

A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR **@home**



THE GUIDE

This guide is a resource to accompany **@home**, a documentary film with the powerful message that everyone has a story worth hearing. In fact, one story could change everything you think you know about homelessness.

Individuals and groups across the country can use this guide to support meaningful discussions on the film's deeply emotional content, as well as to promote engagement and action that can lead to positive change.

Take time to look through the guide before your screening or event. You can select which stories to focus on based upon the time you have available and the specific needs of your audience.

Sections include:

- How to host a discussion group
- Post-film general questions
- Stories from the film of people who represent different homelessness situations, in addition to:
 - Facts related to the individual's situation
 - Discussion questions that expand understanding of the key issues represented in the story
- Activities that engage viewers in further reflection and provide information and guidance for taking action
- Background information on the film and outreach campaign
- Resource links for further learning



@home

@home is a journey through the landscape of a forgotten America – the invisible communities of people living without permanent housing.

The film explores homelessness through the lens of activist Mark Horvath, as he talks with people across the country about their experiences living on the street and in shelters, who are finding their way back home.

Once homeless himself, Mark's storytelling platform, InvisiblePeople.tv, gives an online voice to those who are rarely heard.

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Produced by

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Website

athomedocumentary.org

Facebook

www.facebook.com/athomecampaign

Twitter

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YouTube webisodes

bit.ly/19FEAww

Run Time: 56 minutes

HOW TO HOST A SCREENING

Hosting a discussion group is an effective way to turn a film screening into an educational and engagement event. Whether you're screening the film in a large movie theatre, a church basement, or your backyard during a teen sleepover, there are basic steps you can take to make sure that the powerful messages of the film sink in after the lights go back up. Here are a few basic strategies for hosting a successful screening, such as the one pictured on the right, hosted by [Hack to End Homelessness](#) in Seattle.



Localize It.

Find a way to connect the stories of the people in the film to what's happening in your area. Invite a guest speaker who can speak knowledgeably and answer questions for your audience. This could include someone who leads your community's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, a leader from a nonprofit organization that works to end homelessness, or people who have experienced homelessness themselves.

Provide Opportunities for Reflection and Discussion.

Allow people in the audience to process what they've just seen. Once they have had a few moments to reflect, encourage them to participate in the discussion and share their reactions. Viewing the film is an emotional experience, and your audience members may find themselves reacting in a way they didn't expect. Sometimes it's better to break into smaller groups for in-depth conversation, rather than addressing only a few questions with a large group.

Turn Awareness Into Action.

After watching a film like this, people feel mobilized to act. Give them immediate ways to take action, so that you don't lose that momentum. You can give them a handout with a list of action steps, ask them to use social media to share reactions to the film during the event, or invite them to sign a pledge card and follow up with them later. There are many ways they can do something to make a difference.

Use the checklist on the next page to help you plan your screening and discussion group.



Lisa Gustaveson
@LisaGustaveson



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It's not about me, it's about us. Simple.
#homelessness can be solved.
@home_campaign @hack2end let's do it

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CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS

To make sure your screening is successful, follow these basic steps:

Pre-planning – at least 6 weeks out

- Choose a date and book the venue.
- Recruit screening partners and assign roles & responsibilities: MC, digital outreach, canvassing, press, event reception, etc.
- Recruit speakers/moderators/VIP attendees.

Audience Building – 4 weeks out

- Create a digital signup form for attendees (a Google form will do!).
- Custom design and print your **@home** screening fliers (use our templates and simply fill in your info).
- Create a social media calendar with updates and posts, including:
 - Sharable graphics (you can use photo and graphic assets provided in our digital screening kit).
 - Tweets using hashtag [#athome](#) and handles [@home_campaign](#) and [@invisiblepeople](#).

Event Planning – 3 weeks out

- Write/send email announcement and ask partners to share with their email lists.
- Draft event agenda.
- Plan reception: food, drink, equipment rentals (if applicable).
- Test DVD player, projector, microphones, and any other AV equipment needed for screening.
- Recruit volunteers and define their roles. Make sure everyone has a job.

Press Outreach – 10 days out

- Personally reach out to your media contacts.
- Send out press release to other targeted media outlets.

Final Push!

- Test your **@home** DVD.
- Send a reminder email and ramp up social media outreach.
- Confirm speakers/moderators/VIP attendees/volunteers.
- Coordinate with press for attendance and interviews.
- Print/copy literature about your organization, **@home** fliers, sign-up sheets, and discussion guides.

Event Day

Test the equipment before guests arrive:

- Cue up the film. Know how to turn the lights on and off.
- Try the microphones and show your speakers how to use them. Turn up the volume and make sure it can be heard once there's a hum of activity in the room.
- Walk around and make sure people will be able to see from all parts of the room.

