

Photographs of demonstrations and police responses range from arrests inside the park in 1989 to a clash in May 1991 when bottles flew through the air and police officers in visored helmets formed a line across Avenue B. He documents a major demonstration a week later in which a crowd marched on Avenue A at night to condemn the city's decision to shut the park and bulldoze part of it.

But the bulk of the book focuses on the lives of the homeless people who lived in the park or on the nearby streets.

In 1987 Sakamaki photographed homeless men and women eating a Christmas Day meal at a soup kitchen in a garden on East Ninth Street. In a 1989 image from Tompkins Square Park two men warm themselves next to a fire inside a trash can. A photograph from the same year shows homeless people and their supporters camping in the park with American flags. In a picture from October 1991, after the park's closing, a man sleeps in a bed on Avenue A in the pouring rain.

In the end Sakamaki's book is a valediction of sorts to lost people and a lost place that has been supplanted by a neighborhood that he finds rather sterile and uninspiring.

"We lost our culture," he said, "and we lost control of our dreams."

The New York Times Archives

## **Tent Made With Flags Set Up in Tompkins Sq.**

Published: July 23, 1989

About 200 homeless people built a tent made of four large American flags in Tompkins Square Park yesterday afternoon to protest a New York City Parks and Recreation Department policy prohibiting structures in the park where police officers and park workers destroyed 35 tents on July 5.

"Shelter is not being provided by America, so we've got to use the symbol of America to shelter ourselves," said Chris Henry, a homeless man who said he lived in the park. The homeless people and a half-dozen sympathizers also built four makeshift tents of plastic sheets and metal tubes.

The chief of the urban park service for the parks department, Oliver Spellman, told the protesters at 5 P.M. that the flags, strung on a wire between trees and staked to the ground, were considered a structure and violated park rules. "There comes a time when, after a reasonable amount of time for symbolic demonstration, they have to come down," he said. "We are looking to prevent a confrontation where there might be injuries."

On July 5, 31 protesters were arrested after 250 officers and park workers sealed the park and destroyed a shantytown that the homeless people had put up.