

YEEHAW!

A TWO DECADE LONG BATTLE

In the coastal town of Trinidad, CA, population 345, you'll find a gas station, a grocery store, and a few scattered novelty shops beside a row of new RVs in the city's center. Just a few miles east of town –past the charming Airbnb's, tidy vacation rentals, and some unoccupied secondary homes at the end of Quarry Road– is an intentional community called “Yeehaw” which is surrounded on three sides, a sort of yin-to-the-yang of a Mercer Fraser rock quarry.

The parcel is about 10 acres of meadows interspersed with once immature redwoods, now giants towering over gigantic stumps left by a logging company decades prior.

The forest floor is blanketed with lush foliage and romantic trails that guide you through berry mazes, leading you to various organic gardens and unique homesteads with goats, chickens, bees and bunnies. There is a collection of maypoles, meditation zones, community gathering spaces, shared kitchens, fire pits, composting bins and toilets, a hot tub, a sauna, a skate ramp, and a clubhouse with instruments, books galore and even a life-sized chess board that doubles as a dance floor.

Over the past nearly 40 years, Charles Garth has “stewarded” or owned the land while hosting an estimated thousand families and animals communally in structures made using recycled materials.

“*[He] has a bleeding heart,*” Charles's son Carlos said. “*He's always wanting to help people and the community.*”

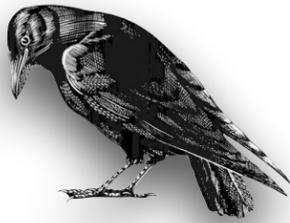
Charles's introduction to Humboldt wasn't unlike many “back-to-the-landers” of the era. He left Silicon Valley at 20 years old to go to Humboldt State University where he majored in economics and worked as a mobile mechanic who mined gold on the side. In the 80's, his partner was expecting and they were inspired to get back to the land, “*someplace my family could have a garden,*” Charles said. Charles drove their massive boat-like 1949 Ford to the land and lived in that bus for eight years as he built their first home.

Charles said it wasn't long before everyone started to show up. He described the guests as, “*traveling gypsies, hippies, and people on tour.*” He told us, “*We had campfires with music every other night, kids were free to run and play, so many fell asleep around that fire.*”

Charles maintained an “open gate policy” for all these years, which meant no one was turned away. Heather Pearce, one of the previous residents said, “*Countless respected members of the community got their start at Yeehaw.*”

Pearce moved to Yeehaw when her son was eight months old and stayed with her family for several years, she told us, “*It's a wonderful community. A lot of people that lived there at the same time that I did continued on in the community... I'm so grateful for Yeehaw taking us all in.*”

Charles's open gate may be closing in September however, if Humboldt County Code Enforcement proceeds with the planned abatement and demolition of the unpermitted structures, RVs, and buses where people live currently.



County staff began the most recent abatement action in 2017 and maintains in the staff report submitted to the Board in February, “*It is a danger to its residents and the environment and an ongoing nuisance to neighbors.*” The primary concerns cited included unpermitted dwellings, electrical issues, sewage, junk, and abandoned vehicles.

After a 4-1 vote at the Humboldt County Supervisors' meeting on February 2, the **Code Enforcement Unit (CEU)** was authorized by the Board to proceed with an abatement.

Director Ford explained the County went out for an inspection and tried to work with the landowner before Charles filed an appeal and then appealed the appeal hearing decision, adding, “*We want to work with people. We want people to clean up their sites without us having to abate. Abatement for us is the last possible option... I think it's fair to say we have not been able to resolve this and bring the site into compliance.*”

Today, Yeehaw has been reduced to twelve livable structures and is home to about twenty inhabitants, including elderly folks, environmental activists, some disabled residents, health care workers, organic produce farmers, musicians, healers, artists, a mill worker, a double cancer survivor, and young children.

That 1945 Ford bus is still parked on the land. Over the years Charles gutted it and rebuilt it to be two stories with a loft, lined with recycled old growth redwood he found in Oakland. The bus has housed countless families over the years and is one of the dwellings the County plans to remove.

“*All these structures they call unsafe or a nuisance, a lot of them are ingenious architecture,*” said Caire Terra, owner of Terra Family Farms, who has lived at Yeehaw for one and a half years with her partner and their two year old daughter.

Terra elaborated on how ideal it is to raise their daughter at Yeehaw, saying, “*We eat berries every day, we pick our food from the garden, she loves watching the baby apples grow... I just hope and pray she will be able to eat the apples again this year. If [the County CEU] follows through on their threat and comes to bulldoze in a month, I truly don't know where everyone will go.*”

Ford explained that DHHS will be helping to relocate the residents. “*My expectation is that the people will be matched up with resources available.*”

As of publishing Terra said her family has not been contacted by DHHS and they don't know when the demolition will happen. Terra added, “*It's all been very unclear and nebulous.*”

Terra told us, “*I wish the county would open their eyes and hearts and see what we are doing here could be replicated and celebrated. It seems really absurd to me that while we are in this housing crisis, and there's such a lack of affordable housing, we are taking one of the only, that I know of, functioning examples of affordable housing and demonizing it...*”

She added, “*I truly believe we should be copying this model, with tiny house villages, and making it accessible for people to live... We're in a crisis right now, why are we going to put another 10 families on the street?*”

Yeehaw! Continues on Page 14

You'll die at sea.

*Your head rocked by the roaring waves,
your body swaying in the water,
like a perforated boat.*

*In the prime of youth you'll go,
shy of your 30th birthday.*

Departing early is not a bad idea;

but it surely is if you die alone,

with no woman calling you to her embrace:

'Let me hold you to my breast,

I have plenty of room.

Let me wash the dirt of misery off your soul.'



A Prophetic poem by

Abdel Wahab Yousif- aka Latinos

One of 45 people who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea last year when their inflatable boat was shot at and caught fire.

Abdel was well known among young poets in Sudan.

From a poor family, he managed to achieve a bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Khartoum.

He wrote poetry and published his poems in Sudanese literary magazines throughout the Arab world.

Politically engaged, he was a member of the “Democratic Thought” movement, the “Reading for Change” project and an activist of the “Peace Support Youth Group” in Sudan.

Despite the dangers that lay ahead, he fled his home in a desperate search for a better, safer life.



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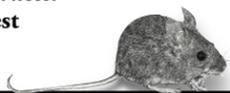
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*“We have to be militants for kindness,
subversive for sweetness &
radicals for tenderness.”*

~ Cornel West



Go to your broken heart.

If you think you don't have one, get one.

To get one, be sincere.

*Learn sincerity of intent by letting
life enter because you're helpless, really,
to do otherwise.*

*Even as you try escaping, let it take you
and tear you open*

like a letter sent

like a sentence inside

you've waited for all your life

though you've committed nothing.

Let it send you up.

Let it break you, heart.

*Broken-heartedness is the beginning
of all real reception.*

The ear of humility hears beyond the gates.

See the gates opening.

Feel your hands going akimbo on your hips,

your mouth opening like a womb

giving birth to your voice for the first time.

Go singing whirling into the glory

of being ecstatically simple.

Write the poem.

Jack Hirschman

b. 12/13/ 1933 d. 8/22/2021

“Resistance is its own reward.”



*"We are not happy natives...
the anger is actually a safety valve...
what's the alternative?"*

*I'd rather make art than, you know,
commit murder"*

Haunani-Kay Trask

b. 10/3/1949 d. 7/3/2021

Hawaiian activist, educator, author, and poet.
leader of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement