

Southern New Hampshire University

Invisible for a Time
The Rise in the Number of Homeless Women in America

A Capstone Project Submitted to the College of Online and Continuing Education in Partial
Fulfillment of the Master of Arts in History

By

Elizabeth Duarte

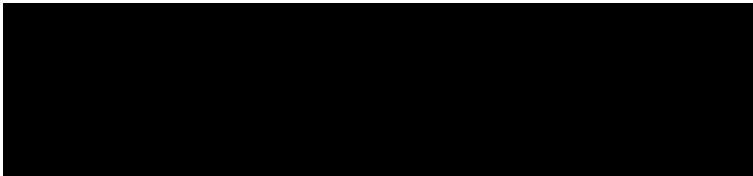
Auburn, Washington

Submitted August 2025

Copyright © 2025 by Elizabeth Duarte
All Rights Reserved

Student: Elizabeth Duarte

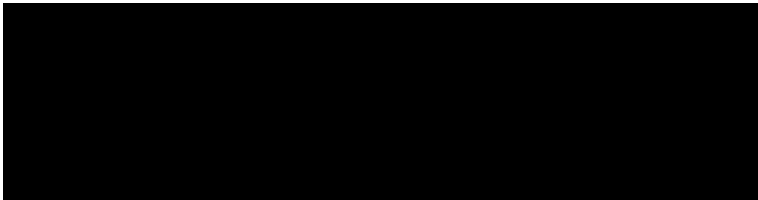
I certify that this student has met the requirements for formatting the capstone project and that this project is suitable for preservation in the University Archive.



Capstone Instructor

9/9/2025

Date



Associate Dean of Liberal Arts
Southern New Hampshire University

September 9, 2025

Date

Abstract

When the average person conjures a vision of a homeless person in their mind's eye, a majority would see a disheveled, down on his luck man. This common perception has led to many misconceptions about the homeless population, both in gender and the reasons for being unsheltered. Women, since the beginning of time, have been perceived as the weaker sex, in need of a strong man, whether a partner or family member, to take care of them. At some point in time, the familial structure that protected women from destitution and homelessness changed. The rise of the dysfunctional family was not the only cause that added more women to the streets.

Many causes should be taken into consideration when exploring the changes in the prevalence of women without a home to call their own. The steady rise in the drug culture, escalating abuse in relationships, lack of education, loss of social programs and services, changes in equality, and the changes in how society views women are just a few to be considered. This paper will address the historiography on homelessness, as well as augment that scholarship, with an argument that women have been overlooked as a significant member of the homeless population for too long. This error in analysis has caused an unclear picture of what these women have been through, what they need, and how the American dream has let them down.

Dedication

For my family, both here and gone, that have supported me, loved me, and promised I could do this. Thank you and I love you.

Rob & Lilly – You both have always had my back and no girl has ever been blessed with such an amazing big brother and sister in law. I love you both and am grateful for our relationship and the love we all share. It is way too hot where you live.

Henry & Mike – You are two of my favorite nephews. Love you both like you are my own.

Duarte/Dailey Clan – Thanks for being my family for the last three decades. You have always been there for us. Madison, Sabra, and Rochelle – you are three of my favorite nieces.

Mom – I miss you. I thank you for my compassionate heart and the willingness to give back to others.

Dad – I miss you. Thank you for making me the sarcastic, determined, and feisty girl that I am. You would have loved this.

Jake, Stephen, and Ian – You are my heart walking outside my body. I have loved all three of you since I found out I was carrying you. Our path has not always been smooth, but it has been full of love and acceptance. I am so proud to be your Mom, Mama, Bruh. Love you.

Andrew my love – What can I say about the man who has stood by me, in sickness and health, for over 30 years? You are the most stubborn, amazing, lovingly annoying man I was lucky enough to meet in that History class oh so long ago. I love you passionately first, always.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iv
Dedication	v
List of Figures	vii
Preface	viii
Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Historic View of Homelessness	7
Chapter 2: Changes in Family Dynamics	18
Chapter 3: Cultural Changes/Equality Movement	28
Chapter 4: Changes in Politics and Legislation	37
Chapter 5: Economic Issues/Social Services Failures	54
Chapter 6: Policy Changes to Aid Women on the Streets	63
Conclusion	72
Bibliography	77

List of Figures

Figure 1: Homelessness is Complicated	1
Figure 2: Two Hobos Walking Along Railroad Tracks, After Being Put Off a Train	10
Figure 3: Skid Row	12
Figure 4: Make Room	16
Figure 5: Victorian Family Portrait.....	18
Figure 6: Women Making Browning Machine Guns	24
Figure 7: Women Suffrage Pickets.....	28
Figure 8: Jane Addams of Hull House, Chicago, Ill.....	32
Figure 9: The Old Arch Street Prison.....	39
Figure 10: Y.W.C.A In service for the girls of the world.....	41
Figure 11: A Monthly Check to you for the rest of your life.....	46
Figure 12: Slums Breed Crime.....	48
Figure 13: A Little Kindness Goes a Long Way.....	53
Figure 14: Black and Hispanic Women Experience the Largest Pay Gaps.....	57
Figure 15: Poster Advocating the Equal Rights Amendment.....	63
Figure 16: Homeless Population: Top 10 States.....	66
Figure 17: Sample Communities Solving Homelessness in 2024.....	68

Preface

My original intention for this capstone was to research the Great Fire of Seattle and how the aftermath led to changes in urban planning. No one was more surprised than myself when I became intrigued by the original story of Skid Row. I had no idea that the reference was tied to an actual street and that I drove by it all the time. I have taken the Underground Tour and learned so much about early Seattle, but for some reason the skid row references did not stay in my mind. It was not until I started to research the 1889 fire that the importance of that road, and its nickname, had on the future of America became clear to me. In the article entitled, *Roots of a Crisis*, author Sinan Demirel describes the believed origin of this now routinely used phrase. “Yesler Way, which came to serve as a rough demarcation of downtown from where ‘the other half’ lived, was for years known as the ‘Skid Road’ for the logs that were ‘skidded’ down the hill to Henry Yesler’s waterfront mill.”¹ The homeless crisis in Seattle is apparent to anyone who goes downtown. As a woman, I wanted to know if there was specific reasoning for the rise in the number of homeless women.

I became fascinated by the cultural shifts, perceptions of women and how they evolved, and by the people who fought for equal rights. While equal rights does not only encompass women it is still something fought for every day. Families of today come in all shapes and sizes. Families, historically, have been seen as the “normal” household of husband, wife, and children. As our definitions have changed over the years, I wanted to understand where the women who are unsheltered had been ignored or misunderstood as in need.

¹ Sinan Demirel, “Root of a Crisis,” *Real Change*, June 29, 2016, <https://www.realchangenews.org/news/2016/06/29/roots-crisis> (accessed November 29, 2024).

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to all of my Professors, Teachers, and Advisors that have answered questions, provided feedback, and cheered me on. The completion of this project is a testament to your support. Special recognition needs to go to Brett Fox, my SNHU academic advisor, for never giving up on me. I appreciate you more than I can ever express.

To my friends and family that have never let me down and believed in me always. Each of you are who made me who I am today.

Introduction



Figure 1: Homelessness is Complicated¹

Homelessness in America has been an issue for generations that is as complicated today as it has been in the past. One of the most often misunderstood factions of the homeless population are unsheltered women. There is a long history of women who were unable to find a safe and secure place to live. Unfortunately, while the history is lengthy, the understanding of the difference between men and women who are on the streets has needed to be examined. Aside from the obvious differences in men and women, the reasons that can put each gender out on the streets can be vastly different.

History's view of women, while everchanging, has focused on the illustration of white upper to middle class women in different time periods. In the book, *The Practice of U.S.*

¹ Joe Heller, "Homelessness is Complicated," ImmaCare Inc., <https://immacare.org/2019/09/30/homelessness-is-complicated/> (accessed November 7, 2024)

Women's History: Narratives, Intersections, and Dialogues, multiple essays by historians offer insight into the overhaul of how women's history has been viewed. This book reminds the reader that, "The idea of universal womanhood predicated on a white, middle-class worldview (an idea that had so distanced many feminists of color from the main stream women's movement) had the effect (albeit unintentional) of rendering invisible the legacies of women of color."² Using this depiction allowed the poor, abused, non-white, and undereducated women throughout history to be marginalized. These were the women who, without protection, struggled to survive on their own. While homelessness has been an issue that has been studied, the rise in number of women on the streets needs further investigation. The historiography of homelessness has largely overlooked the plight of homeless women, whose growing numbers highlight issues such as domestic violence, gender wage gaps, insufficient safety nets, and unaffordable housing, necessitating comprehensive policy reforms.

The first chapter of this paper focuses on the historiography of homelessness by time period. The views of Americans throughout the country's life have vacillated between disgust and fear to activism and legislation. As time went on, dispossessed people took on many different mantles and nicknames. Tramps, hobos, vagrants, and bums were just a few of the words used to describe these groups. These labels covered a mainly male population, as during most of the early part of America's growth, family protected women. While not always the case, women in peril would do what they needed to do to survive. For some this was working from the home, outside the home, and for some it meant selling themselves. In Leisa D. Meyer's essay she

² S. Jay Kleinberg, Eileen Boris, and Vicki L. Ruiz, eds, *The Practice of U.S. Women's History: Narratives, Intersections, and Dialogues* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 51.

wrote, “Studies of working-class ethnic women’s sexual and social lives suggest that such women were sexual actors who created their own definitions of the boundaries of appropriate behavior – definitions that were often in tension with those offered by white middle-class, native-born authorities.”³ The family dynamic was an integral part of a woman’s upbringing and the future afforded her.

The second chapter of this paper follows the changes in family dynamics that have been seen in the last two-hundred plus years. When America was settled, it was rare for an upper to middle-class woman to not have family that would protect her. These women were not to be bothered by the heavy responsibility left to men. In early America and into the Gilded Age, this class of women were kept at home until marriage. Older single women, who may not have married, were still a part of their family home. For the lower classes work, both inside and outside the home, was common. In David A. Copeland’s article, “*Virtuous and Vicious: The Dual Portrayal of Women in Colonial Newspapers*,” he wrote of possibilities for single women. “Single women discovered that they could make a living in America’s cities by entering domestic service, becoming nurses, seamstresses, and teachers, or by running inns.”⁴ These jobs were a lifeline for women in need.

These times would change with the Great Depression and the World Wars. Many women may not have had the support that they were accustomed. Many women went into the workforce, and as jobs dried up, so did money for rent. During this harrowing time for the country, homeless women were an invisible casualty, as most people did not believe a woman could be without a

³ Kleinberg, Boris, and Ruiz, *The Practice of U.S. Women’s History: Narratives, Intersections, and Dialogues*, 286.

⁴ David A Copeland, “Virtuous and Vicious: The Dual Portrayal of Women in Colonial Newspapers.” *American Periodicals* 5 (1995): 63.

home. As Elaine S. Abelson wrote in her article in *Feminist Studies*, “While stories of dissolute females and the unfortunate poor had wide currency in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the female drifter remained an anomaly.”⁵ As the 20th century evolved, family life looked different, abuse became more apparent, and a drug culture grew that many were unable to escape, causing a rift in the fabric of societal norms.

Chapter three focuses on the cultural changes over the years, the equality movement, and societal norms that have transformed. Cultural shifts over time have taken the reality of a woman as property, needing to be moral, just, and pure to a powerful female presence that can think, act, and manage their own affairs. Women have fought for equality for generations, from the Suffragettes to the women who march today for justice, women’s rights, and equal opportunity. Societal norms have also altered over the years to see women as worthy of an education, intelligent, able to work outside of the home, raise a family, and have a place in the legislation and politics of today. America was founded as a male-dominated land that took a slow approach to change. Many men fought against the shift in culture, as they saw women outgrowing their place. As the years have progressed, so has the mentality of many, but not all.

Chapter four shines a light on the political changes that have led to the consistent rise in the homeless population. A lack of legislation and understanding of the plight of the down-and-out, has continued to stymie our government in making choices that will help fix the problem. The United States government did not recognize how problematic allowing the number of homeless people to rise would be to the American people. Legislation has been proposed by

⁵ Elaine S. Abelson, “Women Who Have No Men to Work for Them: Gender and Homelessness in the Great Depression, 1930-1934,” *Feminist Studies* 29, no. 1 (Spring, 2003), 106, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3178478> (accessed November 13, 2024).

Congress, adopted, and put into practice with federal programs, but remains too little, too late. The homelessness issue has a generational component that shows how a shortage of political change has affected the people on the streets. Issues such as lack of fair housing laws, allowing social programs to expire, tolerating educational standards that are biased to the wealthy, and the income gap are just a few examples of the American government's failure to protect all of its citizens.

Chapter Five analyzes the economic dimension of the issue of homelessness. Most Americans are aware of the Great Depression, the World Wars, and the result of economic downturns. The United States has always seemed to be an illustration of the haves and the have-nots. When so many people live paycheck to paycheck, the slightest shift in circumstance can send them to the streets. The Great Depression is a vivid example of how quickly conditions can change for anyone. According to the 2023 US Census, "The official poverty rate fell 0.4 percentage points to 11.1 percent."⁶ The fact that so many Americans live below the poverty line, a little over one in ten, leads one to believe that the poor are not top of mind for legislators when they convene. The Great Depression led to the government institution of many social service programs to help get America working again.

In more recent years, we have seen a marked decline in the number of social programs funded by the government. This absence of funding caused a ripple effect for the homeless communities. Mental health institutions began closing as funding ran out, putting their patients at a higher risk of becoming homeless. According to an NPR report, "The disappearance of long-term-care facilities and psychiatric beds has escalated over the past decade, sparked by a trend

⁶ Emily A. Shider, "Poverty in the United States: 2023", US Department of Commerce, <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2024/demo/p60-283.html> (accessed July 20, 2025).

toward deinstitutionalization of psychiatric patients in the 1950s and '60s.”⁷ The 1980s saw a steady flow of displaced people on the streets. Gentrification of cities are taking the old Single Room Occupancy (SRO) and rooming houses which kept many off the streets, and turning them into apartments and condominiums. The sad fact is that they are taking the only housing some may have and replacing it with homes they could never afford, all for profit. As home values rise, city dwellers are more vocal about the homeless, not to help them, but to complain about their property values deflating with their presence.

Chapter six explores options for policy changes that can help the homeless, but more specifically, women who are stuck in the cycle of displacement. Based on the exclusion of women as a significant part of the homeless population, programs geared to their benefit evolved slowly. Many of the current policies center around health, which is especially important. In order to give women a voice, policies that center around education, work study, and life choices need to be adopted.

Politicians, activists, celebrities, and everyday Americans have tried to bring the dilemma of homelessness to the forefront of conversation. Initiatives, legislation, fundraisers, and public outreach are just some of the ways that people are trying to get the situation under control. The study of how the homeless population grew to the current levels is robust and contains good scholarship about the causes and practical solutions of homelessness, but could be enhanced by further study.

⁷ Samantha Raphelson, “How the Loss of U.S. Psychiatric Hospitals Led to a Mental Health Crisis” *NPR* (November 30, 2017), <https://www.npr.org/2017/11/30/567477160/how-the-loss-of-u-s-psychiatric-hospitals-led-to-a-mental-health-crisis> (accessed July 20, 2025).

Chapter 1: Historic View of Homelessness

Homelessness is not a recent issue in history. For as far back as we have written, or translated, material one can find instances of someone being without shelter of their own. In the New International Version of the Bible, the Apostle Paul spoke to the experiences felt by himself and the other apostles. “To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless.”¹ Fast forward to the founding of America, and the unsheltered were looked upon as a stain on the morally upright communities being formed. As Todd DePastino wrote, “A highly mobile people themselves, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Americans harbored the Old World’s suspicions of wandering strangers and took vigorous measures to suppress the transient poor.”² In each time period, the homeless situation has shifted, but has rarely gotten better.

The Pilgrims of Plymouth, Massachusetts, took a very English view of the poor in their communities. Emulating the laws set in England led to categorizing the needy, the construction of poor houses, and the beginnings of public assistance. In John Hansan’s article written for Virginia Commonwealth University, he discusses how the poor were grouped. “Dependent persons were categorized as: vagrant, the involuntary unemployed and the helpless. In effect, the poor laws separated the poor into two classes: the worthy (e.g., orphans, widows, handicapped, frail elderly) and the unworthy (e.g., drunkards, shiftless, lazy).”³ Residency in the area that provided aid was a requirement. In more rural areas, it was not unusual for the poor to be, in essence, sold to the lowest bidder. “The process of “auctioning” the destitute resulted in an

¹ 1 Cor. 4:11(NIV)

² Todd DePastino, *Citizen Hobo* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 6.

³ John E. Hansan, Ph.D., “Poor Relief in America.” VCU Libraries Social Welfare History Project, (2011), <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/programs/poor-relief-early-amer/> (accessed November 10, 2024).

individual or family being placed with a local couple or family bidding the lowest amount of public funding needed to care for them.”⁴

In a book published in 1895 the author, John Rankin Rogers, wrote, “The truth is, however, no nation, ever was – or ever will be – strong, free, brave, contented, happy, unless the people were secure in the possession of their homes.”⁵ Rogers used his writing to remind his readers that all throughout history, the wars, the governments, and the insecurity of the people led to disaster. “Losing their foot hold upon the earth they flocked to the cities or roamed at large, gathering rags and misery and desperation as they went.”⁶ Since the colonial times of America, people have been displaced due to war, poverty, religious excommunication, and bigotry. In recounting King Philip’s War, a battle between the English colonies and Philip, the Chief of the Wampanoags, Sarah Elizabeth Dawes illustrates the loss of homes and property that caused many to be displaced. “The dreadful war thus brought to a close was a disastrous one for the colonies: for it cost them six hundred lives, besides the loss of thirteen towns and six hundred buildings. Most of them the dwelling-houses of the people.”⁷ As those colonists moved to the forests for protection, they were forced to adapt to a transient way of life as their security was destroyed.

The Civil War was another period that perpetuated the problem of homelessness, most evident in the South. As the fighting ended, soldiers returned home to find destruction, not only their property, but their livelihood. As they had spent years on the move, many of these men,

⁴ Hansan, “Poor Relief in Early America,.”

⁵ John Rankin Rogers, *Home for the Homeless. An argument in favor of a non-taxable homestead* (Seattle, Allen Printing Co., 1895), 14.

⁶ Rogers, 7.

⁷ Sarah Elizabeth Dawes, *Colonial Massachusetts* (New York: Silver, Burdett & company, 1899), 87.

unable to find work just continued to be transient. “Having learned how to travel quickly, find temporary shelter, forage for food, and otherwise “trust tomorrow to take care of tomorrow,” the Civil War veteran, according to this theory, possessed the skills necessary to live without working.”⁸ With the advancement of the transcontinental railroad, these vagabonds would become hobos.

Jack London, a writer who traveled the rails as a hobo for a brief period, wrote about his travels and helped generations of readers live on the road. In John Lennon’s article in *American Studies*, he relates, “By voluntarily giving up his job in order to travel, London was consequently no longer defining himself in terms of a “worker” living a feminized “uneventful existence” but rather he saw himself as a thoroughly masculine adventurer whose identity was centered upon his ability to move.”⁹ Unemployment was high, money was scarce, and the economic crash of 1897 led many to continue a transient existence. While women were not commonly known to be hobos toward the turn of the century, there were many who were displaced due to factors outside of their control.

One such woman was Ethel Lynn, M.D., who traveled from Chicago to California, with her husband, on a tandem bicycle. They were escaping the slums of Chicago and headed for the promise of better days in California. They were in San Francisco in 1906, victims of the earthquake and fire that ravaged the city. A doctor, trained at university, she was out of a job, as was her husband. Her book, “*The Adventures of a Woman Hobo*,” details their journey, the

⁸ DePastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 18.

⁹ John Lennon, “Can a Hobo Share a Box-Car? Jack London, the Industrial Army, and the Politics of (In)visibility.” *American Studies* 48 (Winter 2007): 7.

people they meet, and her understanding of human nature. Her description of the journey from sheltered to homelessness in 1908 is eye-opening.

Those days when we pledged every pawnable article in a dogged desire to hang on for just one week longer in the hope the tide would turn; when we moved from lodgings to lodgings, each meaner and more squalid than the last, until the fathomless pit of hell itself seemed reached in this slum; when I gave up my work in the college where the wonderful experience gained was ample compensation except to those driven by grim necessity to seek for any work that would keep this vile tenement over our heads and put food in our mouths.¹⁰

The homeless population would continue to grow as the Stock Market Crash of 1929 would cause an economic collapse that affected the whole country.

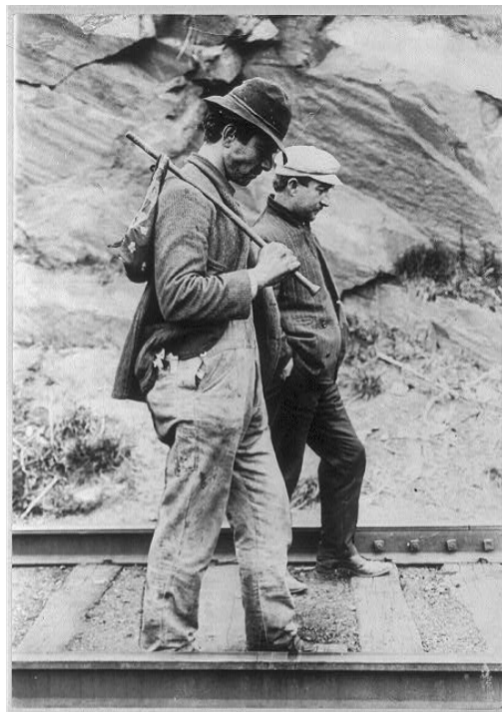


Figure 2: Two Hobos Walking Along Railroad Tracks, After Being Put Off a Train¹¹

¹⁰ Ethel Lynn, *The Adventures of a Woman Hobo* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1917), 9.

¹¹ Unknown, "Two Hobos Walking Along Railroad Tracks, After Being Put Off a Train," George Grantham Bain Collection (Library of Congress), <https://www.loc.gov/item/2006677423/> (accessed November 12, 2024).

The Great Depression was one of the first periods that women were observed as being homeless. Women had continued to take on jobs outside of the house, secretarial, domestic work, serving, and the like. When the Stock Market fell, “They lost jobs at a rate higher than did men in the early years of the collapse, were often unable to find other sources of income, and were routinely discriminated against in public employment.”¹² Men were considered as the first choice for any open jobs in the government or publicly funded organizations. Relief agencies began to understand that women were becoming a new population of the dispossessed. Even with the understanding of these women’s plight, authorities and legislators did nothing to curtail the growing number, as they could not get an accurate count of women in need. “After three winters of deepening economic crisis, private welfare agencies across the country admitted that only a small percentage of homeless women were known, although rough estimates suggest that women constituted about 10 percent of the urban homeless population.”¹³ As the Depression pressed on, new programs were discussed, revised, and some implemented, but none geared toward the new unsheltered population.

As the federal government struggled to find ways to assist the homeless, state governments felt the federal government was stepping on their toes. “The Roosevelt administration struggled to balance the national and local program management in the Transient Program. Across the board in New Deal programs, many local and state officials objected to what they perceived as usurpation of their authority.”¹⁴ While many of the New Deal projects did

¹² Elaine S. Abelson, “Women Who Have No Men to Work for Them: Gender and Homelessness in the Great Depression, 1930-1934,” *Feminist Studies* 29, no. 1 (Spring, 2003), 106, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3178478> (accessed November 13, 2024).

¹³ Abelson, “Women Who Have No Men to Work for Them,” 111.

¹⁴ Ella Howard, *Homeless: Poverty and Place in Urban America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 63.

help to stem unemployment, many of the jobs provided were biased toward men in need, not the women. These programs may have been started to help alleviate the homeless issue, but they did not help the public understand the needs of the unsheltered. “The Transient Service did little to enlighten the public that not only homeless women, but many homeless men as well needed a “comprehensive program” to restore them as functioning members of society.”¹⁵ The start of World War II caused a decline in the number of homeless as it ended the Great Depression.



Figure 3: Skid Row¹⁶

¹⁵ Kenneth L. Kusmer, *Down and Out on the Road: The Homeless in American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 217.

¹⁶ Charles Surendorf, “Skid Row” Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.8993503> (accessed November 13, 2024).

Economic boom, post World War II, and the rise of the nuclear family led to a decrease in the number of homeless in America. As families moved to the suburbs, bought cookie cutter houses, and settled into domesticity, there were still homeless people that called Skid Row home. Skid Row was not a new term postwar; it was in fact an expression that has attributed its roots to the logging town of Seattle. “Skid row, after all, is merely a variant of Skid Road, the traditional nickname for Yesler Way in Seattle.”¹⁷ Originally referring to the road that logs were skidded down for milling, it became a line of demarcation between the haves and the have-nots. The characteristics of a skid row inhabitant, post WWII, became repugnant to society. “Hoboes,” who had once epitomized freewheeling American working-class manhood, had become “bums,” confined to a few city blocks and shut out of the abundance and fulfillment that the postwar world had to offer.”¹⁸ Skid row was only just beginning to be a bigger issue when dealing with the homeless problem.

The 1970s and 1980s were decades that saw the most change in, not only the perception of but, the reasons for homelessness in American cities. “Although there had been homeless people sleeping in public places in the two decades following World War II, during those years vagrancy was thought to be primarily a problem of elderly males, often alcoholics, living in cubicles and SRO hotels on skid rows in cities around the nation.”¹⁹ As the 1970s progressed, so did a new renaissance of the American city that had no room for skid rows or the people that inhabited them. In New York, many SROs were in up and coming neighborhoods. The

¹⁷ J. Meredith Neil, “Is There a Historian in the House? The Curious Case of Historic Preservation,” *The Public Historian* 2, no. 2 (Winter, 1980): 37.

¹⁸ DePastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 228.

¹⁹ David Levinson and Marcy Ross, eds., *The Homeless Handbook* (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: Berkshire Publishing Group, 2007), 3.

contemplation of increasing personal wealth was too much for property owners. Owners began to make living in the SROs just as uncomfortable as being homeless. “Some SRO owners forcibly evicted tenants, while others simply stopped making necessary repairs, shutting off heat and hot water, and otherwise pressed tenants to leave.”²⁰ The Mayor of New York, Ed Koch, tried to combat the property owners by offering tax incentives for the renovation, not the destruction of the SRO. “But the late effort had little effect; some estimated that more than 10,000 rooms had closed between 1975 and 1979 alone.”²¹ This time period also brought a focus onto the gender and makeup of the homeless population.

As the 1980s dawned, homelessness began to be recognized as a problem that was not limited to men. This concept of the “New Homeless” incorporated women, children, and families of varying ethnicities. “Even worse, whereas the vast majority of “homeless” individuals of decades past had been *housed*, albeit marginally, this new population was *literally* homeless, bedding down in large congregate shelters or on the streets and in other locations not meant for sleeping.”²² As evidenced by this quote, one can see that the classification of the homeless was narrowed by gender, with men being the primary focus. As this new population began to multiply, it caused the public to rethink how they saw, not only the homeless, but homeless women specifically. “The persistent denial of women’s existence on Skid Row only served to consolidate long-held beliefs that homeless women are even more derelict and eccentric than homeless men, and thus the most socially undesirable of all marginal people.”²³ The 1980s also triggered the federal government to enact certain legislation to try to right the problem.

²⁰ Howard, *Homeless: Poverty and Place in Urban America*, 183.

²¹ Howard, *Homeless: Poverty and Place in Urban America*, 183.

²² Levinson and Ross, *The Homeless Handbook*, 246.

²³ Madeleine R. Stoner, “The Plight of Homeless Women,” *Social Service Review* 57, no. 4 (Dec., 1983): 570

Many of the early programs, authorized by the federal government were focused on funding hunger relief and shelter following the recession in 1981-1982. Unfortunately, the programs were shortsighted as to how assistance was applied. “In reality, The Emergency Food and Shelter Program provides a very large proportion of its food assistance in the form of food bags or food vouchers for people with homes, rather than prepared meals served in the soup kitchens and shelters.”²⁴ Federal programs began to refocus their efforts toward the end of the 1980’s by introducing the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987. The McKinney Act “created the first federal programs to provide direct support for emergency shelters since the Emergency Food and Shelter Program was authorized in 1983.”²⁵ Unfortunately, the end of the 1980’s saw funding for the homeless programs drop dramatically.

The attention given to the homelessness issue in the late 1980s was short-lived, as the 1990s saw an even sharper decline in the rhetoric surrounding the issue. ‘The post-cold war economic boom combined with (President) Clinton’s drive to “end welfare as we know it” caused issues such as poverty, homelessness, and underemployment to recede to the margins of popular interest.’²⁶ By cutting funding and regulation, the federal government allowed a development that sanctioned evictions and raised rent. “Without government subsidies, landlords charged market rate for rental units, and home ownership became further out of reach as once-affordable urban neighborhoods were impacted by a wave of gentrification in the 1990s.”²⁷ Gentrification, in cities, became an issue of income inequality and an additional reason for the

²⁴ Martha R. Burt and Barbara E. Cohen, “Who is Helping the Homeless? Local, State, and Federal Responses,” *Publius* 19, no. 3 (Summer 1989): 113-114.

²⁵ Burt and Cohen, “Who is Helping the Homeless?” 115.

²⁶ Anthony Marcus, “Shelterization Revisited: Some Methodological Dangers of Institutional Studies of the Homeless,” *Human Organization* 62, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 134.

²⁷ Shannon R. Lane and Jennifer McClendon, eds., *Handbook of Social Work Practice with Vulnerable and Resilient Populations* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2014), 350.

displacement of people no longer able to afford the roof over their heads. Unsheltered people were now an eyesore and had a negative effect on the communities being reinvented. As the new century began, homelessness reentered the public discourse as recession once again pushed Americans out of their homes.



Figure 4: Make Room²⁸

The new century brought many challenges to the displaced, those that fought for them, and those that sought their removal. As developers moved into the city centers, cost of living began to skyrocket. “Gentrification results from a “return-to-the-city” movement by private developers and business investors who purchased and rehabilitated older and structurally sound buildings into expensive housing to attract more affluent residents, replacing long-time residents who were usually low-income, minority or ethnic group members, and the elderly.”²⁹ A good example of this gentrification is the Bowery in New York City. The Bowery was a well-known

²⁸ Gary Markstein, “Make Room,” Pueblo Star Journal, <https://pueblostarjournal.org/voices/2024/04/02/make-room/> (accessed November 24, 2024)

²⁹ Deliah D. Lawrence, “Community Development: Can Communities Effectively Fight Displacement Caused by Gentrification?” *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law* 11, no. 4 (Summer 2002): 359.

skid row in the pre- and post-Depression eras. Home to SROs, soup kitchens, and bars, the Bowery was a place that kept the homeless away from the other social classes. After almost a century, this area of New York was developed as an area for a higher income bracket. “The Avalon Chrystie Place at Houston Street and the Bowery houses the upscale supermarket Whole Foods, while at 195 Bowery, luxury apartments include a sixteenth-floor penthouse worth \$4 million.”³⁰ This disparity in income levels was obvious as lower income city dwellers were pushed to outlying areas in hopes of finding affordable housing. The rise in living costs did not only cause issues for the poor, but for the lower middle class as well.

Families and individuals that lived paycheck to paycheck, had limited savings, or were one catastrophe away from destitution were also in danger from gentrification. The history of homelessness is long and complicated. The number of women that have become displaced has increased exponentially over the decades. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness the number of women identifying as homeless is rising. “Homelessness among women increased 12.1 percent since 2022 and 11.4 percent since 2015.”³¹ Changes in the economy, policy, and mental health issues are strong justifications for this rise in numbers. One foundational problem supersedes the rest, changes in family dynamics over the years has shifted the narrative of how the world views women.

³⁰ Howard, “*Homeless: Poverty and Place in Urban America*,” 219.

³¹ Daniel Soucy, Makenna Janes, and Andrew Hall, “State of Homelessness: 2024 Edition”, <https://endhomelessness.org/state-of-homelessness/> (accessed July 20, 2025).

Chapter 2: Changes in Family Dynamics



Figure 5: Victorian Family Portrait¹

The family structure has changed over the centuries and the transformations seemed to adapt to the time period of which they were a part. Changes in the structure and security of a family unit is just one of the reasons for the growing numbers of homeless. In the history of America the culture around family dynamics, both what was acceptable and what was seen as unseemly, has changed significantly. Women had been seen as necessary for a family to thrive, but lesser than her husband as a citizen. As times and roles changed society became less accepting of certain types of women. These cultural changes led to a lack of understanding, assistance, and at times, compassion.

Early American settlers brought with them their concept of family and marriage as taught by their religions. The dynamic illustrates the husband/father as head of the household, his wife as the caretaker of the home and children, and the children were raised in typical gender roles. Early studies into the history of American families found that settlers believed that the

¹ Unknown, "Victorian Family Portrait," Pinterest, <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/victorian-family-portrait--622693085992930532/> (accessed November 24, 2024).

community was just as important, if not more, as family. “The New World of the religious communities of New England and Pennsylvania did not encourage individualism; rather, men and women remained closely tied to family and kin, and to the community they so highly valued.”² Maintaining these communities was an important aspect of family in early America. These notions of family, and their roles, would carry through for generations. While women were considered an integral part of the community, their role was still considered as a secondary factor to a home’s success.

During these times, children stayed at home until marriage, extended family might live in the home, and roles were strictly divided between men and women. The colonial period saw women as more than just a mother, as they were called upon to handle many of the responsibilities of the home. A major part of the economy, the labor they supplied helped not only their family, but the community as well. “Essential activities included: maintenance of house and work houses; growing (or procuring through barter or purchase), processing and preserving most of the food for the household, caring for the very young and very old and sick, sharing social and religious life of the home and producing cloth and clothes for the immediate members of the family plus enough for sale or barter.”³ Colonial women held jobs, took care of the family, and were an integral part of the community. Even with those characteristics they were not considered equal to the men of the time.

Women of that time were completely controlled by their husbands, fathers, or other male relatives. After the American Revolution there was a change in how women, and their

² Daniel Blake Smith, “The Study of Family in Early America: Trends, Problem and Prospects,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (Jan., 1982): 7.

³ Elizabeth F. Defeis and Joan Hoff Wilson, “Role of Women: An Historical Overview,” *India International Centre Quarterly*, 5, no. 3 (July, 1978): 163-164.

accomplishments, were viewed by society. “For example, sex subordination was immediately present in the patriotic accounts of the Revolutionary War which stressed the political and military roles of men while ignoring the equally important supportive roles of women.”⁴ In a child development study, Miriam Johnson offers the premise that, “it is identification with the father, in the sense of internalizing a reciprocal role with the father, which is crucial for producing appropriate sex role orientation in *both* male and females.”⁵ Johnson believed that the mother’s role was also an important part in children’s understanding their gender role. “If she loves her husband and defines him to the children as a worthy person, then this should enormously facilitate the success of the father in emancipating the children from the mother and in determining their sex relevant orientations.”⁶ When Johnson’s study was introduced 60 years ago, it did not consider the fatherless homes, single mothers, and other possible family structures. Many scholars have been ill prepared to envision how circumstances, changes in family complexity, and gender roles have transformed over time. These changes in family life led to some of the instability that pushed women to the streets.

Early scholarship stated that the nuclear family, or traditional family, was the common model in America as more people moved to the city to find work. The nuclear family is defined as “a family consisting of two parents and their children, but not including aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.”⁷ These smaller families were more mobile, able to find work, and kept their family close. As America became more industrialized, “the isolated nuclear family was a

⁴ DeFeis and Wilson, “Role of American Women,” 165.

⁵ Miriam M. Johnson, “Sex Role Learning in the Nuclear Family,” *Child Development* 34, no. 2 (June 1963): 319.

⁶ Johnson, “Sex Role Learning,” 323.

⁷ “Nuclear Family.” *Cambridge Dictionary*, Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2024, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/nuclear-family#dataset_cald4-us (accessed November 25, 2024).

response to the requirements of an industrialized economy because this type of family unit allowed the occupational, social, and geographical mobility that is necessary for such a system.”⁸ City living changed the role of women in different socioeconomic classes.

For the lower class, women still worked, not in the fields, but in factories. For middle to upper class women, perceptions changed drastically. No longer working or never having worked, these higher born women were entering into an age of wealth and vanity. “The tendency of wealthy men to place their women on pedestals within the home served the dual role of allowing men to display their female possessions while protecting and isolating them from work and life.”⁹ While women were perceived as fragile and in need of care, the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century would cement that vision for some social classes. While the predominantly white middle and upper-class flourished, it was not always the same for the lower classes or the ethnic communities.

When reading early studies of women’s roles in society, it is easy to infer that the authors used a white female as the model for their research. As more academics studied a woman’s place in their communities, they realized the disparity between prior scholarship and what they were finding in their own studies. In her study about women and gender, Kathleen M. Brown writes with a more feminist slant. Brown’s article speaks to the perception of previous researchers and how going forward the model should not only be a white woman. “As Elizabeth Spelman observes, white feminists need to recognize that their experience as women (and that of their white female historical subjects) is shaped also by race; femaleness is not synonymous with

⁸ L. Jaganmohan Rao, “Industrialization and the Family: A World View,” *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 3, no. 2 (September, 1973): 185.

⁹ DeFeis and Wilson, “Role of American Women,” 167.

white femaleness, accessible to black women only through some filtering lens of race.”¹⁰ African American women have been presented by society as having American ideals, when in fact most were brought from Africa as slaves at the mercy of their masters.

Researchers of the past looked at these women through a patriotic lens, when they should have been looking through an Afrocentric lens. “African women came to the United States primarily as workers; familial and spousal roles for African American women were redeveloped to accommodate the slave holder.”¹¹ Considered property, not people, these women were forced to adapt to the white slave owners idea of a family structure. This structure was not only unfamiliar, but the opposite of what they knew in Africa. “Neutrality in gender roles was a significant part of the lifestyle of African men and women.”¹² American history has not been kind to the African American woman; stolen from their homes, forced into labor, not considered human, struggling to adapt and survive, and when freed, not given an equal chance to thrive. Sadly, all these years later the struggle can be seen for many women of all ethnicities, who struggle to survive.

The turn of the century found many women continuing to push for more rights in America. Suffragettes, social reformers, and the first woman elected to Congress are just a few changes society had to accept. Many still believed a woman’s place was in the home, but these pioneers were pushing for equality for women in a man’s world. Reform was the buzzword of the Progressive Era. Social, political, labor, and welfare reform were constantly up for debate.

¹⁰ Kathleen M. Brown, “Brave New Worlds: Women’s and Gender History,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (April, 1993): 315.

¹¹ Norma J. Burgess, “Gender Roles Revisited: The Development of the “Woman’s Place” Among African American Women in the United States,” *Journal of Black Studies* 24, no. 4 (June, 1994): 393.

¹² Burgess, “Gender Roles Revisited,” 397.

Women workers were under scrutiny for ideals that started with the early settlers. “Leading progressives, among them women at the forefront of labor reform, advocated excluding women from the labor force on the grounds that (1) work outside of the home threatened women’s health and morals; (2) working women usurped jobs that rightly belonged to male heads of household entitled to a “family wage”; and (3) women in the labor force improperly abandoned their eugenic duties as “mothers of the race.”¹³ Sadly, during this time in history the belief in eugenics was on the rise.

Seen by some as social reform, eugenics was seen as keeping the American race (white) pure. “But the eugenicists’ diagnosis—that immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, blacks, the “feeble-minded”, and others deemed unfit were the root cause of social and economic problems—was publicly opposed by few.”¹⁴ Not only were men and women, of the time, wrapped up in the premise that men were strong, women were weaker, but that white America was necessary for survival of the race. This idea of coddling women and preserving men’s alpha role would change with the start of World War I, as women were called to work in the absence of men that were fighting in Europe.

World War I and the Great Depression were major events that changed women’s roles in not only family and society, but in the labor market. With the men fighting the Great War, jobs that needed to be done were being done by women. Many women were volunteering for the war effort, but others were working in factories and shipyards. Usually white upper and middle class women volunteered as a way to support the soldiers. Their work was exhaustive but unpaid, as

¹³ Thomas C. Leonard, “Protecting Family and Race: The Progressive Case for Regulating Women’s Work, *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 64, no. 3 (July, 2005): 759.

¹⁴ Leonard, “Protecting Family and Race,” 762.

many people of the time would expect. “Despite their skills and contributions, however, their voluntary work-unpaid and generally represented as an extension of women’s domestic role of serving the family-did not challenge traditional expectations about women’s proper place.”¹⁵ For the women that were able to work in the public sector, it was a new experience.



Figure 6: Women Making Browning Machine Guns¹⁶

Jobs that had primarily been considered a “man’s” job were now open to them. As the war ended and the men came home those opportunities were again closed to women. “But despite the fact that women had proven, according to one manufacturer, that there is hardly a line of work to which a woman cannot adapt herself, women’s postwar opportunities in blue-collar work, especially for black women, contracted to their prewar status.”¹⁷ Postwar America went through a radical change when it came to women, the 1920s brought out the “Flapper”, a new

¹⁵ Lynn Dumenil, “American Women and the Great War,” *OAH Magazine of History* 17, no. 1 (Oct., 2002): 36.

¹⁶ U.S. Army Signal Corps, “Women Making Browning Machine Guns-general view of polishing shop, Winchester Repeating Arms Co., New Haven, Conn.,” Library of Congress. <https://lccn.loc.gov/94506155> (accessed November 27, 2024).

¹⁷ Dumenil, “American Women,” 36.

archetype of woman. As the stereotype of how women were perceived changed, so did the old familial definitions.

Young women of the 1920s were stepping out of their mother's shadows and becoming a completely different version of their sex. Eschewing the restrictions of modesty, morals, and being family driven, these young ladies caused an ethical dilemma in their time. "In some of the numerous articles printed about them in American magazines and journals, these "flappers" were noted for their economic independence, their disregard for traditional gender roles, and their penchant for 'shaking off the shreds and patches of their age old servitude.'"¹⁸ Not only were these women forsaking the beliefs and teachings of their families, but they were claiming their place in society. Society was not entirely pleased with this new type of woman, her drinking, vulgarity, sexual promiscuity, and her freedom were frowned upon by the older generation. These were the girls that fared the worst when the Great Depression hit in 1929. The working girls who lost their jobs as the country suffered a catastrophic economic downturn. The Great Depression was the first real time period that women were recognized as being homeless.

As women had always been the protected class throughout America, it was impossible to imagine that they could be without a roof over their heads. Homeless men had been a part of a national problem since the Civil War. "Whether in scholarly or popular renditions of the Great Depression, homelessness has been understood narrowly as the displaced men who thronged the urban centers or the travail of the hundreds of thousands of transients"¹⁹ As the 1920s ended women made up a substantial portion of America's workers. Living on their own, away from family, these women were vulnerable to the massive layoffs that came with the financial crisis.

¹⁸ Michael A. Lerner, *Dry Manhattan* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007), 173.

¹⁹ Abelson, "Women Who Have No Men To work For Them," 107.

The description of these women was toned down in comparison to the men who were homeless at the same time. “The Salvation Army referred repeatedly to a white-collar problem and was careful to respect the privacy of the ‘shy, proud, new poor.’”²⁰ Due to this classification the actual numbers of homeless women at the time were hard to record.

Many women were in shelters, so they were not considered homeless, by the classic definition. These accommodations were, of course, segregated so the non-white women were even harder to verify. “The category ‘New Poor’ was constructed within a context of race and gentility which conspicuously excluded the working poor and racial minorities-particularly African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans.”²¹ Cities were not prepared to help the new population of homeless women. Without the safety net of going home, homeless women had few other choices. “While in the past, an unmarried woman over thirty-five might have been taken in by family members as a ‘poor relation,’ financially independent modern women faced unprecedented challenges.”²² Family dynamics had changed over the years, leaving a new concern for society, the homeless woman.

As time has moved forward there has been an ebb and flow to the female homeless population. World War II found many women back in the work force as the Depression ended. These jobs helped to lower the number of homeless women. Postwar found many people moving out of the city to the suburbs, a new generation of the nuclear family. Gentrification crept into city spaces that had been skid rows, prompting the removal of the homeless, in favor of urban renewal. This rebuilding of the city did not end homelessness; it just took away the home they

²⁰ Abelson, “Women Who Have No Men To work For Them,” 108.

²¹ Abelson, “Women Who Have No Men To work For Them,” 108.

²² Howard, *Homeless: Poverty and Place in Urban America*, 37.

had on skid row. “As skid rows fell, homeless residents scattered to various new locations, changing the landscape of many cities.”²³ While America began to restore city centers to their former glory, the homeless were again the casualties of choices made by government, both federal and state.

²³ Howard, *Homeless: Poverty and Place in Urban America*, 120.

Chapter 3: Cultural Changes/Equality Movement

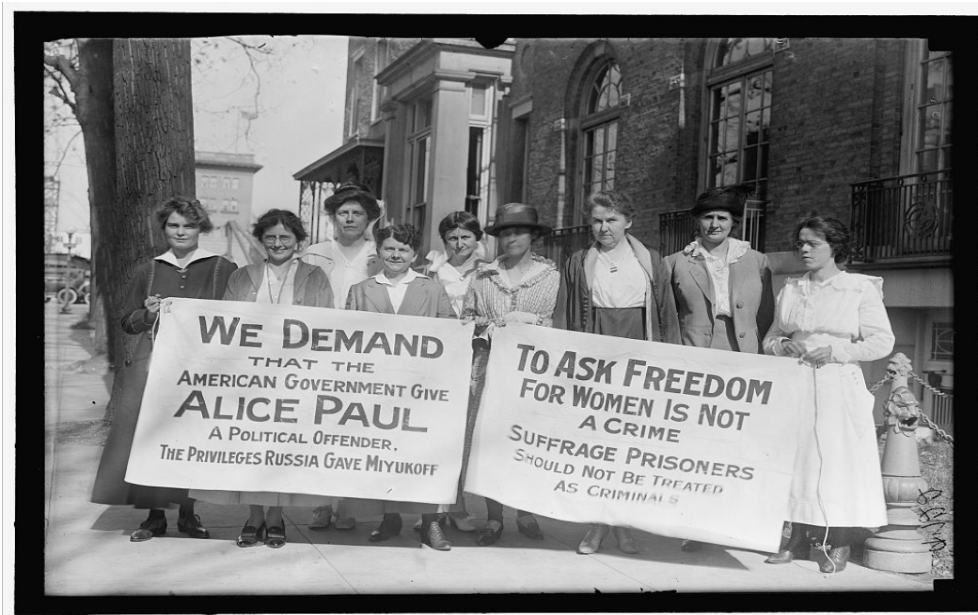


Figure 7: Woman Suffrage Pickets¹

The perceived strength of women and the roles they have had in history have changed drastically over the years. The weaker sex, who needed to be coddled and cared for, had morphed into capable, strong, and resilient members of a society that fought to keep them down. Seneca Falls, New York was the sight of the first Woman’s Rights Convention, held July 19-20, 1848. Women leaders of the time, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and others brought attention to the chasm that separated men’s and women’s rights.

Resolved, That woman is man’s equal – was intended to be so by the Creator, and the highest good of the race demands that she should be recognized as such.
 Resolved, That the women of this country ought to be enlightened in regard to the laws under which they live, that they may no longer publish their degradation,

¹ Harris & Ewing, “Woman Suffrage Pickets,” Library of Congress, Harris & Ewing Collection, <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016868585> (accessed November 25, 2024).

by declaring themselves satisfied with their present position, nor their ignorance, by asserting that they have all the rights they want.

Resolved, That woman has too long rested satisfied in the circumscribed limits which corrupt customs and a perverted application of the Scriptures have marked out for her, and that it is time she should move in the enlarged sphere which her great Creator has assigned her.²

These women were pioneers of their time and were an example to future generations of women who wanted change. Fighting for the rights of women, to ensure that equal treatment would be bestowed on them, was a fundamental shift in how women were recognized.

While women have long been the silent backbone of the family structure, their mark on the world was not felt until the rumblings of equality reached a tipping point. The demure, quiet, and somewhat compliant wife would become the outspoken and determined revolutionary leading the fight for women's rights. As women fought for the right to vote many strong voices called for action. Alice Duer Miller, a poet and suffragette, responded to an Indiana judge that husbands decide where a family lives with the following:

Home is where the husband is, Be it near or far,
Office, theatre, Pullman car, poolroom, Polls, or corner bar,
All good wives remember this,
Home is where the husband is.
A women's place is home, I wis.
Leave your family bacon frying,
Leave your wash and dishes drying.
Leave your children crying;
Join your husband, near or far,
At the club or corner bar,
For the court has taught us this; "Home is where the husband is."³

² John Dick, "Report of the Woman's Right Convention, held at Seneca Falls, New York, July 19th and 20th, 1848. Proceedings and Declaration of Sentiments," Library of Congress, American Memory, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbcmil.scrp4006702> (accessed November 25, 2024).

³ Alice Duer Miller, "Are women people?: A book of rhymes for suffrage times," Library of Congress, National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, <https://lcn.loc.gov/15013348> (accessed November 25, 2024).

Women were no longer content to be the background support for the country they lived in and loved. Seeking more autonomy than ever before, women were reevaluating their position in society and within the home. Becoming more independent was a crucial step in women's rights, but it also poked holes in the safety net many women has always counted on.

In her 1991 article, *City sex: views of American women and urban culture, 1869 to 1990*, author Andrea Tuttle Kornbluh references a book written by George Ellington in 1869 that discusses the difference in city and rural women of the time. In looking at his early scholarship, Kornbluh sees his bias against the emergence of a more independent woman. "His very distress, however, alerts us to both a post-Civil War concern about the failure to contain women in domesticity and to the contemporary impossibility of ignoring women's diverse public roles in urban society."⁴ Ellington wanted a return to the time of gentle women at home and not this new industrious woman out in society. Further in her article, Kornbluh references the writings of two women, Helen Stuart Campbell and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who published around the same time as Ellington. The difference in their writing is that they laid the foundation for social reform that would further women's equality. Campbell's work called for changes in wages, education, and home security as a way to keep women safe. "For Campbell, it was not the simple return *to* the home, but the reform *of* the home through scientific homemaking knowledge, which would allow the home to become an agency of social reform."⁵ Gilman's work focused more on the mental health of women of the time.

⁴ Andrea Tuttle Kornbluh, "City sex: views of American women and urban culture, 1869 to 1990," *Urban History Yearbook* 18, (1991): 62.

⁵ Kornbluh, "City sex," 63.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's work encouraged a new view of urban living. Citing apartment house living for families, Gilman brought community to the forefront of her argument. "Through collective organization urban women would have the privacy of their own homes, food and services, at a lower cost and with much less labour than in traditional, individual homes."⁶ Kornbluh's article is very compelling in its premise that prior scholarship has helped to define women's roles as city dwellers and the reforms they created. Her writing is clearly bent toward a feminist slant, but carries valuable information that creates a clear picture of the struggles women have faced since the late nineteenth century. Both Campbell and Gilman point to issues that are prominent factors in homelessness, wage disparity, affordable housing, and security, both financial and physical.

African American women in the same time period had similar struggles to their white counterparts, but had the added pressure of discrimination, lack of education, and lack of social standing. Much of the initial scholarship on African Americans centers around slavery and is very biased to the enslaved men. Women were merely a part of the men's life. Elizabeth Higginbotham and Sarah Watts wrote, "Such a perspective illuminated the ways that male slaves accommodated and resisted White authority, but failed to give meaningful consideration to Black females."⁷ By ignoring the contribution of the female slaves, many researchers missed the importance of the resilience and fight of the Black woman. This marginal interpretation of the African American woman has unfortunately been a long held view. By propagating this narrative society has placed women of color on the fringe of security that other women experienced. As

⁶ Kornbluh, "City sex," 64.

⁷ Elizabeth Higginbotham and Sarah Watts, "The New Scholarship on Afro-American Women," *Women's Study Quarterly* 16, no. ½ (Spring-Summer, 1988): 13.

scholarship grew over the years, more women writers brought the strength and spirit of the African American woman to life.

At the turn of the century Black women were able to gain employment, but never earned a wage at the same level as their White equivalents. The authors continue, “While Black women were often able to find agricultural and domestic work to help their families survive, it was low-wage work, the working conditions were poor, and it made their family work more difficult.”⁸ Higginbotham and Watts article argues that the original scholarship was lacking in a true accounting of women’s contribution to the Black family. By using a completely male gender focus, early scholars belittled the ways that Black women throughout the ages have been a strong pillar of the family, both as family members and workers. The authors point again to the early scholars, primarily men, lessening the impact that women of any color have had on society. Some of these early authors ideas led to social reforms that allowed women more of an autonomous role.



Figure 8: Jane Addams of Hull House, Chicago, Ill.⁹

⁸ Higginbotham and Watts, “The New Scholarship,” 17.

⁹ Lewis Wickes Hine, “Jane Addams of Hull House, Chicago, Ill.” National Child Labor Committee collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018676451> (accessed November 30, 2024).

To test the elector's fitness to deal with this situation by his ability to bear arms is absurd. These problems must be solved, if they are to be solved at all, not from the military point of view, not even from the industrial point of view, but from a third, which is rapidly developing in all the great cities of the world-the human-welfare point of view.¹⁰

Social reform was a topic that was prevalent among the women who would lead these crusades for decades to come. One such reformer was Jane Addams, creator of Hull House in Chicago, one of the first settlement houses in America. Her writings were used, see above quote, to refute the idea that women should not vote because they cannot fight. Her opening of Hull House in 1889 started a movement in which our current social work professionals find their roots. Jane Addams was aware that more than words were needed to correct the inequality among the poor, especially women. Hull House was a place of learning, compassion, and community. Karen Lundblad writes, "It became a community center for all of Chicago; there was an art museum, a theater, a boys club, a music school, a coffee house, meeting rooms for discussion clubs, a gymnasium, an employment bureau, a lunchroom, a library, apartments for working women and their children, a kindergarten, and much more."¹¹ Addams and those who worked for, and learned from, her, were the catalyst for new programs at all levels of government.

Jane Addams had the ear of Presidents, state politicians, and her local officials, and was not afraid to share her ideas. Lundblad explains, "In 1909 President Theodore Roosevelt invited Addams to a conference in Washington, DC, to consider the best type of care to be given to dependent children: 'It brought the entire subject before the country as a whole and gave to

¹⁰ Julia Ward Howe, "Jane Addams on Suffrage." *New York Times*, March 20, 1909, Letter to Editor, <https://www.loc.gov/item/rbcmiller002065/> (accessed November 30, 2024).

¹¹ Karen Shafer Lundblad, "Jane Addams and Social Reform: A Role Model for the 1990's," *Social Work* 40, no. 5 (September 1995): 663.

social work a dignity and a place in the national life which it had never known before.”¹² The notion of social work, welfare, and advocacy on behalf of the downtrodden paved the road for equality and inclusiveness in the future. These early steps permitted people to see that the poor or displaced were valuable to society and deserved a helping hand. Protection of the vulnerable became more of a public issue that translated into federal interventions, via social programs, over time.

The struggle for equality for women in America has been fought for since the early days of the country. Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams, now famously wrote to her husband, in 1776, that women deserved equality when the new nation was formed.

I long to hear that you have declared an independancy—and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Laidies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.¹³

While she promised a revolution if women were not treated better, that did not come to fruition until much later in America’s history. From Revolutionary America through the Progressive Era, women were still considered second class citizens, unworthy of a voice in government, destined to stay at home, and under the control of their father or husband. The work of Jane Addams and others opened up more opportunities for women to find their voice. Many of these reformers

¹² Lundblad, “Jane Addams,” 664

¹³ Abigail Adams, “Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March 1776,” Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-01-02-0241> (accessed November 30, 2024).

took the idea of equality, in both politics and society, as a springboard to provide support to women in need or danger.

Most women of today, while grateful for the rights afforded them, do not understand when the battle for equal rights really began. The Equal Rights Amendment brings to mind the women of the 1970s marching for government change. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was drafted in 1923 by the National Women's Party (NWP). Led by Alice Paul, a staunch suffragette, this amendment would be battled over for the next fifty years. In his book, David Kyvig writes, "The equal rights amendment had been continuously before Congress since 1923, yet not until the 1970s did it acquire a broad enough base of support to gain a realistic chance of being added to the Constitution."¹⁴ When Congress approved the amendment it failed to get states approval, despite the seven year deadline for their ratification. Failure to get the states ratification kept the amendment out of the Constitution.

The ERA received the final state, Virginia, ratification needed to make the amendment effective on January 15, 2020. The ERA has still not been ratified as an amendment, but there have been some strides made in women's rights in the meantime. While changes have happened it is still not enough to give women the same opportunities as men in America. In their article explaining the Equal Rights Amendment, authors Alex Cohen and Wilfred U. Codrington III write, "And yet, despite these dramatic and important gains for women's rights, pervasive gender

¹⁴ David E. Kyvig, *Explicit and Authentic Acts: Amending the U.S. Constitution 1776-2015 with a New Afterword*, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2016), 394.

discrimination persists in the form of wage disparities, sexual harassment and violence, and unequal representation in the institutions of American democracy.”¹⁵

These differences in men and women, and that they still continue today, is a sad commentary on a country that boasts about freedom and opportunity. For almost one hundred years an amendment to guarantee equality had not passed in the three-fourths majority of states needed to add it to the Constitution. Lack of these equal rights are a direct connection for some women as to why they are unsheltered. These inequalities have led to many women being unable to access what should be a right to Americans, affordable housing, equal pay, medical services, and the confidence that the American dream includes them as well.

¹⁵ Alex Cohen and Wilfred U. Codrington III, “The Equal Rights Amendment Explained,” Brennan Center for Justice January 23, 2020, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/equal-rights-amendment-explained> (accessed November 30, 2024).

Chapter 4: Changes in Policy and Legislation

The matter of homelessness is something that has been debated for generations as to the cause, the systemic issues, and solutions to the problem. For many the idea that anyone other than the displaced person was at fault for their circumstance was preposterous. These tramps, hobos, and vagrants made choices that led to the consequence of being without shelter. Many believed that vagrants were nothing more than drunks who cared more for alcohol than a place to rest their heads. This common misconception led to many years of ignoring homelessness as it seemed like a problem brought on by the unhoused. This lack of understanding allowed for rising numbers of homeless people to be without shelter.

In their article about stigmatizing the homeless, authors Bruce Link, et al wrote:

In a national survey in the United States, for example, Feagin found that, when respondents evaluated the causes of poverty, they placed more importance on poor people's behavioral characteristics, such as lack of thrift and proper money management (59 percent said this was a "very important" reason for poverty), lack of effort (57 percent), lack of ability and talent (54 percent), and loose morals and drunkenness (50 percent), than on economic and social factors such as low wages (43 percent), scarcity of jobs (29 percent), poor schools (38 percent), and racial discrimination (34 percent).¹

This survey, done in 1975, shows that the onus of homelessness that fell to the displaced person was still the widely held belief.

In early America, poor people were singled out and made to feel conspicuous about their lack of income or support. Link, et al. continued, "For example, those receiving public assistance were required to wear distinctive clothing and badges, which were 'rightly ordered to be fix'd as

¹ Bruce G. Link, Jo Phelan, Robert E. Moore, and Ann Stueve, "The Impact of the Label "Homeless" on Attitudes Toward Poor Persons," *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 60, no. 4 (December, 1997): 324.

some public Marks of Shame”² Policy in America was not kind to the poor, the downtrodden, or the mentally ill. Poor houses, colonies to separate the vagrants from public life, and other methods were instituted to deal with the societal smear that was homelessness. As cities started to forcibly remove those considered to be vagrants, these transient homeless began to look for other places to settle.

The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia’s entry on vagrancy shares, “During the nineteenth century, Philadelphia’s central location, conveniently situated harbor, and economic connections to inland markets drew thousands of vagrants and pauper migrants who circulated among smaller cities in Delaware, New Jersey, and New York.”³ Philadelphia residents and officials were alarmed by the rising number of vagrants and itinerant poor that were moving through their city. The Encyclopedia further explained, “The city’s Board of Prison Inspectors, as well as the influential philanthropic group known as the Philadelphia Prison Society, grew so concerned about the magnitude of poor vagrants in the early nineteenth century that they created a new penal facility, the Arch Street Prison, solely for incarcerating them.”⁴ Arch Street Prison was just one example of how cities dealt with the vagrant concern. Reform efforts were also being initiated by the religious communities, who were looking to offer services and faith to the downtrodden.

² Link, et al., “The Impact of the Label,” 323.

³ Kristin O’Brassill-Kulfan, “Vagrancy,” The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia, <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/essays/vagrancy/> (accessed December 1, 2024).

⁴ O’Brassill-Kulfan, “Vagrancy,” (accessed December 1, 2024).



Figure 9: The Old Arch Street Prison⁵

Charity was offered in many different ways toward the end of the nineteenth century by a variety of charitable organizations. Some of these organizations were philanthropic, others run through city governments, and some were faith based. Each of these associations had detractors who opposed offering a free ride to those they considered lazy. As the vagrants morphed into tramps, and were more mobile, concern for violence being instigated by them increased. “With the tramp crisis raging, two private agencies, the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor (AICP) and the Charity Organization Society (COS), convinced New York officials to stop all donations to the indigent in order to force them ‘indoors’ to regimented poorhouses.”⁶ Concerns were raised that by giving the poor and displaced handouts would make them more dependent and less likely to get jobs. As Kenneth Kusmer wrote, “Tramps also represented a more extreme case of what reformers perceived to be a general problem: the existence of a class of people – denominated “paupers” – who attempted to get by with as little labor as possible

⁵ David J. Kennedy, “Arch Street Prison,” Historical Society of Philadelphia, David J. Kennedy watercolors, <https://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/objects/4253> (accessed December 1, 2024).

⁶ DePastino, “Citizen Hobo,” 22.

while living off public aid or private charity.”⁷ While the concern about abuse of the system was present, areas still began to make accommodations available to those in need.

While there had been poorhouses, soup kitchens, and the like, cities were now seeing the rise of shelters or missions for the homeless. “The Water Street Mission in New York, founded in 1872 by a reformed drunkard and criminal, Jerry McAuley, was the first of numerous ‘rescue missions’ that would spring up in the skid rows and slums of American cities during the next several decades.”⁸ McAuley’s work encouraged others to help, but it also caused quite the headache for the more oppressive factions, like the COS.

Many of these missions were founded by reformers who believed that the saving grace of Jesus Christ would turn any life around. One such organization that illustrates this narrative is the Salvation Army. In Priscilla Pope-Levinson’s book she writes:

Those engaged in what he calls “evangelical social work” either launched or expanded their institution building during the Progressive Era. Take the Salvation Army. In a span of two decades after the founder, William Booth, commissioned a group of eight to begin work in the United States, a staggering expanse of institutions had already opened from New York to San Francisco, including “forty-nine men’s shelters and five women’s shelters; fourteen rescue home; twenty-three food depots; twenty-three workshops, factories, and labor yards; twenty slum posts; three farm colonies; three hospitals; and two home for waifs and strays.”⁹

Evangelical women were a large part of the reform movement addressing the homeless population. Their belief that, by converting to Christ, any person was afforded a better and more wholesome life. These faith based missions differed from the settlement houses that had been

⁷ Kusmer, “Down and Out,” 73-4.

⁸ Kusmer, “Down and Out,” 88.

⁹ Priscilla Pope-Levinson, *Building the Old Time Religion: Women Evangelists in the Progressive Era* (New York, New York University Press, 2014), 143-144.

established. The main difference was the Christian vision, not that settlement houses did not have religious aspects, but it was not a required exercise. At many of the more evangelical shelters daily sermons or discussions were required for those living there.

As times began to change, so did the issues that cities were facing, both economically and morally. In her article about these moral changes, Marian Morton wrote, “Maternity homes had their origins in the late nineteenth-century evangelical benevolence that equated reform and social welfare with the moral rescue and spiritual reclamation of the individual – in this case the ‘fallen woman’.”¹⁰ One of these maternity houses was started by the organization that became the Young Women’s Christian Association or YWCA. “As an adjunct of the YMCA, the Women’s Christian Association shared its goals of the conversion of urban youth to evangelical Protestantism and middle-class respectability.”¹¹ While many of these programs and organizations have gone defunct, the YWCA is still going strong and helping needy women. For the indigent people that the services were intended, for some the required lectures and sermons about converting to Christianity were a deterrent to gaining services. Shelters have been in existence since this time, but were not as sustained until the 1980s.



Figure 10: Y.W.C.A In service for the girls of the world¹²

¹⁰ Marian J. Morton, “Fallen Women, Federated Charities, and Maternity Homes, 1913-1973,” *Social Service Review* 62, no. 1 (March, 1988): 62.

¹¹ Morton, “Fallen Women,” 63.

¹² Neysa McMein, “Y.W.C.A. In service for the girls of the world,” New York, American Lithograph Co., 1919, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. <https://lcn.loc.gov/93502256> (accessed July 20, 2025).

One of the biggest policy changes that occurred in America, as an opportunity for the poor to raise themselves up, happened around the end of the nineteenth century. In 1892, the 52nd Congress of the United States called for and approved money to conduct a study “to study slums in American cities.”¹³ The homeless epidemic has always fluctuated alongside housing prices and wages paid. As social reformers were more adamant that both the federal and state government’s help was necessary to assist with the displaced, legislation began to be adopted. Some of the issues with this legislation was that it was based on antiquated ideas surrounding the poor and needy. Mark Peters wrote in his book, “Perhaps the most striking aspect of the reformers’ developing theories about homelessness was their tendency to see tenement problems in their most visible manifestation: poor sanitation.”¹⁴ From the very first stirrings of assistance, government and reformers were looking at the root of destitution incorrectly.

The Great Depression was a period where homelessness was constantly debated, studied, and possible solutions were presented. The issues of vagrancy, transient workers, and the recently unemployed were fought over in the press, in Congress, and in communities nationwide. The number of homeless continued to rise as the depression worsened and the government enacted various agencies to try to alleviate the struggle. One of the issues coming against the government was the view in the differences between the new poor and the hobo. In her book, Ella Howard writes about the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), “FERA representatives assured the public that the program would assist the deserving, newly poor

¹³ Tad DeHaven, “Department of Housing and Urban Development Timeline,” <https://www.downsizinggovernment.org/hud/timeline> (accessed December 1, 2024).

¹⁴ Mark Peters, “Homelessness: A Historical Perspective on Modern Legislation,” *Michigan Law Review* 88, no. 5 (April, 1990): 1219.

victims of the Depression rather than the unemployed migrant poor of prior years.”¹⁵ Their goal was to help end the practice of transiency by instituting the Federal Transient Program (FTP). The focus, according to Howard was, “Nationwide, most transients aided by the FTP were white, American-born, unskilled and semi-skilled male workers with at least an elementary school education.”¹⁶ Unfortunately, the program focused on only a small part of the problem.

