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The Overlapping Experiences of Immigration and Homelessness

By Nicole Kiser

Immigrants in the United States are **not more likely to experience homelessness**. So why are immigration and homelessness often discussed together?

Beginning in March, thousands of unaccompanied teenage immigrants were housed in a **decompression center** at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center. The boys were provided three meals a day, and volunteers worked to provide activities and religious services to occupy the boys. Though they acknowledge that conditions are likely better than Border Patrol sites, many described conditions in the center as **depressing and inadequate**.

Alex Lee-Cornell, interim pastor for Westminster Presbyterian Church, volunteered at the convention center when it housed the boys three times. “It is a giant room with thousands of cots set up,” said Lee-Cornell. “The entire day is really spent cycling the kids through eating, shower breaks, bathroom breaks” while adhering to restrictions set in place by the pandemic. “It didn’t seem like they were bad conditions,” said Lee-Cornell. “Nobody was visibly suffering. But any time you have hundreds and hundreds of boys that are sharing a giant space...that is no better than what a detention facility would be like.”

Less than a month earlier, the convention center had looked largely the same. Rows of cots were laid in rows to serve as **temporary housing** for those experiencing homelessness during the record-breaking winter storm in February. Then, as in March, volunteers worked to provide meals and other supplies to those staying in the convention center.

Many of the challenges faced by immigrants are also faced by those experiencing homelessness. Some of the top causes of homelessness for both individuals and families are **lack of employment and poverty**. These same pressures in other countries are some of the main **reasons that people migrate** to the United States in search of economic opportunity, including a **recent wave of Venezuelans** fleeing socio-economic instability.

This crossover of experiences means that immigrants and those experiencing homelessness can often benefit from similar services. Organizations, like The Stewpot and The Bridge Homeless Recovery Center, can help find employment, locate affordable housing, and provide meals to help immigrants and those experiencing homelessness find their feet.

Organizations like Sister Norma and



Cots were set in rows at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center to serve as temporary shelter for those experiencing homelessness during the winter storm in February. Courtesy of The Stewpot.

Catholic Charities “are prepared to welcome and provide hospitality in support to asylum seekers and migrants along the border,” said Kathy Lee-Cornell, the task force coordinator of migrant status for Faith Forward Dallas. “There was a season two summers ago when they were inundated, and so a request was made from El Paso to see if Dallas could help...welcome migrants in our city. We’re a little further from the border, we have access to great transportation hubs, and we have willing and

able congregations and volunteers and other ministry partners to pitch in.”

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STREET *Zine*

STREET *Zine* is a program of The Stewpot.



The STREET *Zine* is a monthly newspaper published by The Stewpot, a ministry of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas. The Stewpot provides services and resources for people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of being homeless. The organization also offers opportunities for a new life.

As part of this ministry, the STREET *Zine* seeks to raise awareness about the issues surrounding homelessness and poverty. At the same time, the monthly publication offers financial opportunity for homeless clients who sell the paper to Dallas residents. Vendors are able to move towards economic self-sufficiency by using the money they receive from selling copies to purchase bus passes, food, and necessary living expenses. Clients also receive stipends for contributing articles to STREET *Zine*.

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A Letter from the Executive Director

By Brenda Snitzer

This edition of *STREETZine* focuses on immigration, a subject that goes back to the beginning of America. Every person in the United States has an immigration story, including First Presbyterian Church of Dallas Senior Pastor Amos Disasa, who came to the United States from Ethiopia with his family when he was a young boy. You will read a few of those unique journeys in this issue. They are told from the perspective of the life of an immigrant in America.

An impressive immigrant story I learned about this summer is the work of **Break Bread, Break Borders**. The organization is only in its infancy, but it is already doing tremendous work.

Dallas resident Jin-Ya Huang started Break Bread, Break Borders in 2017 to honor the legacy of her mother, Mei-Ying Huang. Jin-Ya's parents were Taiwanese immigrants who owned a Chinese restaurant in Dallas, where her mother helped train other immigrant women to cook. After her mother passed away in 2015, Jin-Ya decided to continue helping women from refugee communities.

She created Break Bread, Break Borders with the goal of economically empowering refugee women through teaching them how to cook for a living. Professional chefs and caterers mentor immigrant women who love to cook so they can get a food-service license that allows them to cater or start their own businesses. Most of the women specialize in their own delicious cultural cuisine, which helps raise awareness of each woman's culture. Jin-Ya says that the group "focuses on economic empowerment through food and culture."

But Break Bread, Break Borders is not just a training program or a way to economically empower refugee women. The organization, whose motto is "Food for Good," also provides opportunities for the women to share their food and experienc-

es with people in the community.

Jin-Ya believes that by breaking bread with the community, where people share stories and culture, the women can break down borders. As she sees it, the universal language of food helps build compassion for others from different walks of life.

Jin-Ya says that refugees are usually very resilient people who have overcome many obstacles as they escaped war and poverty. She now wants them to dream big, just as she dreams of building Break Bread, Break Borders to serve more women and more communities. She sees this work as a way to fight for economic justice through providing women job skills and a community of support. Along with giving hope to the women growing their businesses and living their dreams, she would like to help create systemic changes that help teach others to have compassion.

You can read more about this impressive social impact organization at: **BreakBreadBreak-Borders.com**

Brenda Snitzer is executive director of The Stewpot.



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The Pastor's Letter: Loving our Neighbors

By The Rev. Rebecca Chancellor Sicks

Throughout the Bible, we find stories of God siding with the orphans, the widows and the sojourners. A sojourner can be defined in different ways, including a person who resides temporarily in a place; this person is an alien, a stranger in a foreign land. Almost always because this person is in a foreign land, the person is in need of help for basic life necessities: food, water, shelter, clothing and protection. And always, God's command is for God's people to care and provide for the orphans, widows and strangers.

God's Word also makes it quite clear that as Christians, followers of the way of Christ, we have a mandate to love our neighbor — even if that neighbor is a foreigner. Among Christians, there is a well-known parable in Luke 10 that we call "The Good Samaritan." This "Good Samaritan" is good precisely because he is the one person (not the priest or the Levite) who stops to help a man on the side of the road who had been left half dead.

The man on the side of the road was presumed

to be a Jew, and the Samaritan would have been his foe. But it was only the Samaritan who had pity on the man who had been beaten up by robbers; it was the Samaritan who stopped and cared for him, bandaging his wounds and pouring oil and wine on them. The Samaritan went further and took this weak and injured man on his donkey to the inn in the next town and then paid the innkeeper to care for him, whatever he needed. And Jesus made it clear: The Samaritan was the one who loved his neighbor, no matter who the neighbor was or from where he came. This parable can speak volumes to us today.

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volumes to us today.**

But one of my favorite Bible stories about caring for the foreigner or sojourner is found in Matthew's gospel in Chapter 2. We learn that after the magi had come to visit the young

child Jesus, Joseph saw an angel of the Lord appear to him in a dream, telling him to get up and take Jesus and his mother Mary and flee to Egypt because King Herod was about to search for the child Jesus and destroy him.

Joseph wasted no time in following the command to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt; they went in the dark of night and remained there until Herod was dead. While they were residing in Egypt, Herod killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or younger. This was truly a matter of life and death. And Jesus was safe because he was able to find refuge with his family in Egypt.

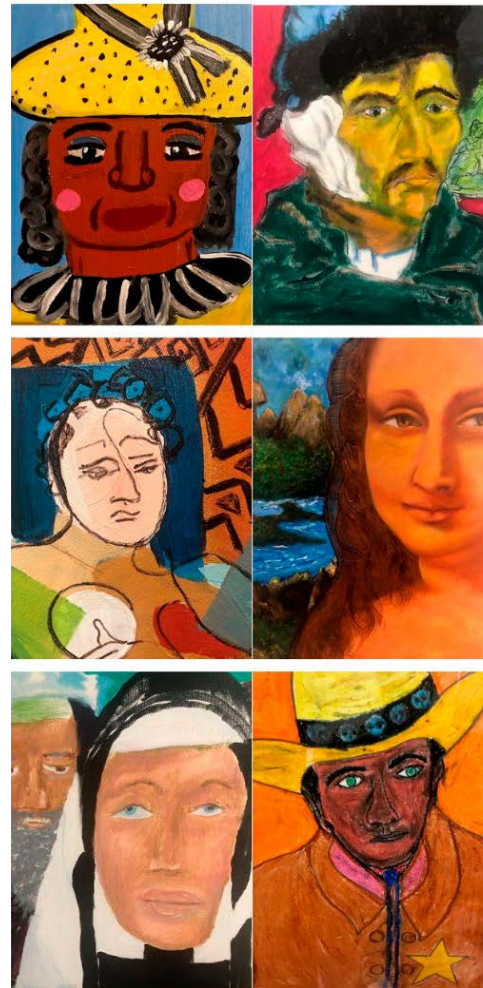
Immigrants may be seeking a place to live permanently in a foreign country, but it is often a life or death situation. Our call to love our neighbors and care for their basic needs is clear. We don't need to ask questions about where the person resides, or what qualifications they have to help us. We simply need to extend love in the form of helping with basic needs to care for our neighbors: fellow human beings in need. In loving God and our neighbors, there is no greater commandment.

The Rev. Rebecca Sicks is associate pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas.

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Children Experiencing Homelessness Bear No Shame: A Conversation with Joseph Kim

By Bill McKenzie

Joseph Kim serves as expert-in-residence in the Human Freedom Initiative at the George W. Bush Institute, where he manages the Institute's North Korean scholarship program. A refugee from North Korea himself, Kim explains in this interview what it was like to be orphaned at age 12 and left homeless in his hometown of Hoeryong, North Korea, until he was 15.

*The author of the memoir, **Under the Same Sky**, Kim lost his father to starvation during North Korea's crushing famine in the 1990s. His mother and sister went to China, where his sister, Bong Sook, was likely sold as a child bride to avoid having to endure her own starvation. After his mother returned to North Korea, she was imprisoned and died in captivity.*

For three years, Kim survived on the streets of his hometown near Siberia and the Chinese border, before deciding to risk his life by walking into China. From there,

through the work of churches, missionaries and the Liberty in North Korea organization, he became a foster child in Richmond, Virginia.

*In 2013, Kim became a U.S. citizen. After graduating from Bard College in 2018, Kim came to work in Dallas at the Bush Institute. President George W. Bush painted the 30-year-old's portrait for his new book, **Out of Many, One: Portraits of America's Immigrants**.*

Kim spoke with Bill McKenzie, who serves as senior editorial advisor at the Bush Institute along with volunteering for STREETZine, about his experiences. He drew from them to remind children experiencing homelessness in Dallas and elsewhere that they have nothing to feel embarrassed about.

You describe in your memoir how suddenly becoming a homeless orphan “means being stripped of all the humanity and pride that you used to have.” What do you mean by that? What was that like?

In a simple sense, it just means I became not special. I was no longer my father's son and my sister's younger brother. Even though I grew up with poverty, I never felt a lack of love from my family. Because I was the youngest one and the only son, every mealtime my father would give me one more spoon of soup. He would say that you are a growing boy and that you need to eat more. My sister was seven years older than me, and she would give me food first whenever she had an extra snack.

So, I grew up with kind of being spoiled. I was

spoiled in an impoverished family. I felt special in that sense.

