

The Student Affairs Diversity Council (SADC) strives to cultivate an environment that embraces and promotes the broad scope of diversity within the division.

Houselessness in Our Community

By Mrya Mangan and Abby Feenstra
Alternative Breaks student and staff partner team

27 million American adults do not have \$400 dollars they could access in an emergency. Not only do they not have it in savings, they don't have anyone to borrow it from, a credit card, or something they could sell. Does this resonate with you?

It may resonate more if you or someone you provide care for has experienced some sort of health crisis. The cost of a trip to the emergency room has been steadily rising over the past decade, even for those fortunate enough to have health insurance coverage. In 2016, the average spending on an emergency room visit for people who have health insurance was \$1,917. And we have all heard the horror stories of individuals who experienced something as commonplace as an allergic reaction to a bee sting and were left paying off the expense of their urgent care for years to come - or people who call Ubers when they need to go to the hospital, to avoid a costly ambulance ride. If you were hit with an unexpected medical expense, could you bounce back?

For many people living in America, half of their income is taken up by rent. The definition of affordable housing is paying no more than 1/3 of your income on rent/a mortgage. If an emergency came up, like above, or you were to lose your job, would you be able to pay for a month or two months rent?

These are all avenues leading to the possibility of someone, even yourself becoming houseless. Take a second to think about how close you are to experiencing this yourself. What options could be available to you to keep you from experiencing houselessness? For us, we have a large family support who could help us if needed. This fall while in Seattle on an Alternative Break, we met and worked with individuals, who through certain circumstances and limited options, were experiencing houselessness.

(Throughout this article we will be using the term houselessness instead of homelessness. This is for a variety



of reasons. We want to highlight the differences associated with a "house" vs. those associated with a "home" (note: when we refer to a house, we also include apartments, condominiums, shared space with parents/family, and all other forms of stable shelter). A house is a place to safely sleep, eat, store personal items, and live, while the definition of a home can vary by person, but typically includes some sort of emotional fulfillment and/or connections to other people (or pets!).)

Our trip to Seattle was an amazing opportunity to connect with other students and learn about an ignored and unacknowledged social justice issue and population. We had one week to learn, destigmatize, and work alongside our community. We completed 257 service hours at 9 different organizations. Each organization focused on a different part of helping someone experiencing houselessness ranging from the food bank, to a day center focused on recovery.

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We worked with a variety of people throughout our Alternative Break in Seattle, people with multiple different identities. These identities included women, people of color, people experiencing mental health concerns, people with disabilities, young people, older people, survivors of domestic violence, parents, children, and people going through recovery and/or struggling with addiction. Hearing the stories of all of these different individuals served as a great reminder of all of the different factors that can contribute to homelessness in our communities, and can make some individuals more vulnerable to experiencing homelessness than others. Our group had thoughtful and sometimes difficult conversations about how the racial identity of the people we were working with was often different than our majority-white Alternative Breaks cohort, and how employment and health care are often less accessible to people of color because of white supremacy.

We visited a women's shelter and learned about how domestic violence, which disproportionately impacts women, can lead to a woman having to choose between staying off the street and keeping herself and her children alive. An overarching takeaway from our experience was the vast number of people unable to live quote "normal" lives because of mental illness, and how severely our society stigmatizes the mentally ill and is resistant to providing

services for them. Another population our society has left behind is veterans, and particularly veterans who also have a mental health concern, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). And of course, no discussion on homelessness is complete without an acknowledgement of America's addiction crisis and the various factors that can drive someone to a substance use disorder, which also include many of the issues discussed above, such as mental illness and surviving violence and trauma.

"What stood out the most for me during this break was how similar many of the individuals experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity were to me and to people in my life. I've always thought of homelessness as something 'other,' something that happened to people with dramatically different life circumstances than mine, but many of the people I met had extensive education and work experience, and still could not afford housing. I've also always thought of homelessness as something occurring only to people who were profoundly alone in the world, but I was surprised to learn how many of the people we worked with had families and support systems that were trying their hardest to help, but couldn't make ends meet enough to get their loved one off the street and into stable housing in an expensive city like Seattle." - Abby

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Recently On NPR



[Does The 'Good Guy With A Gun' Tagline Work If That Guy Is Black?](#)

You've heard the tagline before. The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun. But that hasn't always been the case — especially when the good guy with a gun is black.

[Listen Online>>](#)

[90s Bitch](#)

Journalist Allison Yarrow says in the 90s a woman reaching for power or just in the public eye was often labeled a "bitch." And that word became a weapon used to hold women back.

