

# LEAD ME HOME



A DISCUSSION PRIMER TO GUIDE CONVERSATION  
ON ENDING HOMELESSNESS



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

3

## OVERVIEW

About the film  
From Filmmakers Jon Shenk and Pedro Kos  
Using **Lead Me Home** in Your Community

7

## EVENT PLANNING

Checklist for Organizing  
Tips for Moderating Conversations

9

## BEFORE SCREENING

Warm-Up Questions  
Background  
A (Very Brief) Historical Frame  
Addressing Common Misconceptions  
Terminology

15

## POST-SCREENING CONVERSATION

Documentary Debrief  
Revisiting Stories  
Consider Solutions

24

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn More About Organizations in **Lead Me Home**  
Sample VI-SPDAT Interview Questions

# OVERVIEW

## ABOUT THE FILM

In **Lead Me Home**, tents become bedrooms; trucks become washrooms; parks become kitchens. Love occurs, as does strife and violence. People make homes for themselves wherever they end up. When directors Pedro Kos and Jon Shenk set out to tackle the subject of homelessness, they had one goal: to humanize the experience, in whatever form that might take. The pair set out to depict the stories of people living on the street who, were it not for a vast set of unfortunate circumstances—addiction, mental illness, sexual abuse, homophobia, healthcare costs, disability—would be living no differently from those sleeping comfortably mere blocks or even just floors away. In the shadow of boundless real estate development proliferating in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle, Kos and Shenk filmed the daily lives of more than two dozen subjects over three years to provide a slice-of-life portrayal of what it's like to experience homelessness in America today. Conceived as a two-part visual symphony shot in distinct production periods, the film opens a window into a parallel world hiding in plain sight and challenges the audience to feel the scale, scope and diversity of unsheltered America.

**Lead Me Home** marks the first time Emmy winners Kos and Shenk have co-directed together and is a co-production of Netflix and Actual Films, produced by Bonni Cohen, Serin Marshall, and Richard Berge.



**“IT FEELS GOOD TO BE OFF  
THE STREETS,  
I’LL TELL YOU THAT.”**

- Luis, *Lead Me Home*



## FROM FILMMAKERS JON SHENK AND PEDRO KOS

In 2016 we read a *New York Times* opinion piece written by Dan Duane—who would go on to be a story consultant on our film—that influenced us a great deal. Like a lot of us, Dan had grown used to the homeless population living near where he lived and had the typical response we think a lot of people have, which is some fear. And when he started writing about it and spending time in homeless encampments, he had an epiphany: a faucet on the side of the building became a kitchen, a park bench became a living room, a patch of grass in a median became a campground.

That made so much sense to us, and we realized that if we suddenly found ourselves without a home, we would do what human beings do, which is to try to figure out a way to create some sanctuary for ourselves so that we could sleep, so that we could eat, so that we can go to the bathroom, so that we can socialize and have safety. And so that remained a North Star for us throughout the filming, to create visual language that would allow the audience to be reminded that the cycle of the day for those of us who are fortunate enough to have homes to go to at the end of the day is actually not that dissimilar to the cycle of people on the streets, in terms of what we aim to achieve. Living in San Francisco and LA, we often see people experiencing homelessness in our day-to-day lives. Often, people simplify the issue, and cast blame in a way that dehumanizes those on the streets. We aimed to make a film which would reflect the complexity of the issue. More importantly, we wanted to show how each individual experiencing homelessness has a different story. We have enormous respect for people who work in the trenches in an attempt to solve the underlying problems that lead to homelessness, but we felt strongly that we could contribute by reminding the audience of the range of human experience out there. **Lead Me Home** is a personal depiction of this giant, complex problem which is national, political, and has emerged as a result of health care, housing, and tax policy history going back decades. That's where it started.

As we began the journey of making the film back in 2017, we met with different organizations working in the homelessness space, from shelters, to supportive housing, to social workers, law authority, and city officials. More importantly, we were lucky enough to meet and connect with a number of extraordinary people from all walks of life who were experiencing or had experienced homelessness. We shot each of the subjects in the film going about their daily lives and then constructed the film as the experience of two days, from sunrise to sunset, really focusing on the things that unite us all as human beings. We wake up, we do our morning routines, we eat, we do our laundry, all these everyday things we all have to do. We really focused on depicting these core human experiences that we all share, but from a perspective that we have been marginalizing and making invisible.

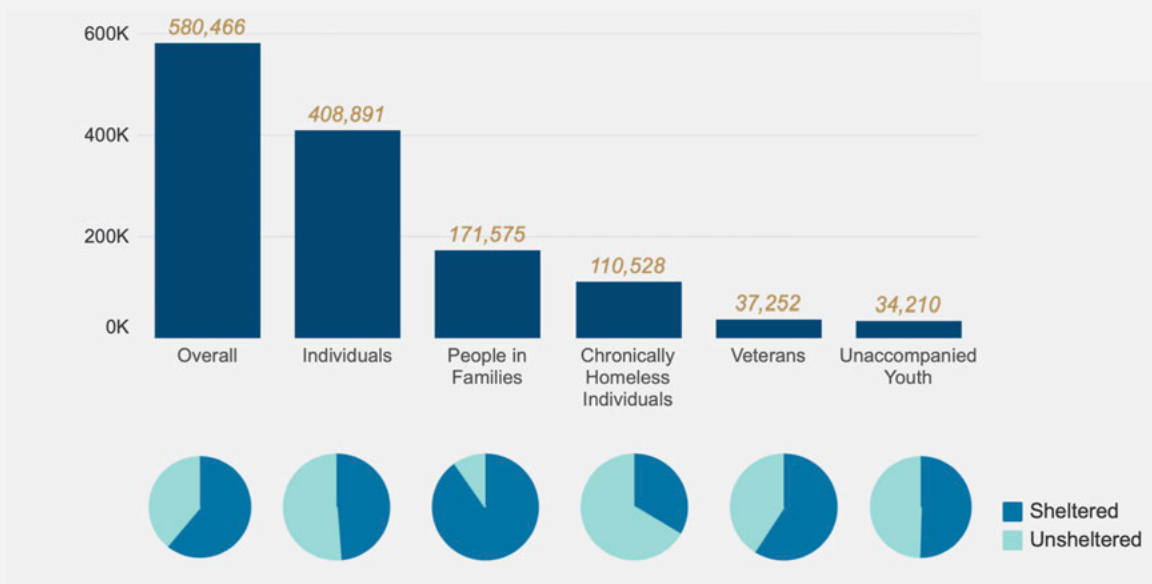
## USING LEAD ME HOME IN YOUR COMMUNITY

In any given night in America, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates that **OVER 550,000 PEOPLE, INCLUDING FAMILIES, EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS.<sup>1</sup>**

**Lead Me Home**, paired with this resource, offers university and community screening events a tool to facilitate conversations using the first-hand stories from those currently experiencing homelessness. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, this existence was always perilous—surviving during the pandemic exposed the stark reality that permanent housing can be a matter of life and death.

This four-decades long affordable housing crisis can appear intractable, but it isn't. Listening and learning to these stories is one step towards breaking down misunderstandings, debunking myths, and lifting barriers that can obstruct communities from responding with effective, compassionate, and proven programs for supportive and permanent housing.

### TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN 2020<sup>2</sup>



## WE HOPE LEAD ME HOME CONVENINGS AND CONVERSATIONS WILL:

- **Lift the humanity and dignity of all people**—unhoused or housed.
- **Shift negative and punitive mindsets** directed towards people experiencing homelessness.
- **Lift stigmas** surrounding people experiencing homelessness in order to increase empathy and compassion.
- Make clear that **homelessness is a public health crisis**.
- Continue efforts to **decriminalize poverty and mental illness**.
- **Emphasize** that solving homelessness occurs through community-wide approaches and programs.
- Be a point of departure to **strengthen proven approaches** and provide support services to maintain and restore basic humanity to all.



**NEARLY 600,000 PEOPLE  
EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS  
IN 2020**

- [endhomelessness.org](https://endhomelessness.org)

# EVENT PLANNING



## PRE-WORK CHECKLIST

- Watch [Lead Me Home here](#) in order to clarify your goals for the screening. The documentary runs 39 minutes.
- Read this discussion resource prior to your event to build background knowledge to bring to your event.
- Brainstorm a list of local and national organizations to co-host the event and help with outreach.
- Build a guest list together and compile relevant local resources.
- What format of event do you want to host?
  - Screening and discussion?
  - Screening and organizing work?
  - Screening and an engagement activity?

## LOGISTICS

- Set a time, date, and location. Decide on in-person or virtual.
  - For an in-person screening, confirm a location that is physically accessible to all including hearing and sight-impaired participants. Test all AV equipment at least a day in advance to troubleshoot any issues.
  - For a virtual screening, decide on platform, facilitator, tools for the screening, and post-screening conversation. Test platform with all participants/speakers prior to the event.
  - Create and push out social media assets to help spread the word.  
**Twitter:** [@LeadMeHomeFilm](#)  
**Instagram:** [@leadmehome.film](#)
- Send out an electronic invitation with time, date, location, and description of the film and the post-screening agenda.
- Coordinate with community partners to push out the invitation on their social channels. Confirm that everyone has watched the film and can prepare and participate fully in the agenda.

## TIPS FOR MODERATING CONVERSATIONS



### BUILD A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Watching films together is a meaningful way to bring people together for a shared experience. **Lead Me Home** is an invitation to have a conversation. It does not present one solution or point of view but is an opportunity to listen to the stories of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Your event may also include a post-screening conversation. Setting parameters right from the start helps to create a respectful space for all to actively participate, listen with compassion, and ask for clarification when necessary. If you are one to speak up readily, be mindful of stepping back to allow others to share. If you are one to hang back try stepping up a bit more.



### SHARE YOUR STORY

As a moderator, and as an organizer, your commitment to this issue is a place to set the tone for your gathering. It can be conveyed through your own story or by sharing why you organized this event. This personal touch can often open up the space for others to feel comfortable and to share more readily.



### CREATE A SPACE FOR MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

There may be many points of view on how best to end the crisis of affordable housing. With diverse perspectives, it's essential to bring openness and curiosity to these nuanced and complicated conversations. Remind your group to avoid generalization and to use person-first language when discussing this issue (e.g. a person or people experiencing homelessness not a homeless person, or a person with a mental illness or addiction, not a mentally ill person or an addict).



### SPOTLIGHT DIGNITY AND HUMANITY

Start with the premise that no one chooses to be unhoused and everyone has the right, and need, for housing. Remind your group that many international human rights treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 25 recognize the right to housing as part of the right for an adequate standard of living.

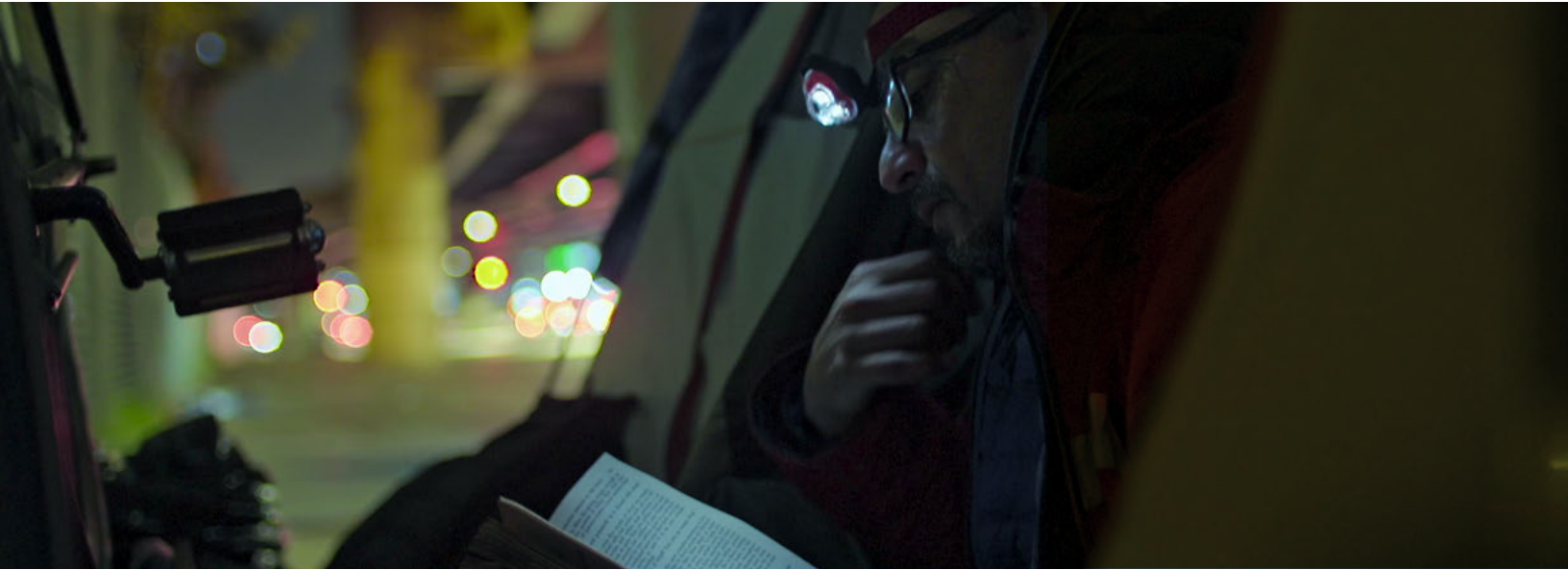


### BE AWARE OF FATIGUE

The issues surrounding housing are complex and can be very personal. Acknowledging the toll this work can take and making an effort to promote self-care is really important. Create opportunities for reflection, celebration, and time for oneself. When you find yourself feeling that your efforts and energy are not making the difference you are seeking, take some time away to recharge and renew your commitment.



# BEFORE SCREENING



## WARM-UP QUESTIONS

To build community and gain a sense of who is in the room, consider discussing one or all of these questions or prompts prior to watching **Lead Me Home**.

- ❓ As a nation, who does America allow to become homeless?
- ❓ What are the first words that come to mind when you think about individuals or families experiencing homelessness?
- ❓ Black Americans are five times more likely and Native Americans are four times more likely to experience homelessness than White Americans.<sup>3</sup> What do these statistics reveal about the relationship between land ownership, our nation's history, and current social safety net policies?
- ❓ Why are certain populations disproportionately impacted by homelessness?
- ❓ What historical events and/or political and economic policies contributed, and continues to fuel, the rising homeless population in the United States?

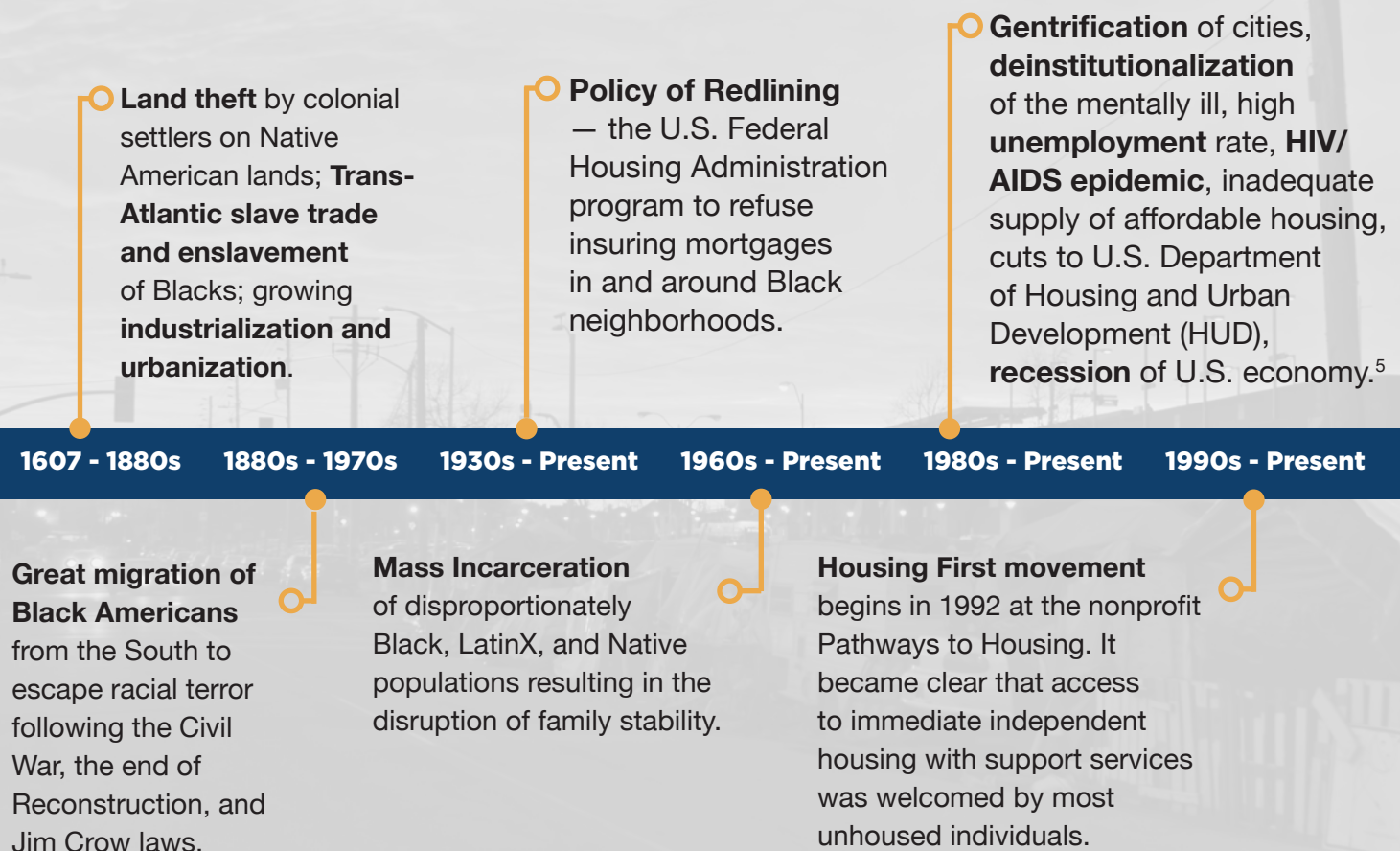
## BACKGROUND

Consider framing your outreach or opening your event by sharing any of this background information. This can help enrich and inform participants prior to watching **Lead Me Home**, help build community through discussion, and help you, as a moderator, gain some insight as to the perspectives of participants in the room.

## A (VERY BRIEF) HISTORICAL FRAME

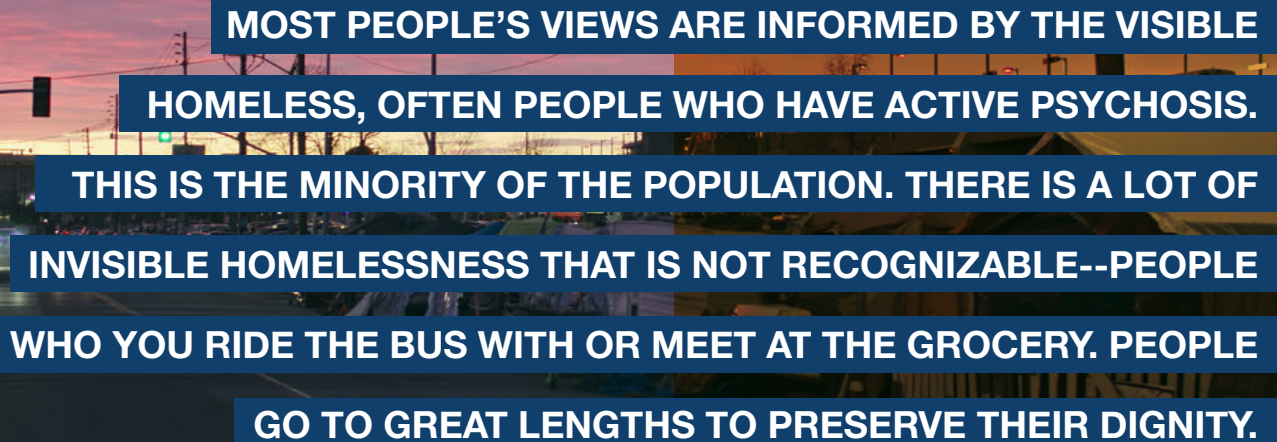
It would be irresponsible to discuss housing policy in the United States without acknowledging our nation's history of land theft and the disproportionate allocation of resources to White populations. In other words, **access to land and land ownership, stable housing, and home ownership is deeply intertwined with the history of structural and institutional racism in America and the inadequacy of the current social safety net.**

See [A Brief Timeline of Race and Homelessness in America](#)<sup>4</sup> for a more extensive survey of the connections between race and homelessness.



## ○ ADDRESSING COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Dr. Culhane also shared the following:



**MOST PEOPLE'S VIEWS ARE INFORMED BY THE VISIBLE HOMELESS, OFTEN PEOPLE WHO HAVE ACTIVE PSYCHOSIS. THIS IS THE MINORITY OF THE POPULATION. THERE IS A LOT OF INVISIBLE HOMELESSNESS THAT IS NOT RECOGNIZABLE--PEOPLE WHO YOU RIDE THE BUS WITH OR MEET AT THE GROCERY. PEOPLE GO TO GREAT LENGTHS TO PRESERVE THEIR DIGNITY.**

PROFESSOR DENNIS CULHANE, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA<sup>7</sup>

- Becoming unhoused usually **occurs with some sort of crisis**, some of which are traumatic.
- The loss of housing usually happens within **close relationships and relationship disruption** combined with the **lack of economic choices**.
- The experience of being unhoused **includes all sorts of victimization**, exposure to the elements, and the indignities of living your private life in public.
- Most individuals without housing are **not mentally ill** (~1/3) and the majority **do not have a substance abuse problem** (~20 - 40 percent.)<sup>6</sup>

### MOST PEOPLE EXIT THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING UNHOUSED ON THEIR OWN.<sup>8</sup>

- **80 percent of homeless are transitionally homeless**--in other words they become unhoused once, on an average of three weeks, usually housed within a couple of months, and never return.
- The **majority of the transitionally homeless reconnect with family and friends** and are able to do it without services.
- The other **15-20 percent, chronic homelessness, are not able to exit on their own** because of some sort of disability and need structures to help. But when given the help, they are able to leave being unhoused permanently behind.

## THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS IDENTIFIES FIVE LEADING FACTORS FOR EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

### 1 LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The lack of affordable housing for low income people. Without options people face eviction, instability, and are unhoused.

### 2 ECONOMIC INSECURITY

Low income households often do not earn enough to take care of all their basic needs — food, clothing, transportation and housing.

- > It is generally accepted that low-income households should spend no more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs in order to have sufficient income for other needs.<sup>10</sup>
- > In Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle (cities with some of the nation's most expensive housing) the city's poorest are severely rent-burdened, meaning they pay more than 50 percent of their incomes on rent, making it increasingly difficult to sustain housing.

### 3 HEALTH PROBLEMS

Health problems can cause a person to experience homelessness and be detrimentally effected by being unhoused and unsheltered.

- > People who experience chronic homelessness live 30 years less, on average, than other Americans.<sup>11</sup>
- > Not having access to a shower has been found to be one of the most humiliating aspects of homelessness and a factor to potential ill health.
- > Behavioral health in youth is complex. The lack of positive social support systems, depression, and exposure to violence or trauma can be contributing factors.<sup>12</sup>

## 4 ESCAPING VIOLENCE

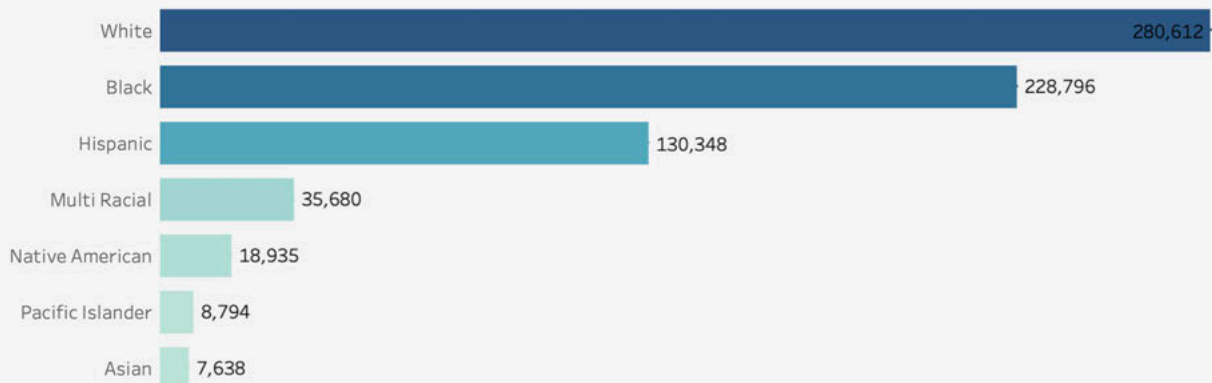
Many become unhoused when leaving an abusive relationship.

- > The National Center for Children in Poverty reports that according to multiple studies examining the causes of homelessness, among mothers with children experiencing homelessness, more than 80% had previously experienced domestic violence.<sup>13</sup>
- > Between 22 and 57% of all homeless women report that domestic violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness.<sup>14</sup>

## 5 RACIAL DISPARITIES

Most minority groups in the U.S. experience homelessness at higher rates than Whites. Structural racism and the history of racial disparities are inextricably linked to stable housing.<sup>15</sup>

### COUNTS AND RATES BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2020<sup>16</sup>



## TERMINOLOGY



### CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

A way to identify individuals who been continuously homeless for at least a year; or experienced homelessness at least four times in the last three years for a combined length of time of at least a year.



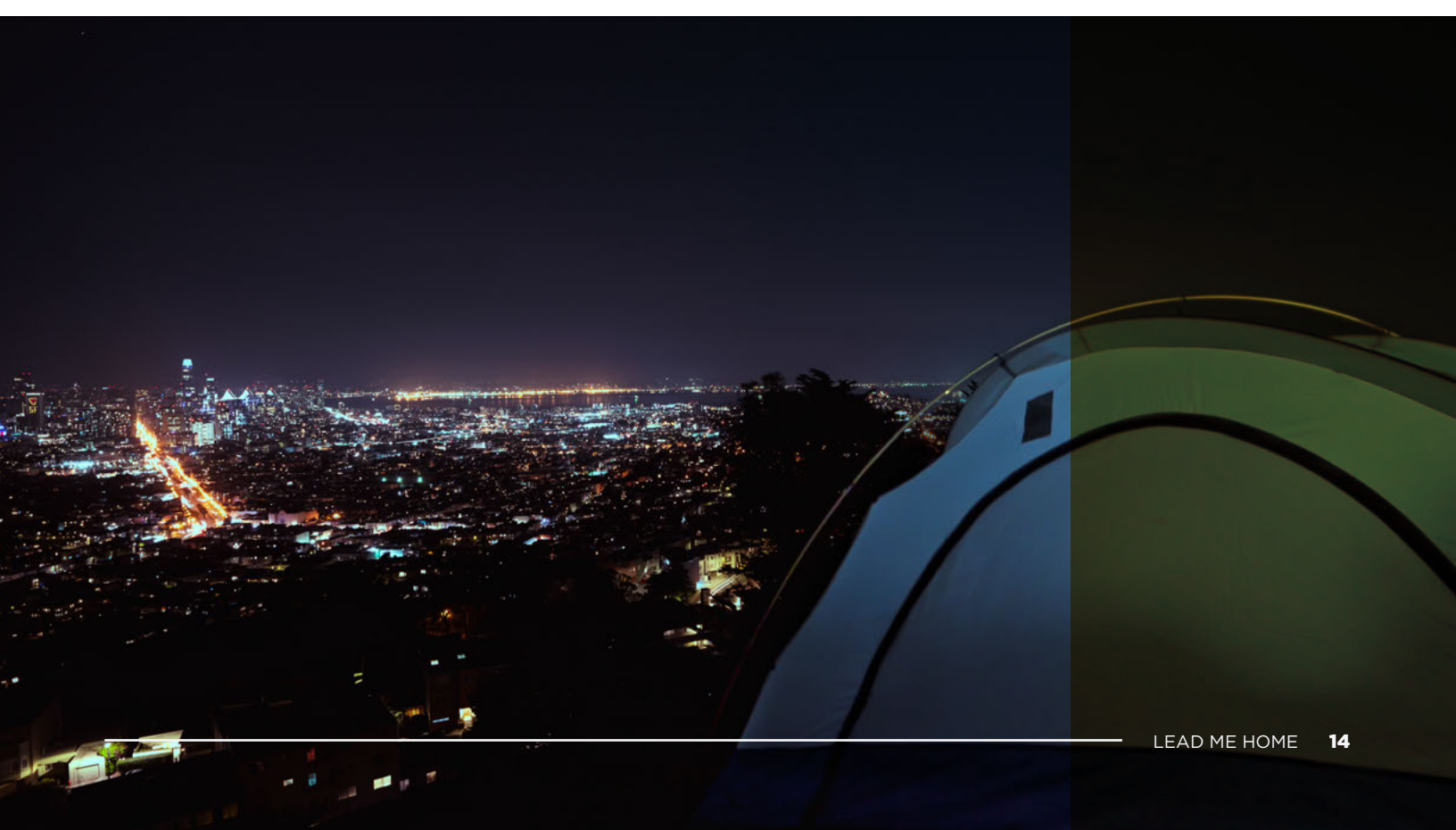
### UNHOUSED

The preferred term amongst housing advocates and activists to describe instability in housing. Like other terms that are retired, homeless, even a person experiencing homelessness has begun to be seen as a pejorative. The goal is always to be respectful, not dehumanizing, and to avoid generalizations. In this guide unhooded and experiencing homelessness are used in various ways. When homeless was used by an organization or used in a definition, the language was not changed.



### VULNERABILITY INDEX OR VULNERABILITY INDEX-SERVICE PRIORITIZATION DECISION ASSISTANCE TOOL (VI-SPDAT)

A standardized assessment tool assigning an individual a score that prioritizing them for housing. In order to join the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Continuum of Care Program, local governments and nonprofit partners are required to use.



# POST-SCREENING CONVERSATION



## DOCUMENTARY DEBRIEF

Open up the conversation by asking for initial reactions to the story—thoughts, feelings, or questions.

- ❓ What scenes stood out to you from **Lead Me Home**? Why?
- ❓ What are your reactions to the use of music, sound, pacing, and lighting throughout the documentary? How did these choices evoke emotions, ideas, or communicate different messages?
- ❓ In what ways was the experience of Tiffany and her children in Seattle similar or quite different than Luis in San Francisco, or Patty in Los Angeles?
- ❓ What are your main takeaways after listening and learning from the diversity of experiences captured in **Lead Me Home**?

## REVISITING STORIES

There is a great deal to learn from the lived experiences of the participants in **Lead Me Home**. New insights, often difficult to hear and know about, sit alongside moments of joy, kindness, compassion, and love. These glimpses into our shared humanity are necessary reminders to break down fear and misconceptions of our unhoused neighbors and support the work of restoring dignity and providing housing for all.

Take time to revisit some of the stories shared excerpted below, and discuss your reactions and feelings using these suggested questions:

**What connections do you hear amongst the different stories? What differences emerge? What new questions surface?**

**Why are certain populations disproportionately impacted by homelessness?**

**The VI-SPDAT interview (referred to in the documentary as the Vulnerability Assessment) was woven throughout the film. Read the full VI-SPDAT at the end of this guide and discuss your reactions to its role in *Lead Me Home*.**

**What historical events and/or political and economic policies contributed, and continue to fuel, the rising homeless population in the United States?**



### VI-SPDAT INTERVIEWER IN LEAD ME HOME

"We're gonna do a vulnerability assessment today for the coordinated entry program throughout the county. I'm going to ask you some questions about your history of homelessness that'll help me understand what you do to get help. Some of the questions may feel like I'm asking for personal information, and I'm not trying to make you uncomfortable. We ask everyone the same questions to better understand your situation, and what your needs are."

\*Note: In the past, the Vulnerability Assessment Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) has been found to be a problematic tool for assessing vulnerability. People already experiencing discrimination have interpreted the questions as an additional barrier disqualifying them for housing.



## INTERVIEWER: HOW DID YOU END UP HOMELESS?

**Futuristic (Ronnie):** Well that's a long story. Well, it really started, to be honest, from 9/11. 9/11 put me in a deep depression.

**Squiddy Jamzzz (Justin):** It's mainly because the cost of living is so high, especially in Hollywood, that I can't afford to live in an apartment.

**Resheemah:** Yeah, I lost my job, and the person I was staying with, I couldn't pay my rent. They had no understanding, so they kicked me out.

**Wayne:** Disability.

**Stacey:** Jail, prison, substance abuse, mental health issues, family issues, just a combination of things.

**Gigi:** I came out as transgender my senior year in college, and I kind of lost all of my family support.

**Flora:** I went to go stay with my daughter for a while, and after that I winded down here um, at the Union Rescue Mission.

**Luis:** "In November of 2016, my brother put me up in the hostels for a couple of months, but I just didn't want to burden him with another bill. I started staying out in the streets."

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**Miriam:** You were working somewhere else, when I first came and I saw the girls.

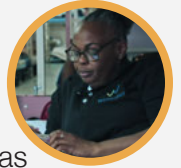
**Unhoused woman:** I got to working again and... things just kinda fell apart. 'Cause the second you report that you have enough money coming in to pay your rent and pay all your bills, Bam! There goes most of your food stamps and now all of a sudden the money that you had allotted to pay rent, now has to pay for food. Because, what is an immediate concern: your child eating that night, or the rent that's due in two weeks? I'm gonna feed my kid.

**Miriam:** This is an extreme situation, we gotta get you guys into housing.

**Unhoused woman:** You know that's what's funny is, you don't, you - you gradually get into an extreme situation, it doesn't seem as extreme.

### FLORA

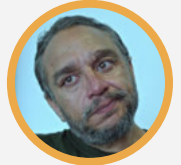
Los Angeles



Currently, Flora is in housing and was hired by Chrysalis to oversee housekeeping contracts that we see her engaged in during the filming of the documentary. She is currently housed outside of the shelter with another bill. I started staying out in the streets."

### LUIS

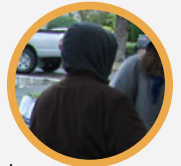
San Francisco



The filmmakers first met Luis at Lava Mae right before Halloween. Usually, Lava Mae travels in different locations around the week to take a shower with some private time. Luis is formerly incarcerated and at the time of filming, lived in SF. He is now located in Oakland. Luis is of Puerto Rican ancestry with family in NY. He remains unhoused.