As Holly Allen points out in her book, *Forgotten Men and Fallen Women: The Cultural Politics of New Deal Narratives*, “Throughout the Depression years, sensational accounts of transient “perversions” – particularly those involving the seduction of impressionable white youth by older, inveterate hobos – pervaded American culture, infusing popular culture and political rhetoric and delimiting the sexual, racial, class, and generational contours of citizenship in the emergent welfare state.”¹⁷ The FTP set up camps for the new homeless that would give them a different path than being transient.

In these camps they had food, lodging, and camaraderie. While trying to combat the hobo existence, the FTP basically replicated it in fixed locations around the country. In his book, *Citizen Hobo*, Todd Depastino wrote of the reasons for the closure of the FTP. “It removed the transient from all possible contact with private employment, from normal society, and from contact with women and normal family relationships and sent him into the segregated, adolescent barrack life of an isolated camp.”¹⁸ These programs were primarily put in place for men as women were treated and classified differently.

¹⁵ Howard, “Homeless,” 64.

¹⁶ Howard, “Homeless,” 65.

¹⁷ Holly Allen, *Forgotten Men and Fallen Women: The Cultural Politics of New Deal Narratives*, (Ithica, Cornell University Press, 2015), 51.

¹⁸ Depastino, “Citizen Hobo,” 209.

Homeless women during the Great Depression were more prevalent than in times past. When faced with the growing number of women and children that were displaced, society placed blame at the feet of the women. Holly Allen wrote, “In the 1930s, women-blaming narratives focused on the specter of transgressive femininity, thereby justifying white men’s righteous anger toward women and fortifying their collective power and identity.”¹⁹ Women were subjected to cruel words and mockery for trying to help their families survive. Allen penned the following, “No figure of white womanhood was more reviled in Depression-era public culture than the married woman worker, who allegedly turned her back on domestic responsibilities in order to vie for employment with men,”²⁰ Another depiction of the Depression-era woman is one of desperation and poor choices.

Prostitution was not a new occupation during the 1930s, but it was one that had seen a decline in the years prior. When writing about New York in the early 1930s, Allen notes, “the desperation of young women who cannot find work in this time of protracted depression is forcing many of them either directly into prostitution or at least into borderline occupations from which the ranks of prostitution are most generally recruited.”²¹ Many women who were forced into that line of work were unattached, but some were in that position due to their husbands leaving the family. The women who adopted the transient life, like prostitutes, were also considered sexually deviant. Depastino writes, “Having to invent customs of their own, lady hoboos were now becoming aggressive in their manners, using their bodies as working capital, and taking on multiple sex partners as they traveled.”²² For some women and families migration

¹⁹ Allen, “Forgotten Men and Fallen Women,” 99.

²⁰ Allen, “Forgotten Men and Fallen Women,” 100.

²¹ Allen, “Forgotten Men and Fallen Women,” 105.

²² Depastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 203.

was the great hope of finding a job. While a job was helpful in their present condition, women were omitted from the government's mind when it came to new programs to aid the destitute.

Finding more people losing their jobs, homes, and hope, the government tried to step in and offer assistance in different ways. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was President during the height of the Great Depression. His focus, as he read in one of his Fireside Chats, was that "We are working toward a definite goal, which is to prevent the return of conditions which came very close to destroying what we call modern civilization."²³ Roosevelt and his administration established various programs and laws that were intended to bring prosperity back to the American worker. The struggle of the American people was being seen and responded to by people in a position to help. Unfortunately, these politicians were a product of their time and beliefs, and missed out on a segment of the population who also needed a hand up. In his Fireside Chat on May 7, 1933, Roosevelt laid out how Congress had made inroads to solving the Depression issues. "First, we are giving opportunity of employment to one-quarter of a million of the unemployed, especially the young men who have dependents, to go into the forestry and flood prevention work."²⁴ While having men back at work was advantageous for the married women and children, this did not give as much hope to the single woman who was down on her luck. As more programs rolled out, unattached women who had become homeless, were not initially considered like their male counterparts were.

²³ Radio Address of the President, May 7, 1933, p. 9, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1933-1945, National Archives, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/197303> . (Accessed July 25, 2025).

²⁴ Radio Address, May 7, 1933, National Archives.



Figure 11: A Monthly Check to You...²⁵

One such program designed to help workers as they approach old age was Social Security. Enacted in 1935 as a foundational part of repairing the devastation of the Great Depression, Social Security was Roosevelt’s administrations answer to easing poverty for pensioners. In Kiran Klaus Patel’s book, *The New Deal: A Global History*, he writes, “the New Dealers primarily focused on domestic economic and Social Security (with a capital S), backed by state intervention.”²⁶ In its initial stages, Social Security concentrated on the needs of the elderly, unemployed, and dependent children. Donald T. Critchlow’s book, *In Defense of Populism: Protest and American Democracy*, he writes, “The Social Security Act of 1935, for example, provided more benefits for the elderly than it did for aid to women with dependent children.”²⁷ Congress was looking toward social service, but were missing out on key demographics in the country. The poster above illustrates a gap in the assistance that would have

²⁵ Newman, *A Monthly Check to you for the rest of your life, beginning when you are 65*, 1935, Poster, Social Security Board, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print> . (Accessed July 25, 2025).

²⁶ Kiran Klaus Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History* (Princeton University Press, 2016), 193.

²⁷ Donald T. Critchlow, *In Defense of Populism: Protest and American Democracy* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 45.

helped many women of the time. “Who is eligible...everybody working for a salary or wages (with only a few exceptions, such as agriculture, domestic service, and government work).”²⁸

Social Security was not a system for every working American, it left many lower-class workers without benefit. By excluding these workers, many of whom were female, the government let them slip through the cracks and remain financially unstable.

Roosevelt’s administration tried to rebuild the housing market by passing the Federal Housing Act in 1937. The Depression had laid waste to reliable housing and housing markets as many homeowners faced foreclosure. In Jenny Schuetz’s book, *Fixer Upper: How to Repair America’s Broken Housing Systems*, she quotes Franklin Delano Roosevelt. “In his second inaugural address, President Franklin Roosevelt famously pointed to “one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished.”²⁹ Using these words to paint the picture of a country in need of assistance, Roosevelt pushed for better housing options. One of the stipulations of the new Federal Housing Act was a clause that called for the destruction of slums as new housing was built. In her book, *Seattle from the Margins: Exclusion, Erasure, and the Making of a Pacific Coast City*, author Megan Asaka points out this clause as just one of the reasons marginalized people were able to fall through the cracks. “For each unit of public housing built, the law now required the destruction of “slum housing’ in equal number.”³⁰ This was another example of the failure of the government to protect all people from homelessness, discrimination, and poverty.

²⁸ Newman, *A Monthly Check*.

²⁹ Jenny Schuetz, *Fixer Upper: How to Repair America’s Broken Housing Systems*, (Brookings Institution Press, 2022), 68.

³⁰ Megan Asaka, *Seattle from the Margins: Exclusion, Erasure, and the Making of a Pacific Coast City*, (University of Washington Press, 2022), 161.

Asaka's book focuses on the Seattle waterfront area known, at the time, as Profanity Hill. "In 1939, Profanity Hill stood as a kind of border zone clustered around Yesler Way, a major thoroughfare that continued to function as a division between white, residential neighborhoods to the north and multiracial, transient areas to the South."³¹ What was once an area that housed some of the city's elite, was now home to brothels, shantytowns, and transient people. The razing of the slums pushed these disregarded people out of their homes with no hope of qualifying for the new public housing being built in its place. "The vast majority of Profanity Hill residents were unable to gain access to Yesler Terrace housing due to restrictive eligibility criteria, which limited tenants to legally married US citizens."³² By giving local housing authorities the right to judge what constituted a slum, Congress failed to protect the residence of Profanity Hill and other areas like it around the country. Posters, such as the one below, give a glimpse of the prejudice that was shared nationally.

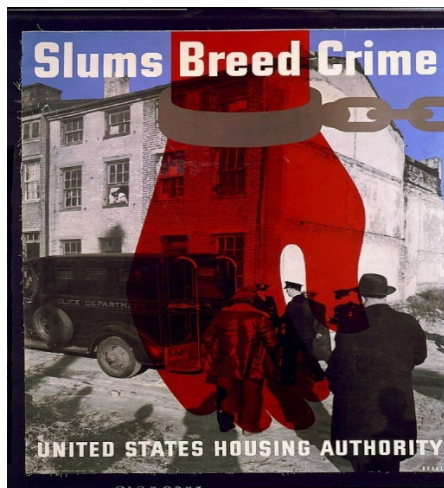


Figure 12: Slums Breed Crime³³

³¹ Asaka, 163.

³² Asaka, 160.

³³ Lester Beall, *Slums Breed Crime*, 1941, poster, United States Housing Authority, <https://lccn.loc.gov/93509010> (Accessed July 25, 2025).

As World War II started, the Great Depression came to a close as people were able to find jobs to support the war effort. Women were especially needed to fill in for the men who went off to fight. The homelessness issue became less noticeable as prosperity returned to America. This downturn in the number of unsheltered men and women would continue to hold steady after the war ended. When the men returned to their families, after the war, there was a surge of people moving to the suburbs. Kenneth Kusmer wrote in his book, *Down and Out, On The Road*, “Postwar economic expansion, coupled with benefits like the G.I. Bill, continued to help many who had been temporarily homeless during the Depression, providing an impetus for them to successfully reenter the economy and leave skid row behind.”³⁴ This was a boon for the men and families that were homeless, but did not factor in the single woman who would be jobless again. The G.I. Bill was intended to keep post-war America prosperous by educating and providing welfare to servicemen and women as they returned. In the book, *Veterans’ Policies, Veterans’ Politics: New Perspectives on Veterans in the Modern United States*, Nancy Beck Young writes, “Ironically, while the G.I. Bill has been termed an unprecedented advance in the federal provision of social welfare, it symbolized the triumph of a more restrained construction of the welfare state because its benefits were targeted to a narrow class.”³⁵ Once again the government offered a helping hand, but not everyone received the same benefit.

In her article about the G.I. Bill and women’s education, Aimee Imundo wrote, “Believing the traditional college curriculum did not prepare women to be wives and mothers, colleges offered and recommended to women courses on family, childcare, and home

³⁴ Kusmer, *Down and Out*, 224.

³⁵ Nancy Beck Young, *Veterans’ Policies, Veterans’ Politics: New Perspective on Veterans in the Modern United States* (University of Florida Press, 2012), 201.

economics.”³⁶ By offering women fewer educational options, this social welfare program did not provide stability. Unmarried women were not afforded the choice of career as the country relied on the continued belief that they were to be wives and mothers. Working outside of the home in a professional setting was not what the government saw for women. The assumption seemed to be that women would benefit by marrying, possibly to a man who used the G.I. Bill to gain an education and career.

Public housing was still a concern over the years since the Federal Housing Act of 1937 was enacted. To address the ongoing lack of low-income housing Congress approved the Housing and Urban Development Act in 1965. Per the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library resources, “The act expanded funding for existing federal housing programs, provided rent subsidies for the elderly and disabled, assisted in the construction of more low-income housing, and provided funds for public works projects.”³⁷ Almost thirty years after the first housing legislation the problem still persisted. In Carolyn R. Boiarsky’s book, *Lead Babies and Poisoned Houses: Environmental Injustice, Systemic Racism, and Governmental Failure*, she described the process by which the government would pay contractors to build low-income housing. “The FHA (Federal Housing Authority) would fund the difference between the construction costs and the amount of rent that the residents would be asked to pay, guaranteeing the banks and contractors the same profits that they would have received if they had constructed homes for

³⁶ Aimee Imundo, “Wam-Bam Thank you Ma’am: The G.I. Bill of Rights and Women’s Education in the Post-War Years,” *Georgetown Law Library*, 1991, <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/1051278>

³⁷ “Housing and Urban Development,” Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, accessed July 26, 2025, <https://www.lbjlibrary.org/news-and-press/media-kits/housing-and-urban-development>

middle-class families.”³⁸ Even this program was short-lived as the next President, Richard Nixon, turned federal dollars away from public housing.

