

# Shopkeepers organize to stem violence

## Arab merchants tell cops they're racially abused

BY TOM CARTER

RECENTLY, when Jimmy Shamieh asked a man he suspected of dealing drugs in front of his grocery at Taylor and Eddy to move on, he got a cold lesson in who rules Tenderloin sidewalks.

"The man pulled up his shirt to show me a gun sticking in his pants," Shamieh told the two dozen people who showed up in early May at the Tenderloin Police Station's Community Room. "He said, 'Your store is inside.'"

Two months ago, Ali Najem, the Cadillac grocery manager at 499 Eddy, got beat up trying to move somebody along. He asked two men to move away from his door, then he pushed away a heaping shopping cart blocking the entrance. The men attacked him, he said, striking him in the face and body. Najem called the police and the men were arrested. Najem figures he was lucky; he didn't have to go to the hospital.

"I work 14 hours a day," Najem said later. "Do you know how many

times a day I asked people to move away? But one of them will go to jail. He didn't show up in court and he was on probation. But you never know if someone's got a knife or a gun or is high on something."

Things have gotten so bad that around 20 shopkeepers, mostly Palestinian Americans such as Shamieh and Najem, are organizing to voice

their concerns and try to make improvements. Temporarily calling themselves the Tenderloin Merchants Association, the shopkeepers don't have bylaws, but plan to soon elect officers, Shamieh said. And, they welcome new members.

The group is not to be confused with another using the same name that the ubiquitous Urban Solutions is trying to organize. Jamie Cutlip of Urban Solutions, who was at Shamieh's meeting, said that few merchants have responded to their effort.

For their third monthly meeting, the shopkeepers met with police Capt. Kathryn Brown. The crowd was double their expectations. The regular North of Market Planning Coalition meeting, usually held the third Wednesday of each month, was not scheduled due to an oversight and the merchants took the time slot. Some NOMPC members who hadn't heard their meeting was off showed up and stayed through the merchants' meeting.

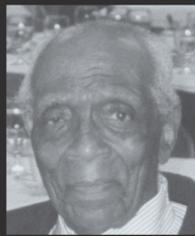
Shamieh explained that shopkeepers, responsible for the sidewalk in front of their business, can't stop or influence the shifting drug-dealing patterns, the loitering and massive soup-kitchen crowds that block sidewalks, often generating refuse and excrement. He linked the high number of homeless in the neighborhood with the concentration of nonprofits, a situation he said didn't seem fair for one neighborhood to endure. Loitering in doorways

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NO. 36

PUBLISHED BY THE SAN FRANCISCO STUDY CENTER

JUNE 2004



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Neighbors set pastor straight

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# CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

## GOING POSTAL



PHOTOS BY TOM CARTER

Charles Maxwell and Administrator Marsha Jackson show the mailboxes that have gone unused since Bayaniban House opened in October.

# Please, Mr. Postman

## Pelosi launches inquiry into SRO mail delivery

BY TOM CARTER

REP. Nancy Pelosi will open a congressional inquiry into why thousands of SRO hotel residents can't get their mail delivered to individual lock boxes but must live with a bulk drop delivery system. Pelosi will ask the Postal Service to address this growing problem, the Extra has learned.

Several hotels unsuccessfully petitioned the post office for individual-lock mailbox deliver-

ies, rather than bulk drops to a hotel clerk to distribute. Their petition claimed that long-term residency entitles their tenants to apartment status, where mail carriers deliver to individual boxes.

"Congresswoman Pelosi will initiate a congressional inquiry to see how this problem can be solved," said Dan Bernal, Pelosi's deputy district director. "The congresswoman supports efforts to help move the homeless into stable housing and maintain it. It's important that these residents are to receive their Social Security, veterans and other benefits through the mail in a secure way."

The decision came June 2 after a 30-minute meeting in Pelosi's office between one of her congressional case workers, Danielle Pacifico-Cogan, and representatives from five SROs, a rep from Supervisor Chris Daly's office and two members of the Central City SRO Collaborative. The group had been working to find a solution with the post office since January.

Now, hundreds of new aluminum mailboxes at SRO hotels in the Tenderloin and South of Market stand unused, frustrating the residents because the Postal Service refuses to assume delivery responsibility. That would require installing a master lock in a bank of boxes. The mail carrier then uses the master key to open the entire bank and make separate box deliveries. Each tenant has his or her own key.

Meanwhile, one hotel in the middle of the fray, the Windsor at 238 Eddy, with mailboxes identical to those in dispute, has been enjoying individual service since 1999. At another hotel, the post office reversed itself by installing a master lock one day and removing it the next.

Regardless of irregularities, the Postal Service denial of individual delivery to SROs

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Typical of the makeshift answers to bulk mail delivery are these files at the Camelot.