Ask volunteers to:

- Collect email/phone number signups at the door.
- Set up station to sell your merchandise and **@home** DVDs.
- Run your own social media channels to keep conversation going online.
- Take photos and short videos of event highlights.
- Project your Twitter stream during reception/discussion.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Choose a few of these discussion questions to get the conversation going after the credits roll.

Perceptions and Awareness

1. When you met Mark in the film, could you tell he had experienced homelessness? Were you surprised? Why or why not?
2. What did you learn from this film about the circumstances that cause homelessness? What did you learn about possible solutions?
3. Did you discover anything unexpected about the kinds of people who are homeless? Can you imagine being in their situation?
4. Who does homelessness affect the most? In what ways? Has it affected you personally?

Compassion and Connection

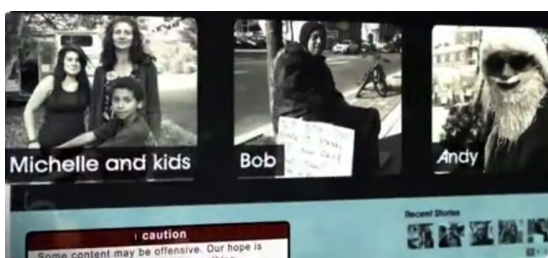
1. Which of the people did you most sympathize with or relate to? Why?
2. If you found yourself in circumstances like the people profiled in the film, what resources could you call upon, such as family, friends or savings? Where would you go? How long would your resources sustain you?
3. Neil Donovan of the National Coalition for the Homeless talks about Americans experiencing "compassion fatigue" at the same time that homelessness is becoming more visible. Have you ever experienced compassion fatigue? Does a film like this leave you feeling that fatigue, or do you feel motivated to help?
4. What part of the film moved you the most? Why?
5. After watching this film, how might you act differently when you come in contact with homeless people?

Reaction and Reflection

1. During a presentation in the film, Becky Kanis of 100,000 Homes shows a photo of 11 people who were homeless in the year 2000, and says that only two of them are alive today. Why do you think so many of them died? Had you ever thought about the lack of access to health care for people who are homeless and what impact it has on their lives? What do you think are the key risk factors for homeless people?
2. Dr. Sam Tsemberis says that homelessness is often viewed as a character issue rather than an economic issue. What does he mean by that? How do you think this affects perceptions of and advocacy for people who are homeless?
3. At the end of the film, we see a "where are they now" epilogue about some of the people in the film. How did those outcomes match or contradict your expectations?
4. Besides homelessness, what ties all these stories together?

Action and Advocacy

1. Mark uses social media throughout the film to promote his cause. Is social media new to you? Have you ever seen it used this way? How could you use social media to help tell the stories of people who are homeless or to help homeless people directly?
2. Take a look at Mark's InvisiblePeople.tv website. Why do you think it attracts such a large audience?
3. Did watching the film encourage you to take action to help end homelessness? If so, what are you planning to do? If not, what barriers are preventing you from doing something?
4. Who do you think would benefit from seeing this film? What can you do to get it to them?



COMMUNITY OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

The goal of our outreach campaign is to make this film widely available as a powerful tool to raise awareness of homelessness, dispel misperceptions and de-stigmatize people who are or have been homeless.

@home has been screening the film across the nation — in parks and libraries, and with nonprofit and service organizations, faith-based groups and community development organizations.

Building off of the narrative of the film — which highlights the power of storytelling and digital media for good — **@home's** engagement campaign includes three main components: social media trainings, community screenings, and a nationwide broadcast.

If you'd like to bring **@home** to your school, house of worship, office, or neighborhood group, email screenings@athomedocumentary.org.



Hannah Hunthausen
@hhunthausen



Wow. The **@home** documentary just floored me. It's not about me, it's about US. Community and intentional, sustained compassion. **@hack2end**

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Bryan Copley
@reblsfounder



@home_campaign - heavy hitting. Mark has hit home with this **#documentary**. The room is entranced (Seattle premier)



WA Housing Alliance
@WLIHA



"I miss being domestic..." There's something many of us who are housed take for granted. **#domesticity** **#h2eh** **#hack2endhomelessness** **@home**

Seattle, WA

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THE MOMS

Synopsis

Jean has been living in a weekly-rate motel with her husband and five kids for six months. They had jobs, a house and vehicles until she lost her job and had to live off their savings. She works full time at McDonalds, a job that does not pay enough to get them into more stable living. Her wishes are a home for her kids and a better job.

LaQuisha is in a shelter for homeless families with her inquisitive young daughter. A single mom, LaQuisha stayed with her own mother until she and her daughter had to move out.

Did you know ...

