

# Homelessness as a Social Justice Issue

Vikki C. Terrile, MSLS, MA, ABD

Assistant Professor

Queensborough Community College, CUNY

[vcterrile@gmail.com](mailto:vcterrile@gmail.com)

[vterrile@qcc.cuny.edu](mailto:vterrile@qcc.cuny.edu)

**We need to reclaim the power of critique as the sword arm of social justice and not relinquish it.  
-Peter McLaren, Professor and Critical Pedagogue**



**Social justice is concerned with the structures of society and their results. Because it is results-oriented, it discerns whether the structures of society—in other words, the social system as a whole—are just in their efforts.**

- Marcus Borg, scholar and theologian

Homelessness is a **RACE**  
**CLASS**  
**GENDER**  
**AGE**  
**ABILITY**  
**SEXUALITY** issue.



Housing insecurity and housing deprivation mark out some populations for the probability of enduring a life without housing, denied the safety and health that a home helps secure. Housing draws from already existing racial subordinations and entrenches and intensifies the death-making effects of those racisms, and so this "some populations" is neither arbitrary nor accidental.

–Craig Willse,

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Homelessness is a *e*  
feature of capitalism, not an  
accidental one, or one that can be  
solved by focusing on individuals

# Medical/Therapeutic Models

Power is held and wielded by  
“experts”

Solutions geared towards  
fixing/changing individuals

May question but doesn't attempt  
to disrupt unjust systems

May be rooted in pity, charity, guilt





# Shifting the Narrative in Libraries

What would the conversation about homelessness and libraries look like if we approached it as a racial/economic/social justice issue?

Modeled after prison abolitionist approaches to library services for those under carceral control  
Services that are patron-directed and patron-centered  
Programs that are not corrective or deficit-focused

Real political change is unlikely unless those individuals who are most vulnerable to unjust distributions of wealth and power figure significantly, as well in reinvigorating our political institutions and practices, from the ground up.

—Lucie White, Professor, Harvard Law

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# Working it in the Real World

## Relationships

With patrons

With grassroots organizations

## Programming ideas

Literature, writing, art

programs

Community conversations

around housing, wages,

equity

## Outreach

Families & youth

Gathering places

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Be one with the people—not only meditatively but through praxis—through acting on and in and even alongside the world with them.

And it is only through love that we can transform this world.

-Peter McLaren



**Thank you!**  
vterrile@qcc.cuny.edu  
vcterrile@gmail.com

