

Homelessness Reflection Guide

Definition:

It is important to recognize that understanding homelessness requires a grasp of several social issues: poverty, affordable housing, disability, and others. Homelessness is simply when people or households are unable to acquire and/or maintain housing they can afford.

Statistics:

- There are **643,067 people** experiencing homelessness on any given night in the United States.
- 12 percent of the homeless population are veterans.
- About 25 percent of the homeless population has serious mental illness, including chronic depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia.
- 46 percent of homeless respondents reported having an alcohol use problem in the past year.
- 38 percent reported a problem with drug use in the past year.
- 42 percent of the homeless population is African-American.

Resources:

- USA Today news story about child homelessness:
 - <http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2011-12-12/homeless-children-increase/51851146/1>
- USA Today news story about religious reliefs of homelessness:
 - <http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/story/2012-03-07/homeless-prisoners-buddhist-art-rehab/53400632/1>
- The month of November is National Homelessness and Hunger Awareness Month
 - <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/11/01/youth-homelessness-awareness-month/341661.html>
 - <http://www.nctsnet.org/resources/public-awareness/national-homeless-youth-awareness-month>
- A report from the National Coalition for the Homeless on the criminalization of homelessness:
 - http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/crimreport/2006_index.html
- The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness report on alternatives to criminalization:
 - http://www.usich.gov/issue/alternatives_to_criminalization
- What do these publications make you think about homelessness?

- What is the best method of dealing with this issue?
- Taking into consideration the above characteristics of a homeless person (addicted, mentally ill, veteran, African-American), do you think we as Christians have an obligation to care for these individuals?

What Now: Resources for Further Engagement

- Degage Ministries:
 - <http://www.degageministries.org/>
 - provides help to homeless individuals in Grand Rapids' Heartside Neighborhood.
- Heartside Ministry:
 - <http://www.heartside.org/>
 - began in 1983 as an outreach center stemming from a household before blossoming into the multi-building ministry center it is today. Heartside provides programs such as Adult Education, Computer Skills, Talking Groups, and an Art's Space.
- Mel Trotter Ministries:
 - <http://www.meltrotter.org/>
 - located downtown serves meals, offers addiction help, and provides housing for homeless individuals in Grand Rapids.
 - Mission statement: Mel Trotter Ministries exists to demonstrate the compassion of Jesus Christ toward the hungry, homeless and hurting of the greater Grand Rapids area.
- National Alliance to End Homelessness:
 - <http://www.endhomelessness.org/>

If you have any suggestions or comments on what we can improve, please contact us at slc@calvin.edu or 616-526-6455.



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