More than 1.6 million children in America are like Jean and LaQuisha's — homeless with their families. Homelessness has a profound impact on children. By the time they reach school age, most of these kids suffer physical, psychological, and emotional damage due to the circumstances that accompany episodes of homelessness. ([National Center on Family Homelessness](#))

Discussion Questions

1. One of the comments Mark reads from his [YouTube page](#) says that Jean's children should be taken away from her and that she should be sterilized. Why do you think homelessness evokes such a strong reaction? Is being homeless a reason to remove a child from a family? What benefits are there to keeping the family together?
2. Jean talks frankly in front of her children. How does the lack of private space affect families who are homeless? In watching their parents struggle to afford housing, what lessons do you think the children are learning about the world? In what ways might these lessons be harmful? How might they be beneficial?
3. If you were in Jean's situation and a minimum-wage job was all you could find, would you be able to support your family? If not, what would you do? What might happen?
4. If you were to lose your home, are there people who would take you in? If so, how long do you think they would let you stay?



"I consider anywhere that I'm with my children our home, so I try not to use the word 'homeless'... At some point, when this is all happening, you feel like a failure. Then you think, you know what, there are still people who are worse off than you. There are people living under bridges. So I'm very grateful." – Jean in a motel, St. Louis, Missouri

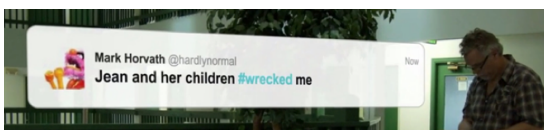


"I was scared at first, but as I got to know and grow with people in the same predicament as I am, I changed a lot ... I wanna better myself. I wanna succeed in life. I wanna be somebody." – LaQuisha, in a shelter, Detroit, Michigan

Activity:

Form small groups and do one or both of the following activities:

- You are parents in a rotating shelter like LaQuisha's or in temporary housing like Jean. List some ways that you would go about creating a sense of "home" for your children and family.
- You have three children and an unemployed spouse, and you are working for the federal minimum wage of \$7.25/hour. Create a rough budget for your week. Would you be able to afford health insurance? Rent?



THE SUPPORTIVE FAMILY MEMBER

Synopsis

Mark visits his childhood home to see his mother. During the visit, we learn that he was once addicted to drugs and became homeless. His mother says that Mark was a nice kid, but after the age of nine, he was the "devil on wheels." She knew Mark's drug addiction would lead to homelessness. During the time that Mark wandered through the San Fernando Valley "thinking I was Jesus Christ," Mark's mom allowed him one phone call a day, which he used to ask for money. As a loving mother, she feared for her child's life and did everything she could to help him — but there was only so much she could do.

Did you know ...

According to the [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#), homelessness itself can exacerbate chronic medical conditions or lead to debilitating substance abuse problems. When someone falls on hard times, a supportive community of family and friends can be an important safety net to help beat substance abuse problems, such as those Mark once faced.

Discuss

1. Have you ever seen a loved one make bad decisions that led to difficult circumstances? Did you try to intervene? If not, why not? If so, what did you do and what happened? At what point do parents need to let children struggle through difficulties on their own?
2. What would you do to help a loved one in need? Does your answer change if they are facing homelessness? If they have a drug addiction? What would helping look like? How would it impact your daily life and your other family members? Have you had the experience of trying to help a child or family member struggling with addiction and/or homelessness? If so, what were your experiences like?
3. If you have a family member or friend who has fallen on hard times, what help could you offer? Would you add conditions to your offer? Is there an apology that needs to be made, or forgiveness that needs to be extended?



Mark's mother: "It almost killed me."

Mark: "I'm sorry. That's one of my regrets, what it did to you."

Activity:

Imagine a family member who is homeless or is in a precarious situation calls and asks you for money:

How do you respond? What do you do for the person?

Now imagine this person calls you every day. How might your response or actions change?



THE TENT CITY ORGANIZER

Synopsis

Caleb is the organizer for a tent city, Camp Take Notice. He was a paramedic in his twenties but lost his job because of his depression. He was embarrassed and moved away from his friends and family, so that they would not see him in that condition. Caleb and his camp mates said that if you're younger and healthier with any source of income, you're less likely to receive help from social service agencies. Caleb is proud of Camp Take Notice and finds comfort in the presence of its members. He exhibits resourcefulness and perseverance.

Did you know ...

Serious mental illness can disrupt people's ability to carry out essential aspects of daily life, such as self-care and household management. Mental illness may also prevent people from forming and maintaining stable relationships or cause them to misinterpret the motives or actions of others. This often results in irrational behavior, such as pushing away caregivers, family, and friends, who may be the only force keeping them from becoming homeless. Individuals living with a mental disorder are much more likely to become homeless than the general population (Library Index, 2009).