When you are on the street, that's not the case. You can't expect someone to treat you that way. I had to learn how to break my pride because I couldn't wait for someone to treat me in a special way. That never was going to happen. I was no longer special. I had to realize that I had to go out and ask for food. That takes a lot of courage and means making an agreement with yourself. You must let go of your pride and focus solely on surviving.

So, that's what you mean when you talk about the first stage of homelessness as breaking your pride?

Yes, and losing your dignity and humanity. They are not all separate.

You also talk about learning how to pickpocket and steal things to survive. And you describe that as not being a long-term proposition.

It's hard but everyone else is struggling with a lack of food. No homeless children could survive solely by begging or snatching food from someone's hands. That's a highway to death.

So, the next step is learning how to pickpocket, which is slightly more stable. But you have to be invited to pickpocket. There are so many homeless people in the markets, you can't just start pickpocketing. You have to be tacitly approved within the people who are homeless. You have to earn their trust.

It's arbitrary and not a well-structured organization. There is no written manual to get to the point of being a pickpocket. But you can't just steal on your own. If you do that, you will get beaten up or give [up] everything you stole.

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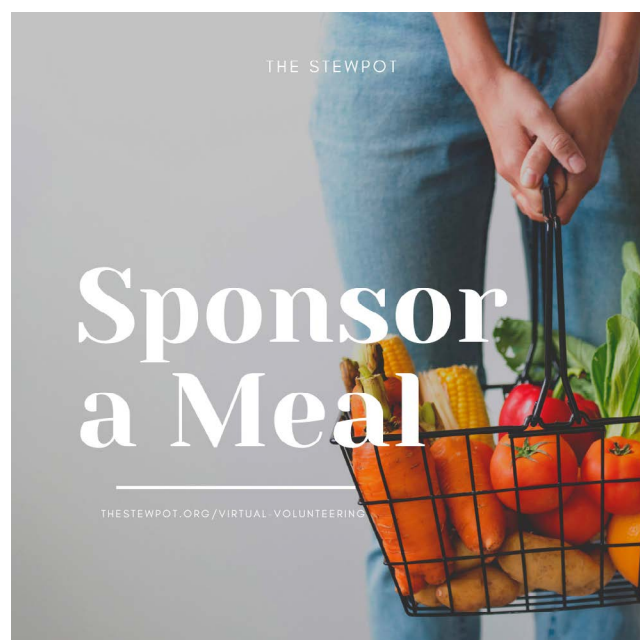


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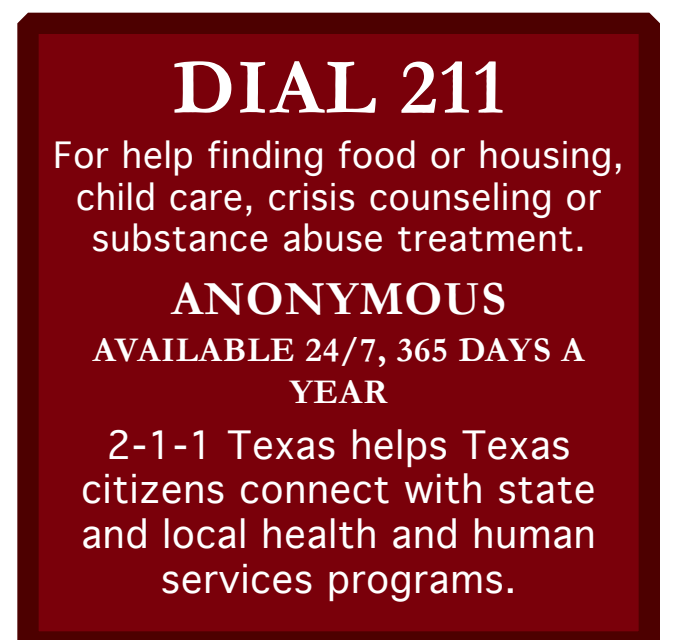
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A View from the Street: Learning English as a Second Language

By Sarah Disasa

Hilda became connected to The Stewpot seven years ago when her oldest of three children began taking part in Saturday Kids' Club, The Stewpot's program for children and youth. Because she had a child who was involved in the Saturday Kids' Club, Hilda could also participate in The Stewpot's English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. The goal of these classes is to help parents be able to communicate in everyday conversations, such as with their children's teachers, with doctors, or with employers.

Now, while Hilda's three children are taking part in art, drama, computer instruction, games and group discussion at the Saturday Kids' Club, she is working on her English. She has progressed from knowing very little English when she arrived from Mexico in 1999, to now refine her grammar.

When Hilda arrived in the United States, she attended W. H. Adamson High School for two years. Of course, immersion into an English-speaking country helped with Hilda's acquisition of English, but there are aspects of learning



Hilda and her three children. Courtesy of Hilda.

English that take dedicated time and instruction. "Maybe I can speak it fine," she said, "but the grammar is very difficult."

Consider this enlightening poem entitled "Why English is Hard to Learn," written by an anonymous author:

*We'll begin with a box; the plural is boxes,
But the plural of ox is oxen, not oxes;
One fowl is a goose, and two are called geese,
Yet the plural of moose is never called meese.*

*You may find a lone mouse or a house full of mice,
But the plural of house is houses, not hice.
The plural of man is always men,
But the plural of pan is never pen.*

*If I speak of a foot, and you show me two feet,
And I give you a book, would a pair be a beek?
If one is a tooth and a whole set are teeth,
Why shouldn't two booths be called beeth?*

*If the singular's this and the plural is these,
Should the plural of kiss be ever called keese?*

*We speak of a brother and also of brethren,
But though we say mother, we never say methren.
Then the masculine pronouns are he, his, and him;
But imagine the feminine...she, shis, and shim!*

After a long week of cleaning homes, helping her kids with schoolwork and providing food for each meal, Hilda still continues to make ESL a priority as she goes each Saturday to The Stewpot.

This poem, although amusing, highlights just a few of the inconsistencies that the English language has, related to singular and plural nouns and to pronouns. One can easily see that English would be difficult to learn as a second language.

In addition to working on daily conversational skills and fine-tuning grammar, Hilda explained that another helpful part of the ESL classes includes listening to conversations and then answering comprehension questions about the conversations. This exercise helps with the understanding of spoken English at a conversational pace.

Hilda's biggest challenge with learning English has been finding the time to devote to it. She explained that raising her three children as a single parent and working to support them does not allow much extra time for her own learning.

Hilda demonstrates strength, independence and perseverance, even when life is hard and seems full. "One day at a time," she said, "I always try to figure out on my own what to do." After a long week of cleaning homes, helping her kids with schoolwork and providing food for each meal, Hilda still continues to make ESL a priority as she goes each Saturday to The Stewpot. Her hope and prayer is that she and her children stay healthy, stable and together.

Sarah Disasa is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas and the STREETZine Editorial Advisory Board.

Learning to Thrive in a New Country

By Suzanne Erickson

Moving to a different city can bring anxiety and stress to anyone, but moving to another country, where you don't even speak the language, complicates matters even more. In 2009, Angeles Rodriguez, a case manager for The Stewpot's Rent and Utility Program, moved to Texas from San Luis Potosi, Mexico, at the age of 11 with her mom and two younger brothers.

Rodriguez's dad had been living in California to prepare for his family's arrival when he suddenly passed away. Ten months later, her mom decided that they were moving to Texas; they left that night. Rodriguez had just received her permanent residency card, which her family had been working to get so that everyone could move legally.

Though moving to a new country can be scary, Rodriguez has learned to thrive in her new environment.

When they arrived in the United States, they lived with Rodriguez's aunt, uncle and cousins. Her cousins were already attending the Children and Youth programs at The Stewpot. Rodriguez began attending a couple of years later when she started middle school. Her mom also started attending the English as a Second Language (ESL) classes offered by The Stewpot. They helped her interact with the teachers at her children's schools and be more involved in their lives.

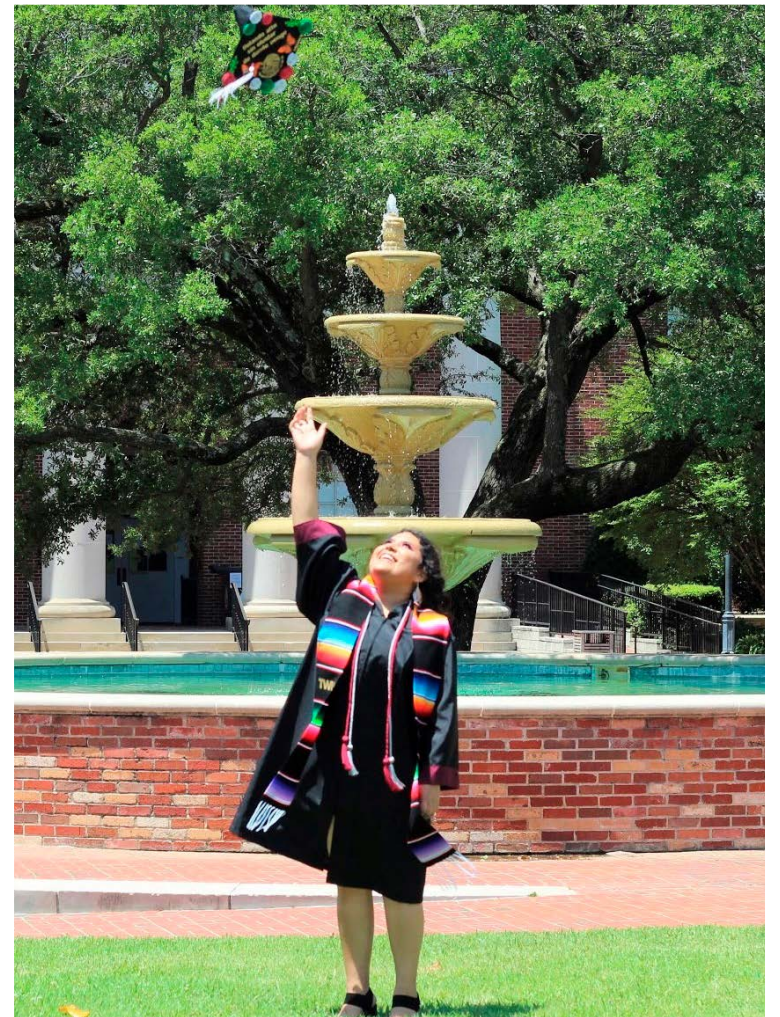
Rodriguez attended A. Maceo Smith New Tech High School. Her mom always told her and her

brothers, "You have to see more for your future than just following your friends," so Rodriguez motivated herself by remembering why her mom decided to come to the United States: to create a better life for her and her brothers. After graduating from high school, she decided to attend Texas Woman's University (TWU). It was close to home and affordable, and the scholarship she received through The Stewpot allowed her to buy books and live in the dorms.

During the summer after her freshman year, Rodriguez started working with the Summer Kid's Club run by The Stewpot. She enjoyed it so much that she started working on Saturdays during the school year. The experience helped her realize her passion for helping others, just as she was once helped by The Stewpot when she first arrived in the United States.

In May 2020, Rodriguez graduated with her Bachelor of Science in Family Studies from TWU and was hired by The Stewpot for their new Rent and Utilities Program. Rodriguez says that she can understand what the families in the program are going through because she has experienced it firsthand.

She also cites several influences that helped her get to where she is today. Her cousins, who she lived with, and who are about 10 years older, were influential in her life as they went to college and have successful jobs. She also said receiving the scholarship and support from the Venturing Crew staff at The Stewpot was important in helping her realize her future goals. As Rodriguez put it, "The Stewpot has always been a support and a second home for my family! They have helped my family from Christmas gifts when I was a child, so we had something to open Christmas morning, to a col-



Angeles Rodriguez in her gown from her graduation from TWU in 2020. Courtesy of Angeles Rodriguez.

lege education and now a job."

Now Rodriguez looks to what is next. She hopes to continue working for The Stewpot as a case manager to help more families and eventually get her Master of Social Work degree. She also looks back and remembers her parents' vision of providing their children with the opportunities that they have now. Though moving to a new country can be scary, Rodriguez has learned to thrive in her new environment.

Suzanne Erickson is senior director of programs at The Stewpot.

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With the help of Oak Lawn United Methodist Church, Judge Clay Jenkins, Dallas County and the City of Dallas, Faith Forward Dallas created **Dallas Responds**, a program that opened and ran a respite center to receive migrants. The hub had overnight housing and volunteers trained to help migrants reach local contacts and coordinate transportation. Critical needs, like medical and mental health care, diapers, clean clothes, showers and hot meals were also provided at the center. The program was put on pause when the enforcement of border policies changed, but may resume as immigration numbers climb again.

“It didn’t seem like they were bad conditions,” said Alex Lee-Cornell. “Nobody was visibly suffering. But any time you have hundreds and hundreds of boys that are sharing a giant space... that is no better than what a detention facility would be like.”

Case management services for immigrants and those experiencing homelessness offer even more personalized assistance, and can help clients set goals, connect them to resources, and even speed processing and obtaining services. Case managers for those experiencing homelessness, like those at **The Stewpot** or from the City of Dallas’s **Fresh Start** program, can help clients obtain public housing, Social Security, food stamps, and other benefits by providing and helping fill out applications and other paperwork. Veterans service officers, which act like case managers to veterans looking for benefits, can **save years of waiting time** and double a veteran’s disability benefits, compared with veterans filing their own claims.

Case management for immigrants, especially for unaccompanied minors, can connect people to needed support and legal services. According to the **National Immigrant Justice Center**, “indi-

viduals with counsel are more likely to pursue relief from deportation and win their cases.” Immigrants who are not detained are nearly five times as likely to win their case with legal representation; immigrants who are detained are 11 times more likely to win their cases; and children with representation are nearly five times as likely to be allowed to remain in the United States. Case management for unaccompanied minor immigrants can also **help children leave emergency intake sites more quickly**.

Additionally, many cases of both homelessness and immigration originate with trauma. A diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is associated with a **higher risk of housing instability**, and, according to the **National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty**, “domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness” for women.

The experience of homelessness can itself be traumatizing. According to the **National Alliance to End Homelessness**, both the event of becoming homeless and the ongoing experience of homelessness can lead to PTSD. The subsequent **increased risk of violence, victimization and discrimination** caused by homelessness can also add to the trauma.

Similarly, immigrants often experience what the **Dallas Morning News** calls “a chain of traumatizing violence.” According to Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, the United States is currently **encountering potential immigrants at a pace not seen in the last 20 years**. A large source of the rising immigration levels is increasing violence and crime in Latin America, including **families escaping extortion** and unaccompanied minors **fleeing gang recruitment and violence in Honduras**.

The path many travel to flee violence in their homeland takes them through high-risk areas like the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, which the U.S. State Department gives the highest do-not-travel warning due to the crime in the area, including kidnappings, extortion and robberies. **Unaccompanied minors may be further traumatized** by their stay with Border Patrol and Health and Human Services, where they are often kept in highly regulated, sparse conditions with little access to information or communication with their families.

Furthermore, the discrimination faced by immigrants can lead to violence even after entering the country. Immigrants have reported **harassment and other hate crimes**, and some individuals have been **murdered** due to their perceived immigrant status. Moreover, the stigma surrounding immigrant status can lead to **worse health care and worse mental health outcomes**.

Mental health services, provided by organizations like **Parkland Hospital**, can help both those experiencing homelessness and immigrants cope with the trauma of their experiences, and reducing the stigma associated with homelessness or immigration can help prevent further trauma. Organizations like **Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance** and the **National Alliance to End Homelessness** lead research into homelessness and provide educational material on the topic to the public.

Texas Impact takes a more direct approach. In 2019, Texas Impact started a program called “Courts and Ports.” The two and half day program takes people to observe how border policy is enforced at the border, including observing immigration courts and volunteering with asylum seekers. During 2019, “they were doing illegal entries in the federal courts,” said Sarah Cruz, policy specialist for Texas Impact. “Groups, small groups of people went in, and they were witness to a lot of the things that were happening there and outraged by it...Mike Seifert [of the ACLU] mentioned how things were different when people were inside the court,” which spurred the idea for the program.

For those that work with immigrants, it all comes back to basic human dignity. “We are a nation of immigrants,” said Alex Lee-Cornell. “I think it’s important for us to treat the people who are coming as people who are acting rationally in their own best interests, knowing it’s a risky thing to come to the United States. There’s no guarantees. For them to do that, they must be experiencing awful desperation, violence [and] poverty in their home countries...Whether it’s adults or children, we should be treating everyone like a child of God. Somebody...worthy of dignity and respect and compassion.”

Nicole Kiser is managing editor of STREETZine.

[inspiring journalism]

International Network of Street Papers
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What would you say to people who are homeless here today in Dallas, particularly children? I was struck by you previously saying that the world reminds homeless children that they are worthless.

For the children, I would say this is not your fault. It's not your responsibility.

When I became homeless and an orphan, my grandfather's younger brother, whom I called "small grandfather," took me into his house when he needed labor. There was a common transaction between older people and homeless children. They would hire them and send them back to the street. And since these were abnormal times, where he had little to live on, my "small grandfather" was doing everything he could to help me.

One day, he needed me to collect wood from a mountain, which required intense physical labor. We were on the way back from the mountain when I saw a bunch of students marching toward me. I was embarrassed and put my head down.

He saw that and days later told me a story from a book that he had read while in college. The story basically was that three guys on the street who were stealing food got caught and sentenced to prison on an island. When they finished their time in prison, they were released into society.

But they didn't have the skills to reenter society, so they went back to stealing food from the street. They got caught again and were sent back to the

prison on the island. On the way there, they threw themselves into the water because they knew how difficult it would be for them back on that island.

When he told me that, I essentially thought, what the heck are you trying to say? But in retrospect, it was his way of telling me that it was not my fault that I became homeless. I shouldn't feel embarrassed. He couldn't tell me that directly because he could be sent to a prison camp. Telling me that directly would have been seen as a form of breeding resentment or discontent.

So, with children, I absolutely agree it is not their fault. And we shouldn't treat them differently because they are homeless. They shouldn't feel embarrassed, although that is super hard. It also requires people sharing that common understanding and treating homeless children fairly. It is unfair that they go through that experience at such a young age.

You have also said that you don't want your past to define who you are today, and that sad and happy memories are equal parts of who you are today. Could you please talk about that?

That means I want to own both my sad and happy memories. Because so many bad and terrible things happened, I tend to share only that story in public. But that is not a healthy way to share my story. I am only owning the negative part, and that should not be true. I am the master of both positive and negative stories. I want to make sure I own both sides.

I don't want my experience to define who I am.

People will think of me as North Korean, automatically. That's up to them. But the real question is how will I perceive myself?

And here you are today, a college graduate, an American citizen, and working to alert people to human rights violations around the world.

So, with children, I absolutely agree it is not their fault. And we shouldn't treat them differently because they are homeless. They shouldn't feel embarrassed, although that is super hard. ... It is unfair that they go through that experience at such a young age.

I don't want that human rights occupation to solely define me. I am passionate about that work and want to do that for my people. But I don't introduce myself as a human rights activist or an author. Those can define people, and I don't like that. I want to keep doing this for the North Korean people, but I don't want to just be defined by that work.

Bill McKenzie is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas and the STREETZine Editorial Advisory Board.



Jenny Konkin visits with a Whole Way House client in the Veterans Memorial Manor at 310 Alexander St.

Whole Way House Creates Homes with Heart

By Rebecca Bollwitt

Vancouver, British Columbia—For Jenny Konkin, home means connection, and that's what she brings to the residents of the Downtown Eastside through her non-profit organization, Whole Way House. The registered charity aims to reach out to marginalized people made vulnerable by society, while building meaningful relationships and a community that instills worth, value and dignity.

And it all started with a family meal.

Konkin grew up in East Vancouver and remembers Sunday dinners where family members shared stories. It's that connection, over heaping plates of her grandmother's pasta, that inspired her to create a safe, welcoming space for residents of the Downtown Eastside.

She co-founded Whole Way House in 2013, three years into her career managing two single-room occupancy buildings that her family had owned since the 1970s. "Growing up, the Downtown Eastside was just part of my life," says Konkin.

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She previously worked in hospitality marketing, but her career path changed when her father was diagnosed with cancer in 2009. Her grandmother asked Konkin and her brother Josh to take over management of the Silver and Avalon Hotels.

In 2010, the pair went in thinking they already understood the community. “We were both quite successful in our careers and really thought that we could come into this and ‘fix’ the Downtown Eastside,” Konkin recalls.

She and her brother thought they could bring in clothing and food, and perhaps help with résumé writing. “I needed to be humbled, obviously,” she says when reflecting upon that time.

As they got to know the residents, they recognized there were much deeper issues. “My first lesson was when there was a resident who passed away,” Konkin says. No resident knew if he had family, or any other information, although he had lived in the building for years.

“That just broke my heart,” Konkin admits. “I thought, ‘OK, I might not be able to ‘fix’ the entire Downtown Eastside, but I can fix that.’ People don’t have to live completely alone and then die alone.”

Konkin’s goal was to simply let people know they are loved and accepted exactly as they are. Konkin asked herself, “How do we connect with them and break down that first barrier?”

She thought of a games night. “We just wanted people to have a place to get to know each other

and hang out because that was the first step of reconnecting,” Konkin says.

The next step was inspired by a trip to the Quest Food Exchange. The warehouse manager mentioned he had just received a big shipment and was having a hard time finding a place to store it. “He said, ‘It’s tortellini.’ And I was like, ‘I can work with that!’” Konkin grins.

Family dinners led to more programs, like a Crockpot Cooking Class and art classes. The social enterprise came next.

When Konkin’s father first received his prognosis, he was told he had four to 12 months to live. “After those first four months, he said, ‘You know what? Every day is a gift and I’m changing my I-have-to to I-get-to. I don’t have to sit in traffic; I get to do that. I get to wait in line at the store today because I’m still alive — that’s actually a gift.’”

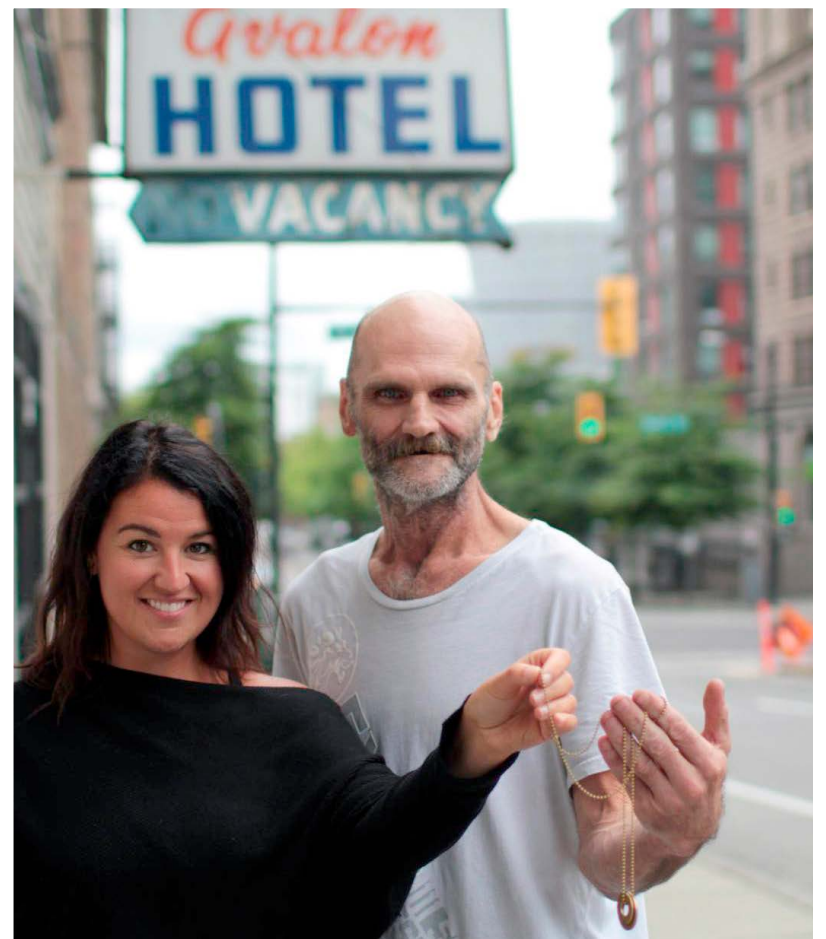
After her dad died four-and-a-half years later, she wanted to share his message. The I Get To legacy project (IGetTo.ca) came out of that.

“I recognized that a lot of the gentlemen I worked with may have barriers to full-time employment, but it didn’t mean that they didn’t want to work,” Konkin explains. She went to the hardware store and bought a metal washer and a stamping set. She stamped the words “I Get To” into the washer.

Then she taught the residents the process and they began making necklace chains, stamping the washers and creating jewelry that would not only give them income, but give back to Whole Way House programming — funding things like the Sunday dinners. It created a sense of community pride.

Whole Way House eventually partnered with BC Housing to replicate their programs and move over to the Veterans Memorial Manor. They tailored new programs to the senior men and veterans living there.

Just as Whole Way House had adapted to serving its new commu-



Megaphone vendor Kris Cronk with Jenny Konkin, president and co-founder of Whole Way House. The pair shows off some of the specially stamped jewelry made by Whole Way House clients.

nity, COVID-19 struck. Whole Way House, with funding from BC Housing, arranged door-to-door meal deliveries so seniors could isolate safely.

The program has delivered 175,000 meals to date, and Whole Way House expanded from a staff of four to a staff of 18. The group serves upwards of 600 seniors and vulnerable residents in 19 buildings. The meal delivery work enabled staff to retain their connections, check on residents and even help some book tele-health appointments.

The BC Non-Profit Housing Association’s 2020 Homeless Count in Metro Vancouver found that those over age 55 represent about one-quarter of respondents, and there is an upward trend in homelessness among seniors. Whole Way House recently received a grant for renter services to start closing that gap.

She encourages everyone to reach out to their neighbors and seniors to see how they’re doing and ask if they need help. “If anything’s going to change in anyone’s life or if anyone is going to know that they have value, the very first thing is that you have to have a connection,” she says.

Rebecca Boolwitt contributes to Megaphone, Vancouver, B.C.’s street paper. This article is courtesy of Megaphone / INSP.ngo



Konkin enjoys some COVID-19-safe fun with another Whole Way House client.

Stewpot Artists



Porch for Friends
Stephen Kehr



Night Owl
Gershon Trunnell

8 Things to Know About Immigrants and Homelessness

STREETZine occasionally draws from academic studies and public reports to understand more about homelessness and its impact on individuals and communities. In this edition, we draw from the research of **Jack Tsai**, dean of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, and Yale School of Public Health graduate Xian Gu to learn more about the relationship between immigrants and homelessness.

The pair's 2018 research into this relationship appeared in the March 2019 edition of **Public Health**, the journal of The Royal Society for Public Health. Below are some of the key findings from their **study** of nearly 30,000 native-born U.S. adults and almost 6,400 foreign-born adults. Of course, we urge readers to always explore more than one source in whatever subject they might be researching.

According to their research:

1. "There was no significant difference in rates of lifetime adult homelessness between foreign-born adults and native-born adults."
2. "Foreign-born participants were less likely to have various mental and substance-use disorders, less likely to receive welfare, and less likely to have any lifetime incarceration."
3. "Foreign-born adults with homeless histories were more likely to be heterosexual, married/have live-in partner, living in an urban area, receiving social security, and to have sedatives-use disorder than native-born adults with homeless histories."
4. "The number of years foreign-born adults lived in the United States was significantly associated with risk for homelessness."
5. "Foreign-born adults who lived more years in the United States who were receiving welfare, had certain mental health disorders (major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, or psychosis) and substance-use disorders (tobacco or alcohol-use disorder), and had any lifetime incarceration were significantly more likely to report any lifetime adult homelessness."
6. "While there are annual point-in-time counts of homeless individuals every year in communities across the country, no data are collected on immigrant status."
7. "Foreign-born participants were less likely to have any health insurance and less likely to have ever been incarcerated compared with native-born participants."
8. "Foreign-born adults at risk for homelessness may require special outreach since they are less likely to have health insurance coverage, may have language barriers and lack of knowledge about support programs, may be more reliant on social capital and supportive ethnic networks, and may experience other cultural issues."

