



LGBTQ+ Youths and Homelessness

By Nicole Arcieri

Thousands of people are affected by homelessness in the United States. Anyone from any background or demographic can be affected by homelessness, but LGBTQ+ youths are disproportionately affected by this crisis. They are also more likely to face “high levels of hardship” when homeless, according to a report published in 2018 by the Chapin Hall of the University of Chicago. It has also been reported that there is a strong link between homelessness and LGBTQ+ youth incarceration, according to an article by Daiana Griffith of the Prison Policy, *LGBTQ Youth Are at Greater Risk of Homelessness and Incarceration*. We must dive deeper and ask a tough question, and that is, why are our LGBTQ+ youths greatly affected by homelessness in the U.S.?

According to the True Colors Fund, one in four LGBTQ+ youths are forced to leave their homes after coming out to their parents. When LGBTQ+ youths are forced to leave their homes due to neglect or a lack of acceptance, they often do not have the resources necessary to support themselves, and therefore, turn to illegal

acts to survive, Griffith notes in the Prison Policy article. The Center for American Progress reported that homelessness is very closely linked to incarceration, and since LGBTQ+ youths are disproportionately affected by homelessness, it is no wonder that there is a direct link between incarceration and homeless LGBTQ+ youths.

Moreover, LGBTQ+ individuals that are homeless “have great difficulty finding shelters that accept and respect them,” the National Coalition for the Homeless says. They are also “often at a heightened risk of violence, abuse, and exploitation compared with their heterosexual peers.” Upon becoming homeless, LGBTQ+ youths are “twice as likely to attempt suicide as their heterosexual peers,” a report by the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) says. They also note that homeless LGBTQ+ youths “...experience an average of 7.4 more acts of sexual violence toward them than their heterosexual peers.”

LGBTQ+ youths are just some of the many people disproportionately affected by homelessness. That being said, they deserve customized care and attention. Firstly, more shelters across the nation need to hire staff members that specialize in working with LGBTQ+ youths. Secondly, more resources and financial support must be offered to these individuals so that they do not resort to illegal activities in order to support themselves. Thirdly, there must be a widespread effort to teach people acceptance and understanding regarding sexuality and gender identity. Many LGBTQ+ youths would not be homeless if they were simply embraced and accepted by their guardians for being who they are. Overall, civilians across the U.S. must understand the needs of homeless LGBTQ+ youths and communicate with these individuals in a respectful way.