



BY VINCE MAGGIORA/THE CHRONICLE

S.F. Mayor
Willie Brown
angrily
defended his
handling of
drug and
crime
problems in
Golden Gate
Park at a press
conference

Calls to Willie's World Come in Loud and Clear

It's A GOOD THING operators are standing by at the mayor's office, because if Willie Brown were taking the calls, boy, would you get an earful.

I found this out yesterday when the honorable mayor spent much of his press conference attacking me, my reporting, my sources, my credibility, my profession, my newspaper and my general reason for living.

There is good news in all this. Mostly, it shows the mayor listens when hundreds of people call to complain about problems in the city. He just wants you to know that, despite what the press re-

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On San Francisco

ports, *he was doing something about it all along.*

The mayor got many of his facts mixed up during his tirade about the press miscreants yesterday, but let me point out the things he did get right.

Golden Gate Park now has fewer homeless encampments and drug dens

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GARCIA: Keep Those Calls, Faxes and E-mails Coming, Folks

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than at any time in the past year — certainly since police and park officials stepped up double-time after The Chronicle reported on some park problems on Thursday.

Make no mistake about it, park crews have shut down most of the largest encampments and say they have identified 14 smaller camps that they intend to clean out within the week. The police have cracked down on most of the known drug-dealing camps, and since a sweep during the weekend, most of the junkies who congregated in the park have moved, for now, to parks unknown.

The mayor is mad at me because since I sent a bunch of people knocking on his door last week,

the message he was getting was that the park (Read: city) is not safe and that the city isn't doing a damn thing about it.

"When someone tells me I'm not doing my job, I take that very personally, and I'm going to go after that person," the mayor told that person during one of his calmer moments yesterday.

I never reported that the mayor wasn't doing his job, just that he does it so much better and faster when citizens call him up to share their pain. Lots of citizens have been calling, and yesterday, the mayor was clearly feeling pained.

But the mayor and I do disagree on a few key points.

He said yesterday that there have been no sweeps. But accord-

ing to everybody who works out there, there have been police sweeps of the park since last Thursday, targeting criminals known to occupy the premises. The problem seems to be with the politically unpopular word "sweeps." Let's call them individual cases of heightened police activity.

I reported that there were some dangerous parolees in the park (some who have since been arrested for parole violations). The mayor said there were parolees throughout the city, not just in Golden Gate Park. I'm more than willing to give him the nod there.

I reported that some of the junkies had been setting fires (including one huge one) in the park, and that the arson was targeted at

certain individuals. The mayor said there have probably been more fires in individual neighborhoods throughout the city, which makes me want to move closer to my neighborhood fire station.

The park's chief gardening supervisor told me last week that when they cleaned out a drug-dealing camp near the M.H. de Young Museum, officials recovered more than 1,000 hypodermic needles. Recreation and Park chief Joel Robinson told me the other day that they recovered only 300. On this I stand corrected.

Willie Brown's concerns appear to go deeper, though. When I told him that every fact I reported had been given to me by park police officers and park officials who patrol the city treasure every day,

he said it was my job NOT to report their findings.

Instead, he told me, I should only be talking to department heads like Robinson and Police Chief Fred Lau, presumably because the officers and gardeners working in the park don't know what they're talking about (nor do they report directly to Willie). This is where Willie's World and the real world part company, and I'm afraid I will be unable to heed his advice.

So the mayor wants you to know that the park is safe and that it's because department heads working under his steady direction have been grappling with the problems for some time. I want you to know that the park is safer because hundreds of people have made their concerns known to the one man who can make a difference — and sometimes very quickly.

The mayor has vowed to spare no resource in protecting and improving one of the world's great parks. His department heads have told me that they are under orders to keep the pressure up.

So now you know that he's listening, that he shares your concerns and feelings. He loves hearing from you. Drop him a note or give him a ring on my behalf at: 401 Van Ness Ave. (3rd floor), San Francisco 94102. E-mail: DaMayor@ci.sf.ca.us. Or call: (415) 554-6141.

Got a story to tell in San Francisco, Marin or Sonoma County? You can reach Ken Garcia at (415) 777-7152, fax him at (415) 896-1107, or send him a note at garcia@sfgate.com.

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