### UNHOUSED WOMAN

Seattle



After leaving an abusive relationship out of fear for her safety, she and her teenage daughter moved to Seattle. She has some health issues and was temporarily employed. Her daughter attends high school and she continues to look for work. Her story underscores the dilemma of earning "too much" (on minimum wage) and losing benefits she currently has access to for her health and family.

## INTERVIEWER: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?

**Ravelle:** It's been about four years for homelessness - four years for being homeless.

*(Phone call) Hey mom, I was just telling you that you're gonna be a grandma. I still have to go to the doctors and like, confirm and find everything out, but it's a big positivo probably.*

**Patty:** I been homeless since I was probably 19 or 20.

## INTERVIEWER: ARE THERE ANY OTHER GOALS THAT YOU WANT TO WORK ON?

**Patty:** If like I, can get a place and do what I have to do to keep my head like, out of the street-mind. But that's all I, like, to be honest that's all I know.

**Flora:** I really want to be stable, and have my family around me like I used to.

## INTERVIEWER: HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU BEEN ATTACKED OR BEATEN UP SINCE YOU'VE BECOME HOMELESS?

**Patty:** Recently, I've been, like, four or five.

**Yvonne (Caseworker):** From the moment I met you, you didn't share anything that was going on with you. You were just trying to move forward. I mean, I see you go to the grocery store every night, when we serve food here, to get food for your kids and come and make dinner for them. Every single night.

**Tiffany:** Because, I try not to lose our family in homelessness. Like, despite the situation, mama got you.

**Yvonne:** Right. So, let's talk about your story.

### RAVELLE Los Angeles



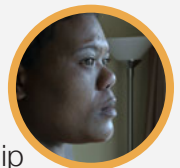
The first time you meet Ravelle in the documentary she is living in SF with her boyfriend Roman. She is currently housed in the Los Angeles area and living with her child.

### PATTY Los Angeles



Patty comes from an unstable family and has struggled with addiction. As we see in the documentary she was in an abusive relationship. At the time of filming we see her choosing to leave that relationship and enter a rehabilitation center.

### TIFFANY Seattle



Tiffany left an abusive relationship with her children and left the state to come to Seattle. She lived in a hotel for a bit of time, a temporary shelter, then into a family shelter, and eventually found housing in the Seattle metropolitan area. Her baby is healthy and her children are attending school. She is also currently employed full time.

**Tiffany:** Okay. Nine months ago, my ex started stalking me. He kicked my door in, and he pistol-whipped me and he raped me. Um, and I'm currently 32 weeks pregnant as a result of that. So, when I was in the hospital, I had black eyes, I was - I was fucked-up looking. And the Urban League here, they were able to get me in the hotel. I didn't qualify for any supportive services. I couldn't sign up for housing, I was not considered homeless.

**Yvonne:** Because you were in a hotel.

**Tiffany:** Because I was in a hotel that the agency paid for me. So, they put us for six weeks in a hotel, I could financially afford to pay for two weeks myself in the hotel, and then we were in a situation where I didn't have money, and I didn't have nowhere else to go. So, we slept outside for a few days. And then I was able to get in a place called The Center of Hope. It's like a one-room facility, and you sleep on mats on the floor. Um there are no shower facilities.

So, I made it be like we were camping, and we had to be out of the place by 6:30/7:00 every morning. Rain or shine, we had to leave. So, I didn't want my kids to know, I didn't want people to know, so I would go to Safeway and get them something to eat, and bathe them in the bathroom. I would take turns with them, so I could go to the bathroom and wash them up and brush their hair. Because I didn't want people to look at my kids - I didn't want to just be walking the streets.



## CONSIDER SOLUTIONS



### HOUSING FIRST

A homeless assistance approach that prioritizes permanent housing and does not require people experiencing homelessness to address (or have solved) all of their problems before they can access housing. This approach is guided by the belief that people need basic necessities like food and a place to live before being able to get a job, budget properly, or attend to substance use issues. This approach also prioritizes client agency—the belief that the clients’ choice in housing and support services leads to greater success and long-term follow through.<sup>17</sup>

Without access to stable housing and services, many people experiencing chronic, or long-term, homelessness (15-20 percent) become trapped in homelessness-jail cycle—rotating in and out of jail, detoxification centers, and emergency health care. This cycle doesn’t help people access the assistance they need to find stability, and it comes at a major cost to taxpayers.



### DISCUSS

The Housing First approach was a radical departure from the previous policy of “housing readiness” described as the staircase model from the 1980s and 1990s. How do you see the differences in these orientations for how best to solving being unhoused?



**"You know, it's not like this thing solves your problems of loneliness, of poverty, of addiction, of mental illness, of disconnection from your family. It's not like a panacea. The whole point of doing Housing First is you can actually start to deal with these other things which are much more profound and much more difficult. And, you know, at least it gives you a shot at having those conversations. Because if people are on the street, you're never going to be able to have those conversations because it's all about where am I going to sleep and what am I going to eat, and you know, like, am I safe."**

SAM TSEMBERIS, FOUNDER OF PATHWAYS TO HOUSING, INC.



## NAVIGATION CENTERS

The Seattle Downtown Emergency Service Center defines a Navigation Center as a “low-barrier, service-enriched shelter targeting high-needs homeless adults living in encampments.”<sup>17</sup> Low barrier includes a range of housing settings that are not always available at shelters including singles, pairs, or groups; with pets, spaces to secure their belongings, many are ADA compliant.

In **Lead Me Home** we witness a tense exchange between housed community members in the San Francisco Embarcadero neighborhood and the San Francisco City Council regarding the building of a new SAFE Navigation Center in the area. These spaces include hygiene facilities, 24/7 staffing, and supportive case management. More than anything, Navigation Centers, and other offer an opportunity to regain safety and engage in rebuilding their lives and establish pathways to permanent housing.

Explore how the cities in **Lead Me Home** are adopting this option:

- > Los Angeles: [Hope of the Valley](#)
- > San Francisco: [SAFE Navigation Centers](#) (as of 2021 there are eight)
- > Seattle: [The Navigation Center](#)



## DISCUSS

Revisit the scene in **Lead Me Home** at the San Francisco port commission meeting discussing building a Navigation Center in the neighborhood.

- **Female Speaker:** We need to be allowing homeless shelters in every single neighborhood across the city.
  - **Male Speaker:** This 200 bed Navigation Center will act as a magnet, and will import a massive homeless population, and will harm the surrounding neighborhood.
  - **Male Speaker:** I have never seen a mayor, jam down the throats of a neighborhood, a project, when the neighborhood was 95% opposed to it.
  - **Male Speaker:** I was just called a racist, for not wanting things like drug use, drug sale, importing additional homeless into our neighborhood. Yeah, I don't think a lot of people want those things in their backyard.
  - **Group Chanting:** People are dying in your front yard! People are dying in your front yard! People are dying in your front yard!
- > What are issues based on reality, and what are issues based on misconceptions?
  - > How are the fears and concerns being expressed?
  - > How can stories like **Lead Me Home** address these concerns?



