



## NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH IS SEPT. 15–OCT. 15

# Cenobio Oropeza — 54 years on the job and counting

Few jobs in the Bay Area are more labor-intensive than picking up trash. Each day, a collection worker stops at hundreds of locations and collects more than five tons of discarded material, all while navigating a large truck through city traffic.

When we see refuse collectors emptying our bins, we intuitively understand they perform tough jobs. Now, our many concerns about the coronavirus have given us an even greater appreciation for trash collectors.

Art for Essential Workers, a project of the local artist collective 100 Days of Action, includes a new mural honoring trash collectors as essential workers. The mural featuring Cenobio “Sonny” Oropeza was painted by his son Christo Oropeza.

The wall painting shows Sonny at age 22 carrying a metal packing can on his shoulder in 1968 while working for Sunset Scavenger, now called Recology. The artwork is located in San Francisco’s Mission District at the corner of Valencia and Liberty streets.

Sonny immigrated to San Francisco from Mexico in the ‘60s. He started working as a trash and recycling collector for Recology in 1966. He could have retired with a pension years ago but prefers to keep working. Sonny, 73, drives a collection truck and empties large metal bins in the Richmond District, Golden Gate Park, and at UCSF on Parnassus Avenue.

Christo posted a picture of the mural of his father on social media



Painted by Christo Oropeza, the mural’s inscription reads: **Gracias/Sacrificio y Dedicación. (Thank you/Sacrifice and Dedication.)**



**“Service is number one,” says Cenobio. “You have to satisfy the people. You have to keep the customers happy.”**

@orochristo and wrote: “To me, this symbolizes a representation of countless people, and specifically people of color, who are on the frontlines together with our brothers and sisters keeping a society functioning during dormant social and economic activity. With respect to all frontline and essential workers.”

Recology is an employee-owned company with a diverse workforce. Workers are paid a living wage and receive medical coverage and other benefits. While some cities across the country have reduced trash collection and recycling services in the wake of the outbreak, the refuse workers of San Francisco have shown

up in force throughout the pandemic and continue to complete their routes to keep San Francisco’s trash and recycling moving.

Many people are posting window signs in support of essential workers or leaving “thank you” notes on trash and recycling bins. Other San Franciscans wave or call out “thanks” when collectors arrive to empty their bins.

Such gestures are especially appreciated by essential workers, including Sonny, who are meeting the challenge of the coronavirus head-on to take care of their customers.

Way to go San Francisco trash collectors and recycling workers. Bravo Cenobio!

The best way to contact us is through email: [CustomerService@RecologySF.com](mailto:CustomerService@RecologySF.com)

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

# Sticks and leaves enrich quality compost

Food scraps such as coffee grounds, eggshells, and vegetable peelings are considered the stars of San Francisco’s curbside composting collection program, and for good reason. Food scraps are rich in nutrients and minerals, and, therefore, help make good quality compost that is used by local farms and vineyards.

But let’s also make our best effort to compost all garden and yard cuttings, including sticks and leaves, by placing them in our green curbside bins. Plants and trees pull nutrients and carbon from the air as they grow, and their cuttings improve the composting process when added to food scraps. The more varied the inputs, the better the final product.

Old leaves and twigs supply carbon to compost, while old lettuce leaves, vegetable peelings, and fruit rinds supply nitrogen.

Whether trimming a tree, sweeping up leaves, or pruning garden plants, please put all plant debris in your curbside composting bin. Doing so keeps plant matter out of landfills and helps provide key materials to make good quality compost that farmers use to grow our food.

Composting is better than magic because it is real. We turn old leaves into new lettuce and transform sticks from trimmed trees and plants into green beans.

It takes just sixty days to turn yard



**Be sure to compost all sticks and leaves in your curbside composting bin. Yard trimmings, together with food scraps, help make high-quality compost.**

trimmings into finished compost at outdoor compost facilities operated by Recology. The sticks and leaves we put in our green bins this fall will feed the soil on local farms next spring and help grow the crops we will get to eat next summer.

Garden and yard trimmings. Pull them out, clip them, and put them in your green bin. Using the green bin for yard waste means your foliage will appreciate the thinning, and you will help grow next year’s harvest of heirloom tomatoes.

## How to recycle household batteries

The need to handle household batteries properly is more important than ever because small batteries, many of which are lithium, are used in many products, including phones and toys. Rechargeable batteries are preferable over single-use batteries as they can be used many times.



Batteries can be hazardous and **must not** go in any trash, recycling, or composting bin.

- **Put used household batteries (AA, AAA, 9-volt, button, etc.) in a clear, sealed plastic bag and set it on top of the landfill (black) bin.** Your Recology collection driver will put the batteries in a special bucket so they can be sent to companies specializing in battery recycling. The outside casing is made into new metal products. The interior material is used in the manufacturing of new batteries.

- **Tape the ends of lithium batteries to help prevent a potential fire hazard.** This is very important because lithium batteries can retain charges for a long time and, if punctured, could create heat and even start a fire.

Apartment building managers can request a free orange battery collection bucket from Recology.

For more information, visit [Sfbatterysafe.org](http://Sfbatterysafe.org).

View our newsletter online in English, Spanish, and Chinese at [Recology.com/sfnewsletter](http://Recology.com/sfnewsletter). For up-to-date information on hours of operation, closures, services, and programs, go to [Recology.com](http://Recology.com).

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