

# Homes Sit Empty; People Live in Tents

Gifford Hartman



1 On March 18, 2009, I visited “Tent City” in Sacramento, the capital of California. Homeless people had set up this camp. While I was there, I talked with people who had just been foreclosed on and evicted from homes.



2 On the way to Tent City, I drove through Sacramento. I saw a lot of houses for sale and apartments for rent. It literally seemed like every other lot had a sign staked into the ground out front.



3 The Governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger was greeting the locals, along with Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson (pictured above and in the next photo). I decided to talk to the Governor. I told him that he must put a



4 moratorium on evictions in California. He should allow homeless and evicted people to live in empty houses. He did not respond. As I left Tent City, I met a woman who had just moved there. She called out, “Don’t forget about us.”

## Do the Math

**How many evictions occur everyday** if there is, on average, an eviction every 13 seconds?

**What is the ratio of empty homes to homeless individuals** if there are 19,000,000 empty housing units and approximately 3,500,000 homeless people?

Gifford Hartman works at the Berkeley Reads Adult Literacy Program, and he teaches ESL at the City of Berkeley’s curbside recycling program and for SEIU health care workers.

**Sources:** Center for Responsible Lending, “Foreclosures,” <[www.responsiblelending.org/issues/mortgage](http://www.responsiblelending.org/issues/mortgage)>; <[www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com)>; <[www.nlchp.org/content/pubs/2007\\_Annual\\_Report2.pdf](http://www.nlchp.org/content/pubs/2007_Annual_Report2.pdf)>.