Discuss

1. Would you rather stay in a homeless shelter or in a tent city? Why?
2. Camp Take Notice has a firm policy against any alcohol use. What assumptions do you have about the relationship between homelessness and alcohol and/or substance abuse? What is the basis for your beliefs?
3. Do you think tent cities are a good solution to homelessness? Is there one in your community? What does it say about our country that tent cities are on the rise?
4. What have you learned about the relationship between mental illness and homelessness? Substance abuse and homelessness?



"When I lost my job, I became ashamed and embarrassed of my dependent status. I didn't wanna be around my friends and family in that condition. I didn't want people to see me that way, so I decided that if I moved at a distance, I could be dysfunctional where nobody knew who I was." – Caleb

Activity:

Break into small groups. Imagine you are planning to establish a homeless encampment.

Draft a code of conduct for members.

Discuss each rule in terms of:

- How it ensures safety and a positive community
- How it might act as a barrier to restrict some people from entering the camp

Discuss what should happen to the people who aren't allowed in.



THE POLICY EXPERT

Synopsis

Synopsis: Dr. Sam Tsemberis is the founder & CEO of Pathways to Housing, a leader in the “housing first” movement. This model works to get homeless people into housing immediately, and then helps them with medical, mental health or substance abuse problems once they’re housed. Dr. Tsemberis says we tend to attribute poverty to something about the people who are living in poverty, and that we build a system of support that is based on character improvement, when really, it’s a problem of economic disparity.

Did you know ...

People who are chronically homeless are often refused housing because they are not considered “housing-ready” due to substance abuse or mental health issues. The problem is that there may be very limited services available for them to get the treatment they need. According to the [U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness](#), programs like Pathways Housing First, 1811 Eastlake in Seattle, and other housing first programs show that residents had high rates of retaining their housing. What’s more, housing first programs for adults experiencing chronic homelessness realize substantial savings in public costs for hospital care (emergency room and in-patient hospitalizations), sobering centers, shelters, ambulance services, jails and other services.

Discuss

1. Are there homeless people in your local community? If so, how has your awareness of their presence changed over time? How do you think your awareness will be different after seeing the film? Have you ever felt “used to” seeing homelessness?
2. Why do you think that offering housing is so effective as a first step?
3. Does it bother you that there are programs that allow people with drug or alcohol addiction to get into housing? What are some arguments for and against making people get “clean” before they’re allowed into housing?
4. What socio-political structures, conditions and policy decisions do you think affect poverty and joblessness in America? In your own city? If you could change one socio-political structure or condition to fight poverty and homelessness, what would it be?

“We have a very serious problem in recognizing homelessness in this country. People have grown up in America thinking homelessness is a part of the landscape and we don’t expect that it’s solvable.”



“Housing is the most important thing to a homeless person, regardless of mental illness or addiction or anything else. And maybe once they’re housed, they’ll consider – maybe treatment, maybe reconnecting with family, maybe looking for a job. But the first response was always housing.” – Dr. Sam Tsemberis

Activity:

Cities and states across the country, including Madison, Wisconsin, California, and Illinois have passed legislation called Homeless Bills of Rights, protecting homeless individuals from discrimination and criminalization.

Visit the National Coalition for the Homeless (<http://nationalhomeless.org/campaigns/bill-of-right/>) to see if your area has such legislation in place, and if not, how you can help advocate to your legislators for better protections for the homeless.

HOMELESS YOUTH

Synopsis

We don't know much about their circumstances, but the youth we meet in the film present a different face of the homeless population.

- Jamir, a young man in Chicago. Despite being homeless since age 13, Jamir is a senior in high school, with his graduation day in sight.
- A young man, who says it is his 18th birthday and his first day being homeless.
- A woman in her late teens or early twenties, who had been walking the streets in Los Angeles with a large suitcase. When she arrives at the shelter and Mark questions her, she breaks into sobs and asks for help.

Did you know ...

- Homeless youth, also known as unaccompanied youth, are young people, ages 13 to 24, who lack parental, foster or institutional care. On any given night there are approximately 1.3 million homeless youth living unsupervised on the streets, in abandoned buildings, with friends or with strangers.
- Many youth become homeless when they "age out" and their foster parents no longer get funding to support them. As many as 40 percent of homeless youth have been in foster care.
- Homeless youth are at a higher risk for physical abuse, sexual exploitation, mental illness, substance abuse and death. It is estimated that 5,000 unaccompanied youth die each year.

Discuss

1. What factors do you think lead to a young person becoming homeless?
2. Imagine being in foster care and forced into homelessness on your 18th birthday, even if you were still in high school. Could you have survived on your own? How would you cope on that first day?
3. Did you ever talk about running away as a teen? Did you think of it as a form of homelessness? What did you imagine it would be like? How does that match your understanding of homelessness now? Where would you have run to, and what would you have needed to survive?
4. Do you ever worry for the safety of young people you see who seem to be living on the street? At what point would you feel like you would want to intervene?
5. Thousands of homeless kids are still going to school. What are some of the challenges faced by kids who are coping with homelessness, while trying to keep up with school and maintain social lives?



"Part of being homeless is being lonely, and that's one of the worst things in the world for me ... Me being homeless really gave me a wakeup call to life... Being homeless and going to school builds character." – Jamir

Activity:

Find a partner and each takes a role.

One plays Mark (or someone like Mark), who does an interview.

One is "18" and out on the street for the first night.

"Mark" asks "18" about his/her story, how he can help, etc.

"18" asks "Mark" about the things a young person would want to know about how to survive on the street.

Work with a group to create a program that provides housing to youth and young adults. What kind of services will you provide? Think of practical options that could help youth and young adults make the transition from living in a group shelter or on the street to a permanent housing situation.

THE RECOVERING ADDICT

Synopsis

Mark speaks to a man waiting in line outside a shelter in Los Angeles. The man says he's been homeless for five years. He's tired of being on the streets and addicted, he says, and he wants to go to rehab to get clean and off the streets.

Did you know ...

While substance abuse certainly contributes to homelessness, substance abuse can also be a result of homelessness rather than a cause. People who are homeless often turn to drugs and alcohol to cope with their situations. They use substances in an attempt to attain temporary relief from their problems.

Breaking an addiction is difficult for anyone, especially for substance abusers who are homeless. To begin with, motivation to stop using substances may be low. For many homeless people, survival is most important, and finding food and shelter take a higher priority than drug counseling. Many homeless people have also become estranged from their families and friends. Without a social support network, recovering from a substance addiction is very difficult.

Discuss

1. What assumptions do you have about the connection between homelessness and substance abuse? How did you form your opinions about this?
2. Do you grapple with whether to give money to a person who appears to be homeless? Why do it? Why not? What kind of appeals or signs make you inclined to give?
3. What do you do when someone who appears to be homeless asks for money? What influences your decision whether or not to give?
4. How would you cope with being homeless? Do you think you would turn to drugs and alcohol? If you had to sleep outside tonight and you had the option to consume a substance that would make sleeping easier, would you?

Activity:

Find out what kind of services are available in your community for people who are homeless and dealing with substance abuse. Are there opportunities for volunteering at organizations that provide these services?

Form small groups to discuss the dangers and traumas you would expect to experience if homeless and how you would manage potential risks and problems. What are the long-term effects of tactics to deal with these harms, such as substance abuse? How would you help a loved one, or yourself, recover?



"Dude, I've been on the streets for five years, bro. I wanna get out of here, man. And if I'm out here, I can't do it [recover from substance abuse]. Easy access."

Mark's reply: "Who wants to do homeless sober, right? It's hard to do homeless sober."

THE VETERAN

Synopsis

Paul has been homeless off and on for 10 years. He grew up in an orphanage for the first 10 years of his life — and he is an honorably discharged military veteran. He visited the emergency room four times in one year because of violent confrontations on the streets. He says he is slowly losing his mind, and all he wants is a place to stay.

Did you know ...

Though most Americans find it unimaginable, on any given night, more than 300,000 military veterans are living on the streets or in shelters in the U.S.

Veterans are twice as likely as other Americans to become chronically homeless.

Primary causes of homelessness among veterans include lack of income due to limited education and lack of transferable skills from military to civilian life (especially true of younger veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan), combat-related physical health issues and disabilities, combat-related mental health issues and disabilities, substance abuse problems that interfere with job retention, weak social networks due to problems adjusting to civilian life, and lack of services. With the growing number of women entering military service, the number of homeless female veterans is also on the rise.

Discuss

1. How do you feel about the fact that so many homeless men are military veterans? Do you think our country owes veterans a place to live, at the very least?
2. Had you considered that living on the streets could expose you to violence, in addition to the other hardships? Do you think a person has to harden to be able to survive the streets? Is it possible to recover from that hardness?
3. Paul admits that he's spent some time in jail. How do you think that affects his ability to find housing? If you were a landlord, would you be willing to rent an apartment to someone who has been in jail?



"I miss being domestic. I'm kind of losing that feeling as time goes by and I'm kind of worried about that. I don't wanna be like some of these people out here, they've been out here for years and are getting used to it." – Paul

Activity:

Find out if your community hosts a "Stand Down" event where homeless veterans can get connected with housing and services. More information is at: <http://www.va.gov/homeless/standdown.asp>

With a partner, write a letter to your Congressional representatives with the message: "Not Another Homeless Veteran." Give a personal example of veteran homelessness you've seen and why it bothers you.

THE HEALTH CARE OUTREACH WORKER

Synopsis

Dr. Jim Withers goes out at night and makes “house calls” for people who are homeless, bringing his backpack full of medication and tools. In the film, we see him on his nightly rounds, treating people, like one woman who’s had a cough for several weeks. Just as important as the health care he provides, he seems to truly care about each person he helps. This outreach can be lifesaving for people living on the street.

Did you know ...

Poor health can contribute to being homeless, and being homeless can lead to poor health. Limited access to health care can make it worse. That’s why the health of homeless people in the United States is worse than that of the general population, according to the National Institutes of Health. Common health problems include mental health problems, substance abuse problems, bronchitis and pneumonia, problems caused by being outdoors, and wound and skin infections.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think motivates a person like Dr. Withers? Why does he do it?
2. Did you ever think about what happens to homeless people when they get sick? Do you think there is a benefit to our community if people who are homeless have access to health care when they need it?
3. Is health care a human right that everyone should have access to?
4. If you were a health care professional, would you volunteer your time after work to do what Dr. Withers does? Why or why not? Would it be frustrating to work hard to help people get well, knowing that the conditions they live in may make them sick again?



“There’s a real disconnect between our brothers and sisters who are sleeping on the streets, or in these very difficult conditions, and the whole society ... They don’t know who to turn to, they don’t have insurance and they get rejected by the health system. They don’t actually believe anyone cares enough, so they’ve given up ... It’s time for us to get out of the hospital, get out of wherever we’re in and start talking to people, listening to them and solving problems with them. You have to deal with the reality of someone else. Not have them come to your reality.” – Dr. Withers

Activity

The next time you visit your dentist, ask him or her if she would donate toothbrushes or toothpaste samples to a shelter. Host a collection drive at your school or church.

Imagine you are creating a “Move-in Kit” for individuals who are being housed for the first time in five years. What are the items you would include to help them turn their house into a home?

LAID OFF AND EVICTED

Synopsis

Robert worked for a property management company for four years. It came with housing, so when he lost his job, he had 72 hours to get off the property, and he became homeless. He says never thought he would be sleeping on the streets. Robert seems shocked to be in this situation and is very emotional. We don't know how long he's been homeless, but he does not seem to be one of the people who has gotten used to it, or hardened. It seems very fresh and painful to him.

Did you know ...

- Because of the recession, America is currently experiencing the highest levels of long-term unemployment since we first started recording statistics in 1948.
- Even when you're employed, the high cost of housing can be prohibitive. There is no city in the U.S. where a person who works full time at minimum wage can afford an apartment.

Discussion Questions

1. How long would you be able to stay in your home if you or a family member lost a job?
2. If you had 72 hours to vacate your home, what would you do?
3. Have you been severely affected by the recession, job loss, or decreasing or stagnating wages? What has that experience been like for your family?
4. Robert says: "This isn't our lifestyle." This contradicts the stereotype that people are homeless because they choose to be. How many people in the film, do you think, would choose to be homeless rather than have a safe, healthy, affordable home? How many people of all those who are homeless would make that choice?
5. Why do you think the director chose to make this story the last in the film?

Activity

Take the SNAP Food Stamp Challenge and try to exist for a week on the allotment provided by food stamps. <http://frac.org/initiatives/snapfood-stamp-challenges/>

Learn something about what it is like to live in poverty:

Visit <http://playspent.org/>, an interactive site, where you move through a range of budgeting decisions and face the challenge of getting through one month living at poverty level.



"[My three wishes are] for everybody to have a place to stay where we can gather our thoughts and think about what we can do. If anyone's listening, that's all. It's not about me, it's about us ... This isn't our lifestyle. We just want a place to go." – Robert

ABOUT THE FILM

@home follows Mark Horvath on a cross-country road trip as he shares his struggle to make homelessness in America visible. Mark's work has garnered the attention of social media activists, politicians, advocates, and the American public; he's become a respected, independent voice on the issue of homelessness. He visits homeless communities that are springing up all over the country in tents, by-the-week motels, and storm drains. It is through this lens that **@home**, a documentary film produced by Kindling Group and See3 Communications, explores the reality of homelessness in America today.

- Website: <http://www.athomedocumentary.org>
- Kindling Group's website: <http://www.kindlinggroup.org>
- YouTube webisodes: <http://bit.ly/19FEAvw>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/athomecampaign>
- Twitter: https://twitter.com/home_campaign

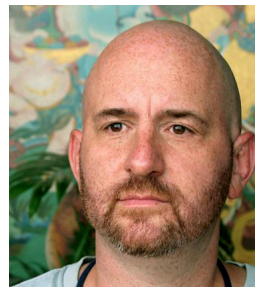
Susanne Suffredin, Director & Editor



Susanne Suffredin is a filmmaker whose celebrated career spans nonfiction, narrative, and commercial genres with a keen emphasis on long-form documentaries. Suffredin's association with Kindling Group includes her most recent directorial effort **@home**, a moving, clear-eyed look at poverty and homelessness in America. Her prior work includes

The Calling, a two-part series she co-produced and edited, and which aired as part of the PBS program Independent Lens; and Do No Harm, an account of whistleblower challenging health care and insurance fraud which she co-produced and edited. An early collaborator with Kartemquin Films, Suffredin was post-production supervisor of the groundbreaking film, Hoop Dreams, winner of the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the 1994 Sundance Film Festival and Academy Award Nominee for Best Editing. Additional projects include the award-winning 5 Girls as editor and contributing producer; the Emmy nominated Higher Goals as co-editor; and assistance with several of Kartemquin's seminal labor films, including The Last Pullman Car.

Danny Alpert, Producer



Danny Alpert is an award-winning producer and director, and leader in using media for change. As Executive Director of Kindling Group, his documentaries (**@home**, The Calling, Do No Harm, A Doula Story) have aired on HBO, PBS, and around the world, sparking engagement campaigns with enduring impact.

As co-founder of See3 Communications, Alpert's online media and campaigns for social causes have advanced the work of organizations like UNICEF, World Wildlife Fund, Planned Parenthood, American Cancer Society, and the Kellogg Foundation. The cross-pollination of Danny's documentary and interactive work fuels innovation and his belief in the power media as a tool for change.

ABOUT MARK HORVATH



"One of my unconscious driving forces is I'm trying to solve homelessness in the next 5, 10 years, so I don't end up on the streets." – Mark Horvath

In 2008, Mark Horvath, known to many as [@hardlynoraml](#) on Twitter, set out to film the stories of America's homeless people and share them with as many people as possible on his website, [InvisiblePeople.tv](#). Since then, he has become an internationally recognized activist and ambassador for the millions of individuals and families who reside in shelters, motels and tents, along the streets and under highway bridges across the country.

Mark has been featured in and on the L.A. Times, CNN, CBS, Mashable.com and NPR. He's spoken at a number of conferences and events, including the Geneva Forum on Social Change, Blog World, the U.S. Department of State's Tech@State, Gnomedex, 140 Character Conference, Nonprofit Technology Conference and SxSW. The Huffington Post named him one of 11 Twitter activists you should follow. YouTube gave InvisiblePeople.tv unprecedented exposure allowing Horvath to curate YouTube's homepage for a day.

Mark was the first nonprofit leader to speak at Twitter, Inc. In 2011, Mark was commissioned by Canadian Government to travel to 24 Canadian cities and help champion the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. Mark has consulted for Los Angeles Police Department, City of San Francisco, and USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism, among many others.

Website: <http://invisiblepeople.tv/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/hardlynoraml> and <https://twitter.com/invisiblepeople>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/invisiblepeopletv>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/invisiblepeopletv>

THE BACKSTORY

I first met Mark Horvath in a little taqueria off of Hollywood Boulevard near his apartment in Los Angeles, the day before our filming began. We started talking, and at one point he said rather abruptly: "You don't know anything about social media, you're not a homeless expert, and you know nothing of my work. Why are you making this film?"

It was a good question, one that would take me the next three years to answer fully. The next day we drove from L.A. to Las Vegas in a car donated by Ford for the road trip I was there to document. We talked almost the whole way to Las Vegas — well, Mark talked, and I listened. I couldn't understand half of what he was talking about, but I was struck by the passion and energy of this guy and his crazy plan. He was going to end homelessness in this country and maybe even around the world. And he was going to do it using social media and YouTube.

The next day we went into the storm drains under Las Vegas to interview the homeless community living there, and I was hooked. For the next three years I traveled with Mark to cities and towns across this country documenting his work and the stories of those people caught in the crisis of being homeless in America.

I give enormous credit to Mark Horvath for the work he's doing, and I admire how, after being homeless himself, he's chosen to devote himself to exposing the realities of homelessness to us all. Mark is an expert at connecting to people quickly, no matter what their circumstances, and this immediate connection adds an unfiltered power to his interviews. He posts the interviews to InvisiblePeople.tv, the site he created to share stories and start a conversation around this issue.

I'm so proud of the way **@home** exposes misconceptions about being homeless and shares the emotion and dignity of those caught in its grasp. This is an issue that often falls through the cracks. It's a complex problem, but as I learned from my time with Mark and others, there are solutions. Around the country, efforts are being made to put an end to homelessness and real change is happening. It was exciting to learn and share that as part of the film's message.

We end **@home** with Robert, one of Mark's most powerful interviews. It's very matter-of-fact, and leaves you in awe at the power and beauty of his words. When he says, "If anybody's listening...", that got me, because the whole film is about learning to listen. I knew Robert was the last thing I wanted to leave in viewers' minds. If we really listen to people like Robert, change can happen. I hope you are as moved watching **@home** as I was making it.

- Susanne Suffredin



IN CLOSING ...

Toward the end of **@home**, Mark Horvath says: "The number-one thing I want people to know about homelessness is that we can solve it."

