



First Quarter 2015

Bringing Work to Life

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Welcome

Welcome to the latest quarterly issue of Bringing Work to Life. We are glad that our new book, *How to Build a Nontraditional Career Path: Embracing Economic Disruption*, was recently published by Praeger. Our book describes when and how to create an inspiring and practical nontraditional career path from more than one source of income: <http://www.abc-clio.com/product.aspx?isbn=9781440831584>

It complements our three existing books:

Business Behaving Well: Social Responsibility, from Learning to Doing, (Potomac Books, Inc., 2013) that provides a rationale and roadmap for organizations to incorporate socially responsible practices, building on principles of social justice:

<http://www.potomacbooksinc.com/Books/BookDetail.aspx?productID=293765>

Building Workforce Strength: Creating Value through Workforce and Career Development (Praeger, 2010) that describes the application of workforce and career development principles and practices to strengthen organizations:

<http://www.abc-clio.com/ABC-CLIOCorporate/product.aspx?pc=C3236C>

and *Affiliation in the Workplace: Value Creation in the New Organization* (Praeger, 2003) that describes leadership approaches to integrate the needs of the individual with the needs of the organization for the benefit of both:

<http://www.abc-clio.com/product.aspx?isbn=9781567204360>

This newsletter contains two articles: Skills for a Nontraditional Career Path, and Homelessness.

Skills for a Nontraditional Career Path

It was one of those cold, late winter days in Chicago in 1978. About twenty of us



Ron Elsdon, Ph.D., is founder of *Elsdon Organizational Renewal*, which focuses on supporting organizations enhance effectiveness through revitalized workforce relationships and leadership practices. Prior to establishing his practice, Ron held senior leadership positions at diverse organizations. Ron is also co-founder of New Beginnings Career and College Guidance, which provides caring and personalized help to individuals and families in career guidance, coaching and college planning.

Ron is author of *How to Build a Nontraditional Career Path: Embracing Economic Disruption*, which describes when and how to create an inspiring and practical nontraditional career path from more than one source of income; editor of *Business Behaving Well: Social Responsibility, from Learning to Doing*, which provides a rationale and roadmap for organizations to incorporate

filed rather sheepishly into a hotel conference room. We were there for a three-day workshop on public speaking for engineers. A root canal paled in comparison to the prospect of this experience. My supervisor at the time encouraged me to go. He recognized the need, though probably not the extent of my fear about public speaking. That lack of confidence started many years earlier in elementary school in England and was reinforced by the English equivalent of high school. I had reached the erroneous conclusion by that winter day in Chicago that public speaking was a gift given to only a few at birth and the rest of us, particularly me, would never be able to do it. However, I was willing to give it one last, painful try. Three days later, after what was a transformative workshop experience, I was able, for the first time in my life, to approach the prospect of public speaking not with terror but with the knowledge that this was possible and might even be enjoyable. This transformation was no mean feat and a great credit to the workshop facilitator, Jeremiah Goldstein.

Since then I have given many presentations, and I may even have informed and moved some people in those audiences. Presentations have become energizing experiences for me, and while I am no Socrates reincarnated, it seems that these presentations have been enjoyable for most participants. This is good because public speaking has been an important part of my nontraditional career, whether in a workshop, classroom, or seminar, or during volunteer activities. It was central to launching and sustaining my nontraditional career path. And it is a good example of developing a skill needed for a nontraditional career that might have seemed out of reach but was actually close at hand. As described in our 3Q 2014 newsletter, by a nontraditional career we mean one that is tailored to our individual needs and that consists of more than one source of income.

In *How to Build a Nontraditional Career Path: Embracing Economic Disruption* we examine the range of skills and personal characteristics needed for success in a nontraditional career. These skills and characteristics include a blend of content knowledge and consulting capability to deliver products or services meeting customer needs; sales, marketing, and business skills to reach prospective customers and ensure viability; personal attributes to relate well and communicate effectively with others; time management skills to balance service or operational needs with those of marketing and sales; and organizing skills to create infrastructure, such as information technology and human resource capabilities. In the book we explore the skills and characteristics needed and potential approaches to building them.