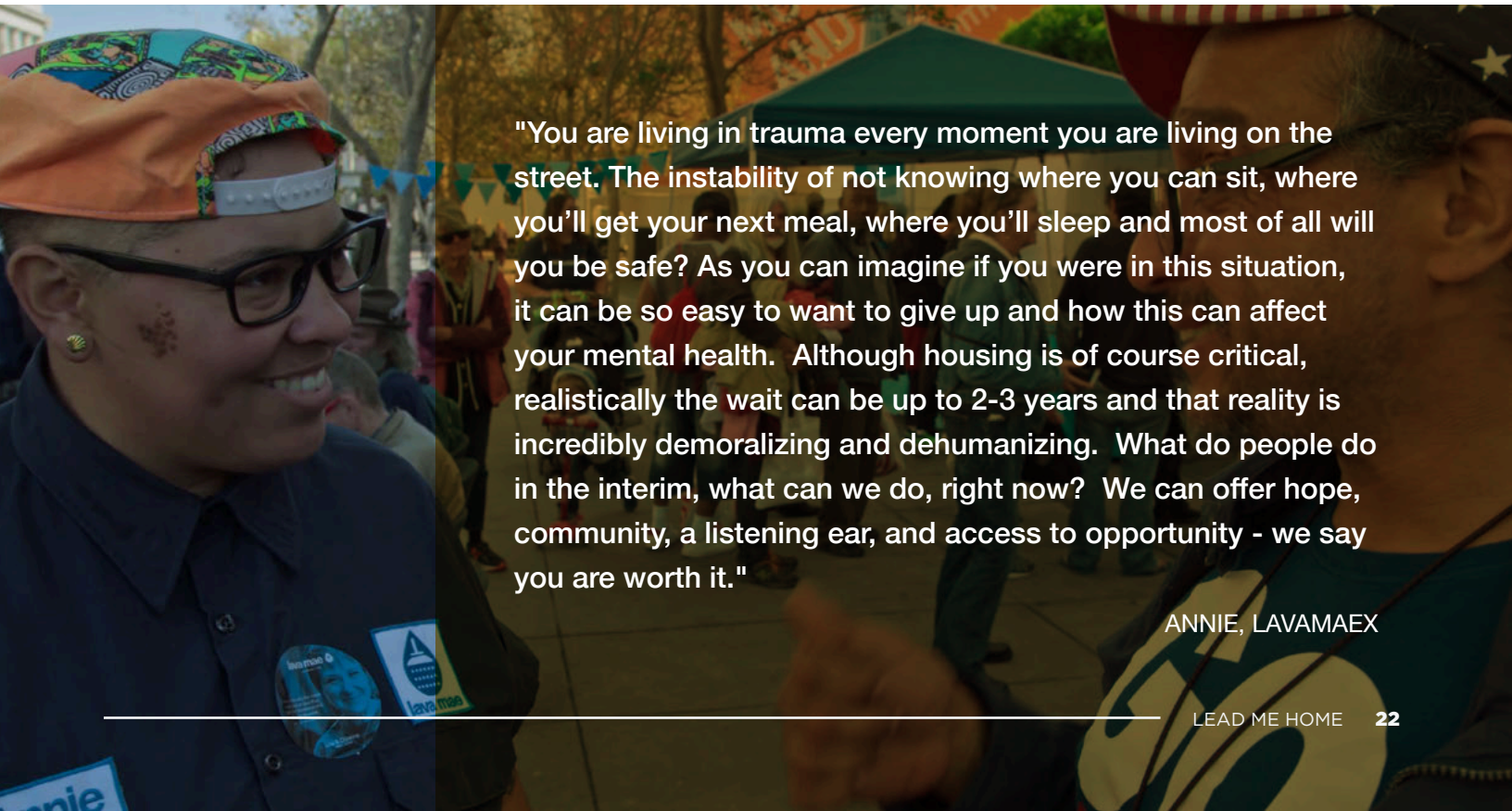
## RADICAL HOSPITALITY™ PHILOSOPHY

This is Lava Mae (now LavaMaeX's) core philosophy which is rooted in treating people with extraordinary care; something rarely offered to people who are unhoused. It is based on the premise of restoring a person's dignity, rekindling their optimism, and fueling a sense of opportunity. This is practiced everyday when LavaMaeX staff brings mobile showers and other critical services to the streets of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Oakland. They recognize that how you deliver the service is just as important as the service itself, it's not a transaction, it's about establishing a relationship - truly seeing people as individuals, accepting them and restoring their self-worth. They refer to them as guests, they are honored to serve them. In **Lead Me Home** we see the power of radical hospitality on the lives of their guests. While a shower and hygiene are critical, Doniece Sandoval, founder of Lava Mae, says it is about so much more. "Radical Hospitality is about reconnecting with dignity and self-worth... and it works in both directions. Choosing to see, effects the person being seen and the person choosing to see."<sup>18</sup>



## DISCUSS

What purpose and meaning does the belief and practice of radical hospitality have on people currently unhoused and unsheltered?



"You are living in trauma every moment you are living on the street. The instability of not knowing where you can sit, where you'll get your next meal, where you'll sleep and most of all will you be safe? As you can imagine if you were in this situation, it can be so easy to want to give up and how this can affect your mental health. Although housing is of course critical, realistically the wait can be up to 2-3 years and that reality is incredibly demoralizing and dehumanizing. What do people do in the interim, what can we do, right now? We can offer hope, community, a listening ear, and access to opportunity - we say you are worth it."

ANNIE, LAVAMAEX



## RAPID RE-HOUSING (RRH)

A solution designed to help individuals and families to quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing. There are no preconditions (such as employment, income, or sobriety) and the support services are tailored to the unique needs of the individual or family. The three main components of RRH or housing identification, rent and move-in assistance, and case management.<sup>19</sup>



## PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Permanent supportive housing is an intervention that combines affordable housing assistance with voluntary support services to address the needs of chronically homeless people. The services are designed to build independent living and tenancy skills and connect people with community-based health care, treatment and employment services.



## STATE OF EMERGENCY

**Lead Me Home** opens with: “In the past five years, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle have declared states of emergency (SOE) regarding homelessness.”

A State or local state of emergency refers to a crisis or disaster in which a government suspends normal procedures to take urgent action. In current homelessness SOEs, this has meant using funds more flexibly to reduce regulatory barriers for additional funds. SOEs can generate a sense of urgency and create public and political will to address issues more quickly, however declaring an SOE does not compel the Federal government to take any action or provide any resources.<sup>20</sup>



## DISCUSS

Is a state of emergency and effective strategy to end homelessness?