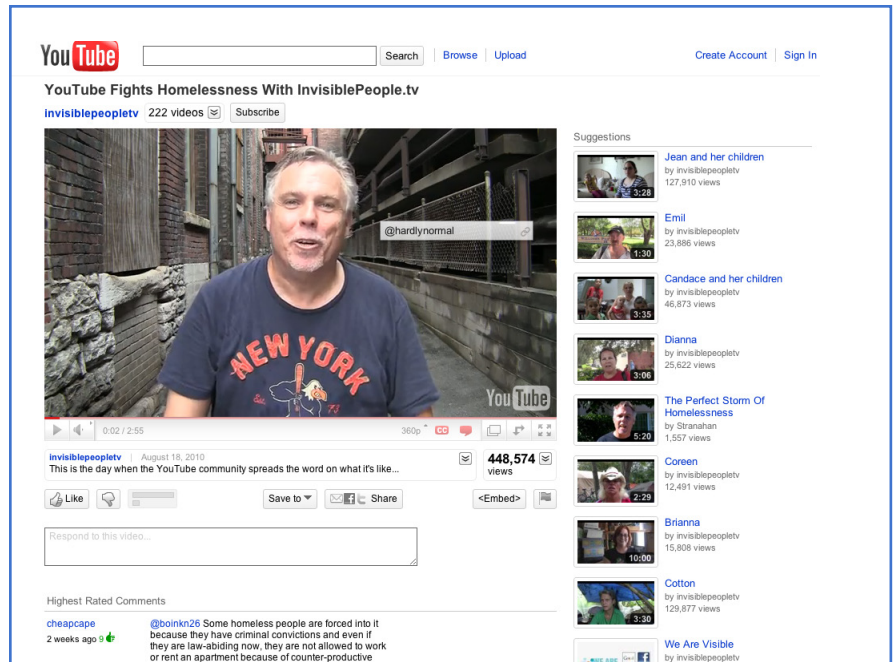
It may seem daunting. Think of all the faces and stories on Mark's site, InvisiblePeople.tv and all the stories we hear in **@home**. These are just a fraction of the millions of people experiencing homelessness in our country.

- They may be homeless because they were born into generational poverty, or because they experienced trauma in childhood that stacked the deck against them.
- Maybe they were children or teens left without a home, because their parents experienced financial difficulty or other household upheaval, or they were rejected because of their gender identity, or they aged out of foster care.
- They could be immigrants, who fled war and human rights violations in their home country hoping for a better life here, only to face more struggle.
- Or, perhaps they were thriving as adults, only to get hit with lack of affordable housing, a medical emergency, the onset of mental illness, death of a spouse, job loss, domestic violence, identity theft, natural disaster or many other difficulties that can lead to homelessness.

As Mark shows us, the reasons may surprise us. We probably wouldn't even conceive of some of them unless Mark had reached out to make homelessness visible.

What will it take for us to solve homelessness? It's going to take more than the people who work for nonprofit service providers and advocacy organizations, more than the people who are experiencing homelessness. All of us need to work together to embrace Mark's vision. That's why Mark is such a mighty force: He appeals to both the people who already felt compassion about ending homelessness, and those who arrived there via a different route, by walking with him.

And that's why watching **@home** is such a powerful experience. We're very grateful to have it as part of our advocacy toolkit.



RESOURCES

If you are interested in learning more about homelessness and poverty, the following websites, documents and organizations could prove helpful.

Websites:

[National Alliance to End Homelessness](#) publishes an annual “State of Homelessness in America” report. Find the most current version in the site’s library section.

[Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity](#)

[United Way](#)

[National Center on Family Homelessness](#)

[National Law Center on Poverty and Homelessness](#)

[National Coalition for the Homeless](#)

@home and Invisible People:

- Visit www.athomedocumentary.org for more information about @home.
- To follow Mark’s activities with InvisiblePeople.tv and more, see the information on page 17.

Other Films about Homelessness:

[American Winter](#), the HBO documentary about the irony of so many American families sliding into homelessness and poverty in the richest nation on earth.

[Homeless: The Motel Kids of Orange County](#), another HBO documentary, about working-class families who are priced out of housing and living in cheap motels in the shadow of Disneyland.

[Inocente](#), the Academy Award-winning documentary about an unstoppable teenage Latina artist who was homeless with her family.

[The Homestretch](#), a documentary that follows three homeless teens as they fight to stay in school, graduate and build a future.

[American Vagabond](#), a documentary of runaway queer youth living in the shadows of the promised city (San Francisco).

This guide was produced by the Project on Family Homeless and the Faith & Family Homelessness Project at Seattle University in cooperation with Kindling Group. For more information about homeless and vulnerable families, please visit us at www.su-familyhomelessness.org and www.faithandfamilyhomelessness.org.

