunday, September 20, Medford Police Department issued eviction notices to all tents at Hawthorne Park, giving individuals sheltering there one week to leave the premises. This eviction notice also explained that a “Resource Fair” would be held on Monday, September 21 to provide alternatives to the over 100 community members sheltering at the park.
- Early on Monday, September 21, Medford Police Department issued NEW eviction notices to all tents at Hawthorne Park, giving individuals sheltering there 24 hours to leave the premises. The “Resource Fair” held later that day consisted of representatives from three different shelters, all of which were at or near capacity. Neither MPD nor the City of Medford offered appropriate alternatives to meet the needs of the over 100 community members sheltering at the park.
- The City of Medford claims they did their due diligence by providing a list of shelters, many of which are already at capacity, geographically inaccessible, or require a two-year commitment to Christianity and are not trans-friendly. None of this was done in an equitable manner.

This morning, after doing less than the bare minimum to support their most vulnerable community members, Medford Police Department swept and removed all remnants of the vibrant, grassroots shelter in Hawthorne Park, arresting multiple people, including members of the press there exclusively to report on the event, and retraumatizing countless individuals who have already experienced so much tragedy this month.



The Leadership Team of SOEquity is appalled by the actions of Medford Police Department and the City of Medford. We stand firmly in solidarity with the multiple organizers, members of the press and nonviolent individuals who were arrested for doing nothing more than offering a place for our most vulnerable community members to rest and get their bearings after an incredibly traumatic event.

The Leadership Team of SOEquity is further disappointed by the multiple housed residents of Medford who had vocalized a desire to remove the tents and the human beings who were sheltering in them and centered their own personal comfort over the safety and health of those who had lost everything.

We believe that everyone has a right to live a life of dignity. In a state of emergency, we believe that any and every way community members can come together to protect and empower our most vulnerable neighbors is necessary. The City of Medford today acted in a way that is undignified and harmful to its people. This is unacceptable.

As we continue to gather more information on how to best support those arrested this morning and how to move forward with addressing the policies in place that allowed for these shameful events to occur, we want our SOEquity community to know that we intend to help those affected by this sweep hold MPD and the City of Medford accountable. We're in this together.

You can support the bail and jail support efforts through Siskiyou Rising Tide's GoFundMe located here: <https://tinyurl.com/hawthornesupport>

With Power and Love,

SOEquity Leadership

Kayla Wade, President & Founder

Dominique Toyer, Vice President

Brenna Hess, Secretary

Kayla Talbert, Treasurer & Education Inequity Lead

Emily Mann, Social Media & Volunteer Coordinator