## STRENGTHEN THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET

Programs that provide assistance to improve the lives of the most vulnerable individuals and families. In the U.S. Social Security is the larger safety net program. Other programs include food assistance (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Special Supplemental Food Program for women, infants, and children (WIC), Medicaid, Earned Income Tax Credit, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA).<sup>21</sup>



## TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Temporary housing for certain segments of the homeless population, including working homeless people who are earning too little.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Learn more about the organizations the **Lead Me Home** film team worked with during the filming of the documentary:

## THE CENTER (HOLLYWOOD)

[www.thecenterinhollywood.org](http://www.thecenterinhollywood.org)

## CHRYSLIS (LOS ANGELES)

[www.changelives.org](http://www.changelives.org)

## THE CENTER (HOLLYWOOD)

[www.thecenterinhollywood.org](http://www.thecenterinhollywood.org)

## CONARD HOUSE

[www.conardhouse.org](http://www.conardhouse.org)

## LAVA MAE (SAN FRANCISCO)

[www.lavamaex.org](http://www.lavamaex.org)

- UCSF Street Nurses
- Sidewalk Talk

## LA FAMILY HOUSING (PATTY & ERIC)

[www.lafh.org](http://www.lafh.org)

## MARY'S PLACE (SEATTLE)

[www.marysplaceseattle.org](http://www.marysplaceseattle.org)



## SAMPLE VI-SPDAT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### INTAKE QUESTIONS

- What is your name?
- What kind of services do you need help with?
- What is your current housing situation?
- How long has it been since you lived in permanent, stable housing?
- If you are currently in housing, can you afford your current rent?
- How long have you been or had experienced homelessness?
- Have you ever been homeless, before the most recent time?
- Can you tell me, how did you end up homeless?
- When was the last time you had a place of your own?
- Was your name on the lease?
- Can you tell me about your living situation before that?
- Where have you lived in the past year?
- In the last three years, how many times have you been homeless?
- What cities have you lived in, in the past five years?
- Where do you sleep most frequently?
- Have you stayed in shelters?
- Do you have a preference for staying in a shelter or outside in the streets?
- Do you ever sleep outside? How often?
- Do you ever feel scared or unsafe?
- Where do you spend your day?
- Do you currently have a source of income?
- What do you get that for?
- Where do you get food?
- Do you think that you're getting enough to eat?
- Do you know where to go for showers and laundry?
- Do you think you're able to shower and wash your clothes as often as you'd like?
- How many belongings do you have, currently?
- What are your plans for housing?
- In the city, or in the suburbs?

### FAMILY & FRIENDS

So now I'm going to ask you about your family and friends:

- Do you have any family that you have contact with?
- Do you have any friends or family in the area?
- Do you prefer spending time with other people or by yourself?

### MEDICAL

I'm going to move on to medical related questions now.

- Do you have any family that you have contact with?
- Do you have any friends or family in the area?
- Do you prefer spending time with other people or by yourself?

### DRUGS & ALCOHOL

We're going to move on to drug and alcohol related questions.

- Have drugs or alcohol ever been a problem for you? Can you tell me more about that?
- Have you ever been hospitalized for alcohol or other drugs?
- Has your drinking or drug use led to you being kicked out of an apartment or program where you were staying in the past?
- Will drinking or drug use make it difficult for you to stay housed or to afford your housing?

### MENTAL HEALTH

We're going to switch on over to mental health-related questions now.

- Are you currently dealing with any mental health issues? If so, what are they?
- Have you been given a formal diagnosis?
- Do you agree with it?

- What symptoms do you experience?
- How long have you been dealing with these issues?
- Do you work with a counselor, case manager, or a psychiatrist for mental health?
- Would you like to talk to someone about it?
- Have you ever gone to the hospital for mental health reasons?
- Have you ever had trouble maintaining your housing, or have been kicked out of an apartment, shelter program or other place you were staying because of a mental health issue or concern?

## LEGAL

I'm going to move on to medical related questions now.

- Have you ever been to prison or jail?
- What for, and when was that?
- Do you need to check in with anyone, currently?
- In the past six months, have you talked to police because you witnessed a crime, were the victim of a crime, or the alleged perpetrator of a crime, or because police told you that you must move along?
- How about anything that might result in you being locked up, having to pay fines or make it more difficult to rent a place to live?

## MISCELLANEOUS

- Are there any other goals that you want to work on?
- Is there anything that you want to tell me about yourself, that I should know so I can better understand you?
- Have you been attacked or beaten up since you've become homeless?
- Have you threatened or tried to harm yourself or anyone else in the last year?
- Does anyone force or trick you to do things that you don't want to do?

- Do you ever do things that may be considered to be risky, like exchange sex for money, run drugs for someone, have unprotected sex with someone you don't know, share a needle, or anything like that?
- Is there any person, like a past landlord, a business, a bookie, a dealer, or a government group, like the IRS, that thinks you owe them money?
- Do you get any money from: the government, a pension, an inheritance, working under the table, a regular job, or anything like that?
- Do you have planned activities, other than just surviving, that make you feel happy and fulfilled?
- Are you currently able to take care of basic needs, like bathing, changing clothes, using the restroom, getting food and clean water, and other stuff like that?
- Is/was your homelessness in any way related to a relationship that broke down, an unhealthy or abusive relationship, or because family or friends caused you to become evicted?
- Do you have any physical disabilities that would limit the type of housing you could access? Or make it hard to access?
- [If female] Are you currently pregnant?
- Has your current period of homelessness been caused by an experience of emotional, physical, psychological, sexual, or other type of abuse, or any other trauma that you've experienced?
- What symptoms do you experience?
- How long have you been dealing with these issues?
- Do you work with a counselor, case manager, or a psychiatrist for mental health?
- Would you like to talk to someone about it?

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This estimated number is collected from HUDs annual count of individuals on a single night who are experiencing homelessness. In 2020, the number was 580,466. [https://www.hud.gov/press/press\\_releases\\_media\\_advisories/hud\\_no\\_21\\_041](https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/hud_no_21_041)

<sup>2</sup> <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-2021/>

<sup>3</sup> Video: <https://community.solutions/the-challenge/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://community.solutions/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/A-Brief-Timeline-of-Race-and-Homelessness-in-America-March-2019.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK519584/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nyu.edu/about/news-publications/news/2019/september/HomelessQandA.html>

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Dennis Culhane. Gathered during a phone conversation between Blueshift Education and October 19, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Culhane, phone interview, October 19, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2021\\_code/2021summary.odn](https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2021_code/2021summary.odn)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.coloradohealthinstitute.org/research/vision-housing-security-health-and-opportunity>

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.nccp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/text\\_888.pdf](http://www.nccp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/text_888.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.nccp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/text\\_888.pdf](http://www.nccp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/text_888.pdf), p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/fact-sheet/domestic-violence-and-homelessness-statistics-2016>

<sup>15</sup> <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/what-causes-homelessness/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-2021/>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.desc.org/what-we-do/survival-services/navigation-center/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://lavamaex.org/who-we-are>


<sup>20</sup> <https://endhomelessness.org/rapid-re-housing-works/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/homelessness-a-state-of-emergency/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://poverty.ucdavis.edu/article/war-poverty-and-todays-safety-net-0>



# LEAD ME HOME

Guide developed by  Blueshift  
Education