

The Tenderloin 7: Activists seek office

— **FREDERICK HOBSON, 52, health policy consultant** —



I moved to San Francisco in 1973 and have lived in the Tenderloin since 1992. It's an area of the city that I love, close to all the cultural events, opera, symphony, restaurants, shopping. It's also the most challenging area of the city, faced with crime and poverty. I served on the board of Adopt-A-Block for years and am currently president of District 6 Democrats.

There are a total of 31 members of the Democratic Central Committee in San Francisco: 12 elected from each Assembly district, then another 7 proxies with votes given to designees from local officeholders. Dianne Feinstein, Nancy Pelosi, John Burton, and others get seats. The committee functions like a board of directors for the Democratic Party. It's done pretty well, making sure we get Democrats elected to office.

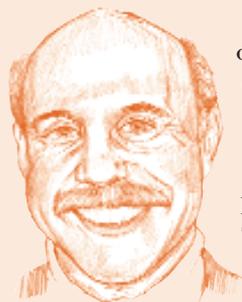
But what I want to see the Democratic Party do locally is to become more involved in issues that the everyday San Franciscan faces, particularly here in the central city: the crime, the drugs, the housing stock, which is deteriorating.

This neighborhood has the highest number of elderly living alone in the city, the highest number of people with AIDS; we have the highest number of disabled people.

It's not a coincidence that the poorest neighborhoods have the lowest voter turnout. That's where you find people who tend to have been discriminated against. They give up after a while. We need to do more of an outreach and register more people. There's a huge immigrant community here that is very difficult to get to register. They don't want much to do with the government because of fear of the INS.

I want people to know that they're welcome to call me up and share their ideas, needs, and wants with me. I have an open door for everyone and a big heart.

— **RICHARD ALLMAN, 54, community developer** —



I've lived in San Francisco since 1980 and have worked on a mix of community developing and organizing projects: affordable housing, neighborhood planning and, increasingly, community economic development—generally around the questions of what makes livable neighborhoods in communities that haven't had access to resources. Most of that community organizing has been in the Tenderloin.

Previously, I was the executive director and president of NOMPC. Currently, I'm interim director of the Tenderloin Sidewalk Improvement Program, a nonprofit set up by residents and merchants to clean the sidewalks daily. We operate two sweeper-scrubber machines, hired two full-time employees from the community, and work with trainees from the workforce re-entry program.

I was elected to one term on the Democratic County Central Committee in 1992, served, then chose not to run again, feeling I could be more effective working with grassroots organizations. Now I'm interested in returning to the central committee and combining that mix of community and political experience.

Voting means being involved in the political process, and anything that's done to maximize that is worthwhile. There are language and cultural issues in the Tenderloin, and we need to make sure the party is sensitive to that. The apartment building at 111 Jones has residents who speak 12 or more different languages. Many of these are citizens who speak English, but they may have a first language they're more comfortable with.

This is also a neighborhood with many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and straight people, and a wealth of life experiences of people with abilities and disabilities. We need to make sure that the political process responds to all of those experiences.

GREEN COUNTY COUNCIL, AT LARGE

— **MARC SALOMON, 39, environmentalist** —



I moved to San Francisco 10 days before the earthquake in 1989. I'm unemployed and volunteer at Matt Gonzalez's office in the afternoons. When Willie Brown began to wreck the city in the mid-'90s, I woke up from the Clintonian torpor and became politically active again. In 2000, I was the first Green ever to run for District 6 supervisor. I'm currently vice president of the Alliance for a Better District 6, and I'm on the San Francisco Community Land Trust Task Force and the Board of Supervisors bicycle advisory committee.

In the Tenderloin, I see a lot of safety issues. One is keeping the streets so that people are more important than cars. We've got a lot of seniors who are not as mobile as other folks. There are health issues involved with people living on the streets as well, the contamination from urine and feces. Daly ran as somebody who was going to deal with homelessness, but didn't do anything about it. Now the initiative is with Newsom and Hall, and Daly's playing catchup. That shouldn't have happened.

Seventeen candidates are running for nine seats in the Green County Council. I've spent about 40 cents on my campaign so far. If elected, I want to build the party up among people of color, especially regarding environmental issues on the southeast side. In the Bayview-Hunters Point and lower Potrero area, there are people who are subject to incredible environmental injustice from power plants and sewage treatment plants. I also want to look at ways to stop the SFO runway expansion. It doesn't affect people so much, but the critters in the bay need someone to speak for them as well.