[Listen Online>>](#)



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"My favorite part of the trip was working with the Union Gospel Mission and going out during their Search and Rescue. Every night, teams go out in vans around the county to distribute food, blankets, hot chocolate, clothes, and hygiene products for people who are sleeping in tents and on the streets. They also are available to pray with people and if an individual chooses, they have beds available in their shelter program to help them out of houselessness. This was an amazing and different opportunity to take the services to people, instead of them having to seek out resources." - Mrya

There are around 12,500 individuals in Seattle King County who are experiencing houselessness. In Salt Lake City, 2,876 people were experiencing houselessness during 2018 on any given night. There's a significant difference between these numbers, but still 15,000+ too many. The number of people becoming houseless is on the rise in Salt Lake County due to high rates of opioid addiction, unaffordable housing, and young adults being kicked out because of their sexuality (in Utah, 50-60% of houseless youth identify as LGBTQ).

There are many organizations who work with people who are houseless in Utah. The Road Home provides shelter, case management, and housing assistance. The VOA provides treatment for men, women, and families. They also have a Youth Resource Center specifically for young adults

experiencing houselessness. Volunteering at an organization is a great way to be a part of your community and help people experiencing houselessness. A very simple way to be a part of the community is to also not ignore people you see on the sidewalk. Say hi, smile, or give them something. It doesn't have to be money, you could buy an extra cup of coffee or a snack for them or ask them what they need/want and see if you are able to provide that.

Another great way to learn more about your community and create an impact is by being a part of an Alternative Break. Alternative Breaks focus on many different social justice issues that you will see to be interconnected with each other. You not only learn a lot about our community, but also have the opportunity to make new friends and see life from different perspectives. If you want to learn more visit: bennioncenter.org/students/alternative-breaks

If you or someone you know is experiencing or on the verge of experiencing housing insecurity, you can contact the United Way Info and Referral line by dialing 211 on your phone. They can help you connect with organizations who help with shelter, down payments, apartment lists, and support.

<https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=617264314>
<https://money.cnn.com/2018/03/19/news/economy/emergency-room-er-bills/index.html>
<https://www.businessinsider.com/how-much-rent-afford-2017-6>
<http://www.slcp.org/files/board/voapresentation102317.pdf>

TED Talks



[The story of a parent's transition and a son's redemption](#)

Paula Stone Williams knew from a young age that she was transgender. But as she became a parent and prominent evangelical pastor, she feared that coming out would mean losing everything. In this moving, deeply personal talk, Paula and her son Jonathan Williams share what Paula's transition meant for their family -- and reflect on their path to redemption. As Jonathan says: "I cannot ask my father to be anything other than her true self."



[How to break the cycle of toxic masculinity](#)

In a powerful talk, educator Eldra Jackson III shares how he unlearned dangerous lessons about masculinity through Inside Circle, an organization that leads group therapy for incarcerated men. Now he's helping others heal by creating a new image of what it means to be a whole, healthy man. "The challenge is to eradicate this cycle of emotional illiteracy and groupthink," he says.

Reflection

By Abby Feenstra, Legislative Advisor, ASUU

When I was 23 years old, I experienced one of the most transformative moments of my life. I was in my first semester of my graduate program at the University of Vermont. My program used a cohort model, so myself and 15 other students took every class together for all four semesters. Many of our classes addressed historic and current inequities in higher education, and, as happens in many higher education graduate programs, intense topics + diverse student backgrounds/experiences = constant classroom conflict. The topic we squared off about most often was race and white privilege.

Prior to coming to graduate school, I had considered myself a strong advocate for social justice, particularly in the areas of feminism and LGBTQ rights. But in these conversations about race, I was consistently feeling demonized as a white person, and would frequently go home riddled in guilt and often, anger. Who were these people to act like all white people were inherently bad? Didn't they know I supported Black Lives Matter, and Latinx immigration, and the rights of indigenous peoples, and, and, and... I was a classic example of white fragility. I didn't want to hear about the negative effects of whiteness on people of color. I was okay with acknowledging racism existed, but not with discussing my own unconscious biases around race.

At the end of that semester, I had a conversation with a white colleague who was actively engaging in antiracist work on campus. We were talking about different kinds of privilege, and he said something I will never forget: "Being a white person in America is like being on a conveyor belt that slowly pulls you towards racism. You can't just stand there, you have to actively walk against it." I had scoffed at this, and he responded, "It's like men and rape culture. To be a man and to do nothing is to be complicit – you have to walk against that conveyor belt." And suddenly, I saw what I had been doing all semester. Although no two types of oppression are exactly alike, it was this loose comparison between racism and sexism/rape culture that finally illuminated to me how ignorant I had been. In all my conversations about sexual assault prevention as an undergraduate student activist, how much would it have meant to me to have one man – just one – stand up and say yes, this is a problem, women deserve better? And here I was in classroom discussions, holding a privileged identity as a white person and actively dismissing the lived experiences of people of color. It was unacceptable. I had to change.