Skills and personal characteristics that form a strong foundation for a fulfilling nontraditional career path integrate elements of working well autonomously with organizational and small business leadership, because a nontraditional career includes all of these aspects. We distinguish broadly between skills, the things we do, and personal characteristics, who we are, recognizing that both are equally important and that they are intimately interwoven. Our values frame how we prioritize and approach skills and characteristics. Relevant skills are those things that we do well, that we like doing, and that make a difference in our work. Relevant characteristics are those attributes of who we are that infuse our work, bring meaning to it, and enable us to be most effective. Perhaps most important is acknowledging that we can develop both skills and characteristics as we see fit according to the needs and direction of our nontraditional career path. Indeed, the brief discussion about learning public speaking skills, at the beginning, is an example of doing just that.

socially responsible practices, building on real-world examples from contributing authors, and principles of social justice; editor of *Building Workforce Strength: Creating Value through Workforce and Career Development*, a book that describes the application of workforce and career development principles and practices to strengthen organizations; and author of *Affiliation in the Workplace: Value Creation in the New Organization*, a book describing leadership approaches to integrate the needs of the individual with the needs of the organization for the benefit of both. Ron holds a Ph.D. from Cambridge University in chemical engineering, an M.A. from John F. Kennedy University in career development and a first class honors degree from Leeds University in chemical engineering. With his co-author he was awarded the Walker Prize by the Human Resource Planning Society for the paper that best advances state-of-the-art thinking or practices in human resources.

In *How to Build a Nontraditional Career Path* we examine individual skills and how to develop them in four broad categories: foundational, interpersonal, customer facing, and support service management.

- Foundational skills are fundamental to the creation and development of a nontraditional career. They include:
 - Content knowledge in a particular discipline or activity, business and financial acumen, and time management
- Interpersonal skills particularly relevant to a nontraditional career include:
 - Communication, negotiation, and networking and connecting
- Three important customer-facing skills are:
 - Marketing, consulting, and selling
- Skills in the area of support service management include:
 - Information technology, and human resources

With respect to personal characteristics, the following aspects are particularly significant:

- Integrity, tenacity, self-awareness, empathy, and comfort with ambiguity

We highlight identifying, for these skills and personal characteristics, those that are strengths, those that are development opportunities, and those where partnering may be appropriate. In some cases individual skills and personal characteristics may develop while in conventional employment as part of that employment or in parallel with it, through a combination of on-the-job experience and relevant learning activities. In other cases such development may be planned over time as part of a nontraditional career path. Addressing the following questions can help guide personal development for a nontraditional career path:

- What strengths do I bring to individual skills and personal characteristics? Which skills and characteristics would benefit from additional development and in what order of priority? Which skills might benefit from partnering?
- What development plan will provide the foundation of skills and personal characteristics that I need?

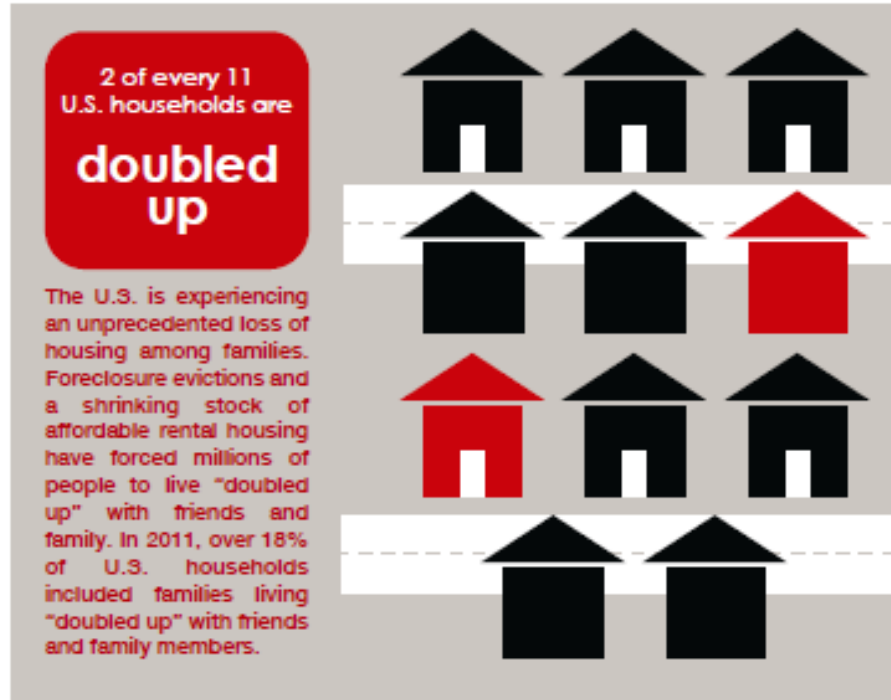
Developing such key skills and personal characteristics is an important part of the foundation for building a vibrant and sustainable nontraditional career path.

Parts of this article are extracted from *How to Build a Nontraditional Career Path: Embracing Economic Disruption*, by Ron Elsdon (Praeger, 2014).

Homelessness

“Imagine a world where it is illegal to sit down. Could you survive if there were no place you were allowed to fall asleep, to store your belongings, or to stand still? For

most of us, these scenarios seem unrealistic to the point of being ludicrous. But, for homeless people across America, these circumstances are an ordinary part of daily life.” These words introduce a 2014 report “No Safe Place: The Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities” by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. They underline the challenge of homelessness, which affects many people. Homelessness is driven in part by a lack of affordable housing and exacerbated by rising inequality in our country. The quotes and diagrams that follow are from this National Law Center study unless otherwise noted.



The number of homeless children in the United States has grown drastically:







Source: America’s Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness, American Institutes for Research, November 2014.

With significant variation by state:

2. State Ranking: 1 to 50

State Composite Score

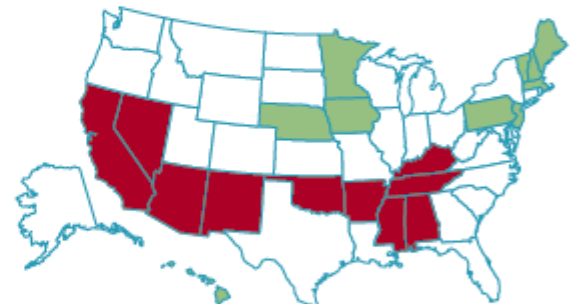
Each state is assigned a rank of 1 (best) to 50 (worst) based on a state composite score that reflects each state's overall performance across four domains:

-  1) Extent of Child Homelessness (adjusted for state population)
-  2) Child Well-Being
-  3) Risk for Child Homelessness
-  4) State Policy and Planning Efforts



Each state received a score for each of the four domains. These are summed to compute the state's composite score to produce the overall state rank of 1 to 50.²

2013 Composite State Rank

State	Score	State	Score
MINNESOTA	1	OREGON	26
NEBRASKA	2	OHIO	27
MASSACHUSETTS	3	COLORADO	28
IOWA	4	NORTH CAROLINA	29
NEW JERSEY	5	INDIANA	30
VERMONT	6	MISSOURI	31
NEW HAMPSHIRE	7	WEST VIRGINIA	32
PENNSYLVANIA	8	FLORIDA	33
HAWAII	9	DELAWARE	34
MAINE	10	NEW YORK	35
MARYLAND	11	SOUTH CAROLINA	36
CONNECTICUT	12	MICHIGAN	37
WYOMING	13	LOUISIANA	38
NORTH DAKOTA	14	TEXAS	39
VIRGINIA	15	GEORGIA	40
MONTANA	16	TENNESSEE	41
SOUTH DAKOTA	17	KENTUCKY	42
WISCONSIN	18	OKLAHOMA	43
RHODE ISLAND	19	NEVADA	44
WASHINGTON	20	ARIZONA	45
UTAH	21	NEW MEXICO	46
KANSAS	22	ARKANSAS	47
ALASKA	23	CALIFORNIA	48
IDAHO	24	MISSISSIPPI	49
ILLINOIS	25	ALABAMA	50



STATE RANKS: 1=Best, 50=Worst

- | | |
|--|---|
|  Top 10 Composite Score |  Bottom 10 Composite Score |
| 1. Minnesota | 41. Tennessee |
| 2. Nebraska | 42. Kentucky |
| 3. Massachusetts | 43. Oklahoma |
| 4. Iowa | 44. Nevada |
| 5. New Jersey | 45. Arizona |
| 6. Vermont | 46. New Mexico |
| 7. New Hampshire | 47. Arkansas |
| 8. Pennsylvania | 48. California |
| 9. Hawaii | 49. Mississippi |
| 10. Maine | 50. Alabama |

Source: America's Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness, American Institutes for Research, November 2014.

And within states, significant variations exist by county as shown here for public school enrollees in California, where nearly 270,000 students experienced homelessness in the 2012-2013 school year, twenty-one percent of the homeless students in the United States:

Figure 1: Percentage of public school enrollees who were recorded as being homeless at any point during the school year, by County (2013).

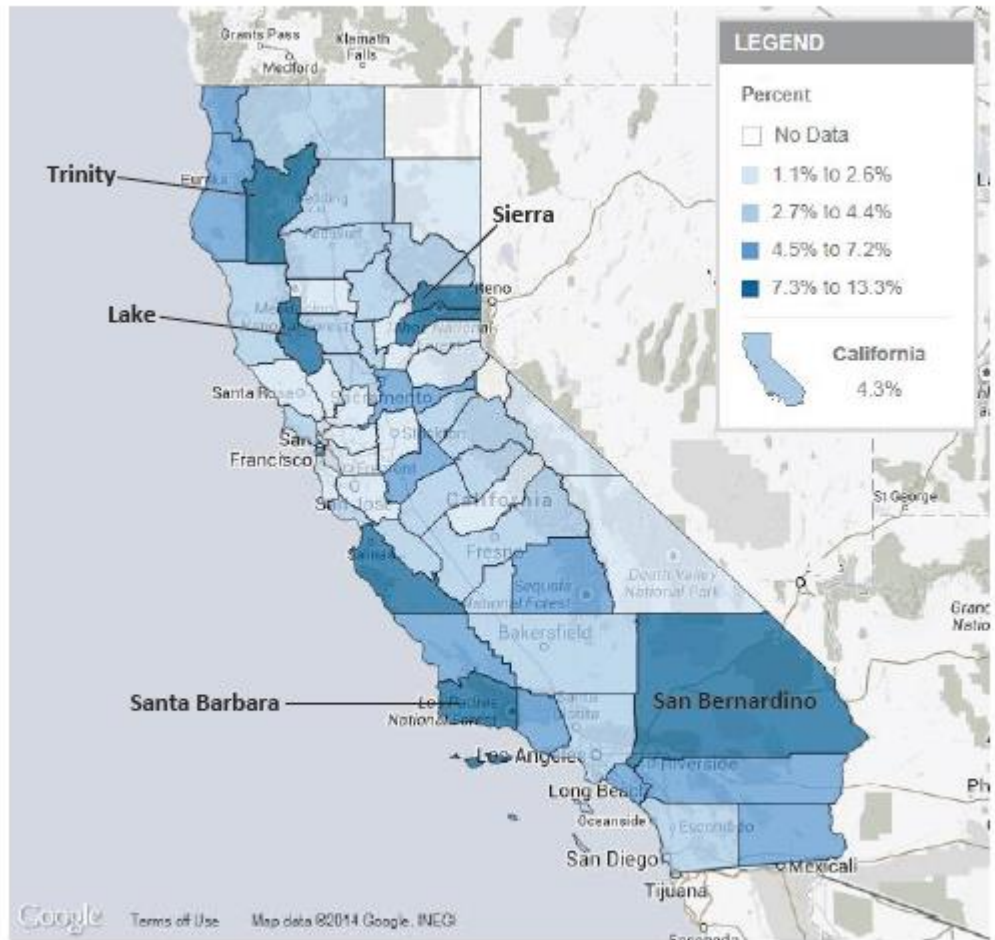


Figure 1.

The five counties with the highest percentage of homeless students are: Trinity (13.3%), Santa Barbara (10.9%), Sierra (9.4%), Lake (8.4%), and San Bernardino (8.1%).

Source: California’s Homeless Students: A Growing Population, California Homeless Youth Project, September 2014.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress in October 2014, nearly one quarter of all homeless people on a given night in January 2014 were children. That means 135,701 children from 578,424 people who were homeless.

Runaway and homeless youth on the street are particularly vulnerable to victimization:



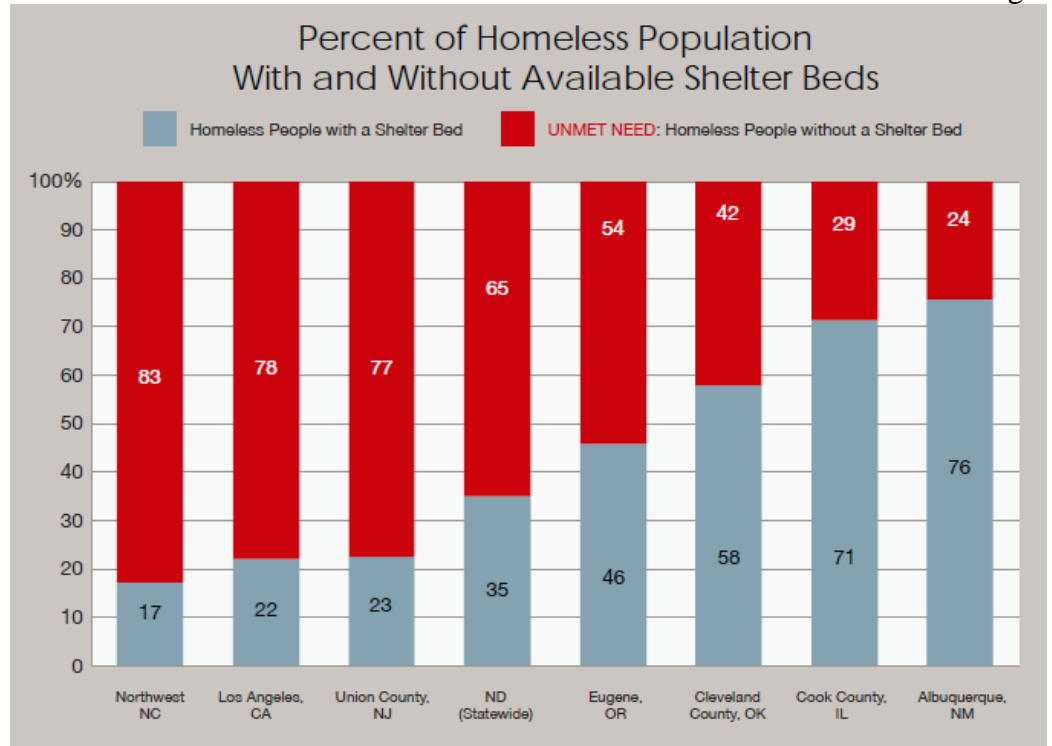
Source: Street Outreach Program, Data Collection Project Executive Summary, Family and Youth Services Bureau, October 2014.

Not surprisingly 62% report struggling with depression. Most were homeless because they were asked to leave by a parent or caregiver, could not find a job, or because they were physically abused or beaten.

Various circumstances can lead to homelessness, for example declining relevance of job skills for adults. The following quote underlines the importance of maintaining a valued skill set. “What led up to my becoming homeless was that I was laid off from a job which I had had for several years and... my house burned down... What I realized was that my skills had become less relevant and I wasn’t all that employable...I had 20th century work skills... I was a purchasing agent... The world’s changed. Anyone with an apartment number and an internet connection can basically find what they need. It’s just not relevant anymore... I didn’t have a relevant, marketable skill.”

– John Harrison, Formerly Homeless Person

While career development can help address such situations there is also great need for public policy to address housing needs as illustrated in the following chart where the shortage of shelter beds is shown for selected locations:



Leading to much suffering:

74% of homeless people do not know a place where it is **SAFE & LEGAL** for them to sleep

Western Regional Advocacy Project, 2013 Survey

“Mr. Smith became homeless after his degenerative joint disease made him no longer able to work in construction. He lived in a camper van for years until it was towed. He couldn’t afford to retrieve it, leaving him with nowhere to reside but in public places in Boise, Idaho, due to frequent overcrowding of area homeless shelters. Mr. Smith was cited for illegal camping and was jailed for a total of 100 days. Due to the arrest, he lost his tent, his stove, and the fishing equipment he relied upon to live.”

MORE THAN HALF

of cities surveyed ban sitting or lying down in particular places



In 2011, 70 cities banned sitting down or lying down in public places.

In 2014, 100 cities banned sitting down or lying down in public places.

This is a 43% increase in just three years



Eva Marie Martinez, a longtime resident of the Jungle homeless camp, is evicted Thursday, December 4, 2014, from the Story Road site along the Coyote Creek in San Jose, California (Karl Mondon/Bay Area News Group)

As in this last photograph, sometimes local policy is at odds with the needs of those who are homeless:

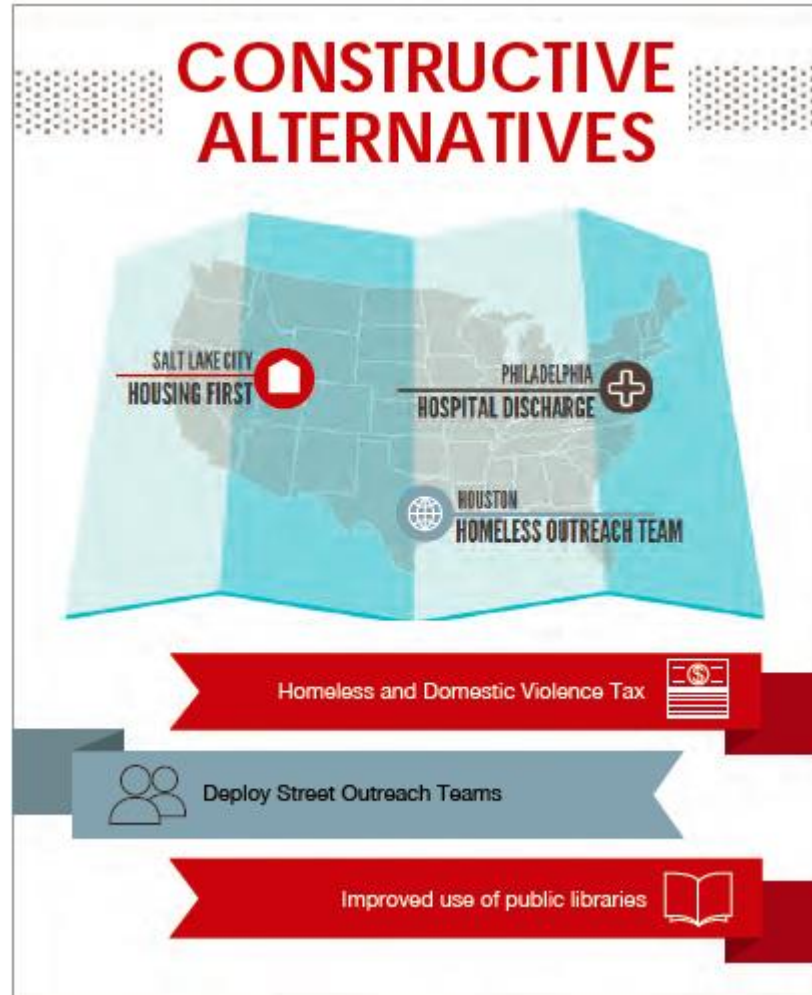
“Pastor Rick Wood of Birmingham, Alabama was ordered by police to stop providing hotdogs and bottled water to homeless people in a city park. ‘This makes me so mad,’ Wood told a local news station. ‘These people are hungry, they’re starving. They need help from people. They can’t afford to buy something from a food truck.’”

And those who are homeless can suffer at the hands of our justice system:



“On February 15, 2014, a homeless veteran, Jerome Murdough, died of dehydration in an overheated jail cell on Rikers Island in New York City. Arrested for trespassing in a public housing stairwell where he sought shelter from sub-freezing temperatures, he was still in jail five days after his arrest for the “crime” of simply trying to survive.”

There are public policies that can help avoid such awful situations, for example:



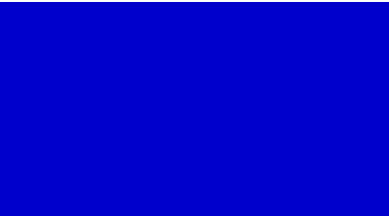
“We address not just the homeless issue, but the why they are homeless, whether it’s mental issues or substance abuse. We have providers we can plug them into, and we’ve been pretty successful.”

Police Officer Jaime Giraldo of Houston’s Homeless Outreach Team.

It is unconscionable that, in this prosperous society of ours, we accept homelessness as a way of life for many people while others accumulate grotesque amounts of wealth. That we fail to provide adequate shelter and affordable housing. That we tolerate 2.5 million children being homeless. In the words of David Shipler from *The Working Poor* “It is time to be ashamed.” And it is time to advocate within our political system for the needs of all in our society, not just the wealthy and powerful.

Quote

“I’m just simply baffled by the idea that people can be without shelter in a country, and then be treated as criminals for being without shelter. The idea of criminalizing people who don’t have shelter is something that I think many of my colleagues might find as difficult as I do to even begin to comprehend.”



Sir Nigel Rodley, Chair of the Human Rights Committee, in closing comments on the 2014 U.S. review, quoted in 2014 report “No Safe Place: The Criminalization of Homelesses in U.S. Cities” by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.