

Representation of the Homeless on Social Media

By Gabrielle Dinardi



Recently, my younger brother has introduced me to the world of information sharing that is known as Reddit.com. Reddit is one of the lesser-known social media site that acts as a virtual discussion board, connecting people from all over the world. As I have begun scrolling through these pages, one of the threads that has most stood

out to me so far has been one in which reddit users have taken to asking questions to homeless and formerly homeless users.

Some of the most intriguing questions that I have come across so far include, “What’s the best thing people can do to actually help homeless people?” “How did you end up homeless?” and “How did you end up turning your life around?” I think this is a very interesting idea because it allows people to share their personal stories and opinions in a more anonymous way, thus being more open and honest than when they are feeling judged or embarrassed by their various situations.

One user posed a question asking if there were any understood rules and etiquette that a homeless person may follow as relating with other homeless people you may come across in your day-to-day life. One user told the story of a time when his family was homeless during his childhood and explained how many other homeless people they knew were willing to share what little food they had just to make sure that he and his siblings were able to eat. This led to further questioning of whether or not homeless individuals will group up with others they do not know, and why. A reddit user going by the name of “theriddler41” responded to this as he wrote of a time when he was homeless, comparing the times he spent solo on the streets to when he chose to stick with a group of others. He explained that there are both pros and cons to each choice. When you are alone, you don’t have to share food and supplies, and are more free to move around. However, being a part of a group can make the experience less lonely as well as offer protection and safety in numbers.

Other questions were of a more practical nature, although still may not be something the average person would know. For example, I saw multiple different users writing about the luxury that is receiving a new pair of socks, especially while living on the streets. This got me thinking that donating socks to the local homeless population is something small that I could do

that might make a difference to some people. Additionally, others wrote about how the harmful stereotypes and misconceptions about homeless people are one of the most difficult aspects of the life that they are living. People judge harshly and make assumptions that all homeless people are drug addicts and felons when this is truly not the case. And even if it may be the case for some people, others may just be trying to get back on their feet and searching for a second chance.

Once I discovered this aspect of reddit, I was honestly sucked in. I read stories upon stories for hours at a time, and I really feel like my eyes have been opened to the world outside of my own personal life. I feel compassion towards people who ended up in awful situations and may be trying to make the best of it. Next time you have a few minutes of free time in your day, I strongly suggest logging on to reddit.com and reading some of these stories, and hopefully you will learn something new.

Reddit

Stories from recent and past homeless people

<https://www.reddit.com/search?q=homeless>