Of course, I still hold unconscious biases around race. I always will. That's true of every white person who grows up



in American society. I also hold unconscious biases about Muslims, and trans* people, and people with different abilities, and people who come from different countries, and anybody who is different from me at all, really. That's why it is so important to continue the unlearning work I thought I had started in college, but actually hadn't even scratched the surface of until graduate school. It is going to be painful, and there are moments when I will mess up. Honestly, there are moments when I already have messed up. But it is only through pursuing these difficult conversations that I can continue to learn and grow as a person.

Completing the requirements of the Student Affairs Diversity Certificate did not provide me with any striking moments of illumination like the moment I had when I was in graduate school. At first, this frustrated me: how could I know I was still on the right path if my world wasn't constantly being upended? But then I realized, social justice work is not comprised of big lightning-bolt moments, because those just aren't sustainable. Actual social justice work needs to be infused into your everyday life, whether that's consciously blocking time out of your overstuffed schedule to go learn about a population that you're unfamiliar with, or taking a moment to recognize when you're feeling guilty, or angry, or defensive, and asking yourself: why do I feel this way? And more importantly: which side of the conveyor belt is my reaction pulling me towards? We are all moving slowly towards some form of oppression. It's up to each of us to walk against the belt.

Upcoming Events

Feb 5 @ 12:00-1:00pm

Public Health Grand Rounds: "Population-Based Cohort of Cancer Survivors in Utah"

Public Health Classroom 203 [[more info](#)]

Feb 5 @ 6:00-7:30pm

Professional Panel Session:

Underrepresented Professional's Journey

Union 293 [[more info](#)]



Feb 6 @ 11:00am-12:00pm

Lean In: Women, Work, and The Will To Lead

350 SSB [[more info](#)]

Feb 11 @ 7:00-8:30pm

Distinguished Lecture: Tendayi Achiume

GC 2018 [[more info](#)]

Feb 12 @ 11:00am-12:00pm

World Leaders Lecture Forum: Vicente Fox

Kingsbury Hall [[tickets and more info](#)]

Feb 12 @ 12:30-1:30pm

"Just Go In Looking:" The Resistance, Resilience, and Kinship-Building of Trans* College Students

Gould Auditorium, Marriott Library [[more info](#)]



Spring 2019—Tuesdays, 10:00-11:30am

Limitless U: A therapy group for students along the autism spectrum

426 SSB [[more info about this and other groups](#)]

Every Friday @ 3-5pm

Fabulous Fridays, LGBT Resource Center Room 409

Find More Events at:

- <http://diversity.utah.edu/events/>
- <https://www.utah.edu/events/>

Upcoming Seminar

Intersection of Gender and Work

Claudia Geist,
Associate Professor,
Gender Studies, Sociology



Wednesday, February 20th

12:00-1:30pm

Pano East, Union

[\[more information\]](#)

Upcoming Modules

Upcoming training modules will be held on April 2nd (module 1) & 24th (modules 2 & 3).

For information about these modules or to register, please visit: <http://sadc.utah.edu>.



sadc.utah.edu

Debra Daniels (Co-chair), Women's Resource Center
Kari Ellingson (Co-chair), Student Development
michael bard, Registrar's Office
Gabiella Blanchard, LGBT Resource Center
Neelam Chand, Office of Equity & Diversity
Branden Dalley, Union Administration
Tim Davis, Housing & Residential Education
Elizabeth Duszac, Assessment, Evaluation, & Research
Kyle Ethelbah, TRIO Programs
Carmen Gold-Johnson, Career & Professional Development
Charity Harding, Disability & Access
Bobbjo Kanter, Bennion Community Service Center

Ryan Kirchner, Campus Recreation Services
Roberto Martinez, Counseling Center
Jenna Matsumura, Women's Enrollment Initiative
Madalena McNeil, Office of Admissions
Matthew Plooster, Scholarships & Financial Aid
Nomani Satuala, Office of Orientation & Transition
Jenni Schreiner, Housing & Residential Education
Jenna Templeton, Center for Student Wellness
Ulysses Tongaonevai, Office of the Dean of Students
Jess Turuc, Fraternity & Sorority Life
Olivia Harker, Student Development (Committee Support)