Around The Stewpot: Rent and Utilities Assistance

By Nicole Kiser

STREETZine spoke with Suzanne Erickson, senior director of programs at The Stewpot, about the rent and utilities assistance provided by The Stewpot.

The Stewpot is known as a service provider for those experiencing homelessness. From its partnership with The Bridge providing regular meals, to its mail services, to the caseworkers that help clients obtain housing, many of The Stewpot's programs center around those experiencing homelessness. But what if they could prevent people from becoming homeless at all?

It's well known that those experiencing homelessness face increased barriers. Without housing, **employment can be hard to find and maintain. Their health worsens. Children do worse in school. Even voting becomes a challenge.** Providing assistance with rent and utilities could prevent people from losing their housing, and stop the cascade of consequences from even beginning.

And then came the pandemic. **Unemployment levels soared.** Many lost their jobs, worked with reduced hours, or became quarantined after becoming ill, leaving some dangerously behind on their bills. **Immigrants found themselves especially vulnerable,** with crowded living and working conditions making them more likely to catch COVID-19, and less stable employment conditions making them more likely to become unemployed.

The **federal eviction moratorium** has prevented some evictions, but many state moratoriums have already ended, and the federal moratorium is set to expire on July 31. As months of bills have piled up, and the **economy has still not returned to pre-pandemic levels,** experts across the country are worried the nation is headed toward an **eviction cliff,** where thousands are evicted from their housing due to the economic stress caused by the pandemic.

Governments on all levels are scrambling to prevent an eviction epidemic. And that's where The Stewpot comes in. With access to new grants from the City of Dallas, the states, and the CARES Act, The Stewpot has been able to launch a rent and utilities assistance program. In 2020 alone, The Stewpot **provided \$247,150.66 of assistance**

to **125 individuals and households,** preventing them from becoming homeless.

"We provide the funds for them to stay in their housing," says Suzanne Erickson, senior director of programs at The Stewpot. "Even if they have fallen behind on their rent, we can help them catch back up." For The Stewpot's program, the household has to be financially impacted by COVID-19 and live in the city of Dallas. Other eligibility requirements vary by the grant that will provide the assistance.

In order to see the requirements and apply, people can go to The Stewpot's **website** or call for further assistance. "People fill out the online application and that puts them on the waiting list. Someone will usually get back with them within about one to two weeks, if they are eligible," says Erickson.

"[The program] provides a needed relief for people who have struggled financially during the pandemic," says Erickson. "Housing is so important to keep people healthy and well. If people would have started getting evicted in large numbers, there would have been nowhere for them to go, and it is safer for people to stay in their homes during a health crisis."

Nicole Kiser is managing editor of STREETZine.

Stewpot Artists



*Go Tell it on the
Mountain
Cornelious
Brackens, Jr.*

Street Newspapers - A Voice for the Homeless & Impoverished

What is STREETZine?

STREETZine is a nonprofit newspaper published by The Stewpot of First Presbyterian Church for the benefit of people living in poverty. It includes news, particularly about issues important to those experiencing homelessness. STREETZine creates direct economic opportunity. New vendors receive ten free papers. After the first ten, vendors pay twenty-five cents for a paper to be distributed for a one-dollar or more donation. Vendors typically profit seventy-five cents from each paper. Vendors are self-employed and set their own hours. Distributing STREETZine is protected by the First Amendment.

Advertise in STREETZine

Support STREETZine and its vendors with your business or personal advertisements and announcements.

\$25.00 - Business Card
(3.5 x 2)

\$50.00 - Box
(3.5 x 4)

\$100.00 - Jumbo
(6.5 x 5)

\$200.00 - Half Page
(6.5 x 10)

\$400.00 - Full Page
(12 x 10)

Email:
streetzine@thestew-
pot.org

STREETZine

Self-Help For People Living In
Poverty

Distributing STREETZine is protected by the First Amendment.

STREETZine Vendors are self employed and set their own hours.

They are required to wear a vendor badge at all times when distributing the paper. In order to distribute STREETZine vendors agree to comply with Dallas City Ordinances.

If at any time you feel a vendor is in violation of any Dallas City Ordinance please contact us immediately with the vendor name or number at streetzine@thestewpot.org

CHAPTER 31, SECTION 31-35 of the Dallas City Code PANHANDLING OFFENSES

Solicitation by coercion; solicitation near designated locations and facilities; solicitation anywhere in the city after sunset and before sunrise any day of the week. Exception can be made on private property with advance written permission of the owner, manager, or other person in control of the property.

A person commits an offense if he conducts a solicitation to any person placing or preparing to place money in a parking meter.

The ordinance specifically applies to solicitations at anytime within 25 feet of:

- Automatic teller machines;
- Exterior public pay phones;
- Public transportation stops;
- Self service car washes;
- Self service gas pumps;
- An entrance or exit of a bank, credit union or similar financial institution;
- Outdoor dining areas of fixed food establishments.

What should we cover next? Fill out our survey at:

<https://bit.ly/2WbMRsg>

Sponsor a vendor for \$15.00*

Your vendor will receive sixty papers which will help him or her earn \$60.00.

Please include the vendor's name and badge number on this form.

Vendor Name

Vendor #

Make checks or money orders payable to

The Stewpot and send them to:

STREETZine 1835 Young Street, Dallas, TX 75201

*If your vendor is no longer distributing papers your donation will be applied towards papers that are shared among active vendors.

[] Check here if you prefer that your check be returned if your vendor is no longer active.

Only badged vendors are authorized to distribute STREETZine. VENDOR #