We need to make politics accessible to all. The Democrats are elitist, and the Greens have to be populist at the local level to be sure folks are involved and have a chance. We have to open the doors to government.

— **PAUL PLATT, 29, computer arts technician** —



I moved to San Francisco from Ithaca, N.Y., and have lived in the Tenderloin for almost five years. I work at the Academy of Art College.

I'm running for the county council because I care about the Green Party and want to make sure it does well, and who better to carry out my beliefs than me. I want to see the Green Party grow. It has the best chance of pulling all the different areas of the city together and accomplishing something because we have a lot of ties to grassroots groups, a lot of volunteer, youth, activist energy, instead of the usual nonprofit groups fighting for things. There needs to be an alternative to the Republicanrats.

There's been some backlash from people who were furious that we handed the election to Bush, supposedly. But you can dissect that race a million different ways and come up with whatever you want. The Green Party registrations have been growing, though, so I'd say that's proof that Nader's campaign has had a positive effect.

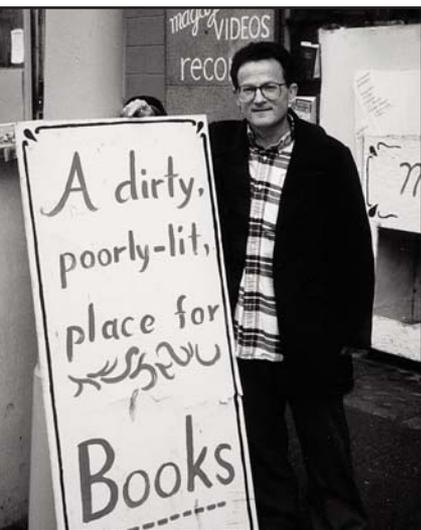
The Tenderloin has a lot of barriers. There's a lot of near-poverty, so there's all this voter apathy; people have given up on the system. The Green Party has an image of being a middle-class, white organization, so it's hard to convince people in the Tenderloin that this is their party—even though we're addressing the issues that affect them more than the other parties.

We've been critical of gentrification; we've been fighting for a living wage; we've fought against police brutality. I'd like to improve the daily life in the Tenderloin. The neighborhood has a good mixture of things, but it needs more of a sense of community, like you see in the Mission and the Haight.

McDonald's books closing for seismic retrofit

Last year McDonald's, not the Happy Meal haven but the

PHOTO: BILLY LUX



Izhak Volansky

vast, brain-food-serving, used bookstore at 48 Turk St., celebrated its 75th anniversary [see *Extra* No. 7].

Now, for the first time, the store will close for an extended period, tentatively from March 30 until November. In 1998, the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corp. took controlling interest in the property, and the city mandated a seismic retrofit. The bookstore is located in the Dalt

Hotel building, and, according to senior project manager Diep Do, TNDC also plans to upgrade the plumbing and add community meeting rooms in the lobby, while keeping the Dalt

as low-income SRO housing.

"I hope our customers don't desert us," says McDonald's owner Izhak Volansky, who has to schlep his estimated mil-

TAKING A ROCK 'N' ROLL VACATION

Billy Lux

lion-plus books, magazines, and LPs into a warehouse for the duration. How many people will it take to perform this daunting task? "They're going to get the entire Mormon Tab-

ernacle Choir in here," says Volansky, referring tongue-in-cheek to TNDC, whose exec is Brother Kelly Cullen, a Franciscan friar. TNDC will reimburse Volansky for the moving and storage expenses and even for the loss of income.

Does he plan to do much reading during the long downtime? "Nah," he replies, "I'm more of a music person." In fact, the 51-year-old Volansky plans to use this opportunity to pursue his dream of being a rock star.

"About 20 years ago, I won a song competition in L.A. for a piece I wrote called 'My Parachute Won't Open,'" says

Volansky, who performs solo, playing an electric keyboard. "I was planning to relocate down there as soon as I won and pursue a career as a songwriter-performer, but my father passed away and I was forced to take over this bookshop and take care of an ailing mother at the same time.

"But now's my big chance. I just signed up with a booking agent. I'm going to be touring retirement homes, from Sacramento to Gilroy. It's going to be a good gig because many of these people have Alzheimer's, so I'll just have to play one song the entire evening, and they'll think, 'Hey, I haven't heard this song before.'" ■