In her book, *Lessons from Eviction Court: How We Can End Our Housing Crisis*, Fran Quigley explains how the Nixon administration sent public housing money to private landlords. “Instead, the plan was to subsidize for-profit landlords via direct payments and tax breaks in return for providing some housing to low-income renters.”³⁹ By privatizing these payments the government lost control of ensuring that low-income renters has access to affordable housing. In an effort to continue to offer assistance the Section 8 voucher program was initiated. “In the voucher program, technically called housing choice vouchers but widely known as Section 8 vouchers, low-income renters are provided with vouchers they can use to find housing in the private rental market.”⁴⁰ These vouchers were meant to allow lower-income households to rent in decent areas using a government subsidy. “If a landlord agrees to the arrangement, the federal government will pay the difference between market rent and 30 percent of the renter’s income—the same rent obligation that a public housing resident has.”⁴¹ Without oversight, landlords were now allowed to determine who could and could not rent from them. This caused many Section 8 recipients to struggle to find available housing that would accept them. Fran Quigley relates the story of one such women, Belinda, who could not find a home after years on the waiting list for the voucher. “Belinda never did find a landlord to accept her, so her voucher expired. The last

³⁸ Carolyn R. Boiarsky, *Lead Babies and Poisoned Houses: Environmental Injustice, Systemic Racism, and Governmental Failure*, (Purdue University Press, 2024), 162.

³⁹ Fran Quigley, *Lessons from Eviction Court: How We Can End Our Housing Crisis*, (Cornell University Press, 2025), 17.

⁴⁰ Quigley, *Lessons from Eviction Court*, 17.

⁴¹ Quigley, *Lessons from Eviction Court*, 17.

time we connected with her, Belinda was homeless.”⁴² Future administrations would do even more harm to the homeless population.

Ronald Reagan was a conservative Republican who believed the government had grown too big and needed economic reform. In his book, *The Presidents and the Poor: America Battles Poverty, 1964-2017*, Lawrence McAndrews details how Reagan was viewed by his opposition. “To his detractors, there seemed no greater evidence of Reagan’s callousness toward the underclass than homelessness, which skyrocketed during the 1980s.”⁴³ Reagan’s plan to shrink the government and the deficit would leverage a high price for social programs throughout the country. Reagan’s administration downplayed the homelessness crisis and understated the numbers of homeless on the streets. “Other estimates of the number of homeless during the Reagan years fell between 300,000 and 1.2 million on any night, including a rapidly growing number of women and children.”⁴⁴ One piece of legislation that was accomplished on Reagan’s watch was the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act of 1987.

The book, *Agenda for Social Justice: Solutions for 2020*, details the aim of the law. “McKinney-Vento funds transitional housing, job training, primary care, education, and permanent housing.”⁴⁵ While a huge step toward improving the homeless situation, Reagan was unhappy with government funding the programs. Prior to the passing of the bill President Reagan had made his stance on the homeless clear. According to McAndrews, “In an appearance on ABC-TV’s *Good Morning America* in 1984, the president declared that ‘people who are sleeping

⁴² Quigley, *Lessons from Eviction Court*, 18.

⁴³ Lawrence J. McAndrews, *The Presidents and the Poor: America Battles Poverty, 1964-2017*, (University Press of Kansas, 2018), 115.

⁴⁴ McAndrews, *The Presidents and the Poor*, 116.

⁴⁵ R. Neil Greene and Wayne Centrone, *Agenda for Social Justice: Solutions for 2020*, (Policy Press, 2020), 128.

on the grates...are homeless, you might say, by choice.”⁴⁶ Far from the only one that felt this way, the stigma around homelessness continued on.



Figure 13: A Little Kindness Goes a Long Way⁴⁷

⁴⁶ McAndrews, *The Presidents and the Poor*, 117.

⁴⁷ Ed Yourdon, “A Little Kindness Goes a Long Way,” *Flickr*, <https://www.cru.org/us/en/communities/innercity/why-a-homeless-woman-called-me-her-friend.html> Accessed July 26, 2025

Chapter 5: Economic Changes and Social Service Failures

Homelessness may not be a purely economic issue, but financial security is one of the requirements to maintain a home. Early scholarship about the unsheltered have long placed the blame on the transient way of life and lack of ties to society. It was not until recently that the narrative changed to include circumstances beyond the control of the person on the street as possible explanations for the number of homeless.

The economic downturns in the United States, especially the Great Depression, were an undeniable factor in people becoming or remaining homeless. The volatility of the Stock Market, loans being called in for payment, and the lack of employment available was the worst combination for Americans. The Great Depression opened many eyes to the issue of homelessness and how it did not discriminate against those who were affected. Ella Howard captured the following sentiment in her book, *Homeless: Poverty and Place in Urban America*:

In a 1933 speech to the National Conference of Social Work, social worker and head of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration Harry Hopkins observed, “We are now dealing with people of all classes. It is no longer a matter of unemployables and chronic dependents, but of your friends and mine who are involved in this. Every one of us knows some family of our friends which is or should be getting relief.” These shifts would affect programming, unless middle-class Americans falling on hard times were to receive the same treatment as “Bowery Bums.”¹

Economic freefall caused the American government to initiate more social welfare programs in order to try to stabilize the country. While many programs were aimed at getting Americans back to work they tended to focus on the employability of the male

¹ Howard, *Homeless: Poverty and Place in Urban America*, 62.

breadwinner. As Holly Allen wrote, “If the ideal citizen was a successful white family breadwinner who participated in local civic affairs, the transient was his diametrical opposite.”² This mindset that the transient, or homeless population, was the counterpart to the homogenous nuclear family caused fear and discrimination throughout the country. The group that got lost in all of this hysteria was the women who had lost their jobs, homes, and had no family to depend on. As Roosevelt came into office desperate women wrote letters, “in the expectation that their complaints and pleas would receive a sympathetic reading,” according to Elaine Abelson, in the book, *Women on Their Own: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Being Single*. Abelson reproduced a response received in 1933:

My dear Mrs. Bishop: Your letter to Mrs. Roosevelt has been referred to the Dept of Labor and to me. I am glad to tell you that there is a movement on foot to do something for the unemployed unattached woman...there is some hope for organizing now a service that will be helpful to the woman who has no family...Have you made application to the US Employment Service, 80 Centre Street NY, for work...Signed Mary Anderson, Director, Women’s Bureau, US Dept of Labor.³

The response was vague and only offered the barest of information to a woman who needed help and guidance. While the end of the Great Depression brought the number of homeless down, it did not give needed security to women who were single.

After World War II ended prosperity seemed to be around every corner. A time of urban renewal, post-war America was looking ahead to a bright future. Americans wanted to see their

² Allen, Holly, *Forgotten Men and Fallen Women*, 56.

³ Elaine S. Abelson, “The Times that Tried Only Men’s Souls: Women, Work, and Public Policy in the Great Depression,” in *Women on Their Own: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Being Single*, ed. Rudolph M. Bell and Virginia Yans, (Rutgers University Press, 2008), 219-38.

success around them and that meant it was time for skid row to be demolished in cities. These areas that included rooming houses, single room occupancy (SRO) hotels, and run down buildings were not the vision of city planners. One example was the Bowery in New York, which retained a small homeless population in the 1940s and 1950s. As Ella Howard wrote, “Eying skid rows as valuable, underutilized real estate, enterprising urban planners launched ambitious redevelopment projects fueled by federal spending.”⁴ This was another step to push the homeless into other less desirable areas. As the middle-class moved to the suburbs they took the federal money with them. In their book *Race and Crime: Geographies of Injustice*, Elizabeth Brown and George Borganian discuss the change in tax base and property maintenance in cities.

Given the federal governments focus on promoting new construction rather than home repair, housing stock in the city suffered a steep decline. White flight also emptied the city of prosperous residents whose tax dollars and property investments had buoyed urban economies. With white flight, the tax base of most industrial cities declined. Together, white mob violence, the formal and informal policies and practices of real estate, and the logics of capital accumulation led to a new geography of racial segregation: whites in suburban America and nonwhites left behind in disinvested – and soon to be deindustrialized – urban spaces.⁵

These urban spaces were sold to developers who had profit on their mind and not a thought for those that were being displaced. By clearing the only low-rent areas out and not offering an alternative, low-income people were that much closer to being on the streets.

Another issue that contributed to the homeless epidemic was the lack of wage equality between the genders and the races. In a blog post for the Economic Policy Institute author Elise Gould framed the disparity between men’s and women’s pay was based on antiquated beliefs.

⁴ Howard, *Homeless: Poverty and Place*, 116.

⁵ Elizabeth Brown and George Borganian, *Race and Crime: Geographies of Injustice*, (University of California Press, 2018), 182.

“Women are paid less than men as a result of occupational segregation, devaluation of women’s work, societal norms, and discrimination, all of which took root well before women entered the labor market.”⁶ It is not only white women who are affected by the pay discrimination. The chart below shows the gap between white men and women of different races:

Gender Wage Gap as Compared to White Men	Median	Gap
Hispanic women	64.6%	35.4%
Black women	69.8%	30.2%
White women	83.1%	16.9%
AAPI women	90.3%	9.7%

Figure 14: Black and Hispanic Women Experience the Largest Pay Gaps⁷

While the wage gap is getting closer women are still undervalued in the marketplace. This can have a direct consequence on being able to pay their bills, maintain a home, and support a family if they are the breadwinner. This inequality in pay also alters a woman’s retirement earnings. Since women have historically been the caregiver to the family they tend to have lapses in their employment that men do not have. Giving birth, being home with a sick child, and the inequality in the perceived gendered role are a few reasons why women may not have the same work history as men. In an article published by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) it states, “Mothers have 28% less lifetime earnings than women without children, and

⁶ Elise Gould, “Gender Wage Gap Persists in 2023,” *Economic Policy Institute Working Economics Blog*, March 8, 2024, <https://www.epi.org/blog/gender-wage-gap-persists-in-2023-women-are-paid-roughly-22-less-than-men-on-average/>

⁷ Gould, *Gender Wage Gap*

their earnings decrease by 3% with each additional child.”⁸ These inequalities have caused some women to lose financial stability over their lifetime.

As the federal government began to remove social welfare programs from their budgets and agendas the landscape of America’s income-insecure was rattled. In the early 1980s, during President Reagan’s administration, the country was in a recession and people depended on their government support to survive. Lawrence McAndrews wrote, “Sixty percent of the administration’s first round of reductions in social spending came from antipoverty programs, with a 16.3 percent decline in AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) and an 18.6 percent drop in food stamps.”⁹ Reagan believed that it was time for the federal government to step back and let the states maintain some of these programs. The issue with the states taking charge was there were no regulations to the process of application. “In Mississippi, a food stamp applicant had to fill out forty-two forms.”¹⁰ Participants were subjected to multiple forms, long waitlists, and for some, denial of benefits. States also did not have the resources to financially cover so many people long term. The Reagan years saw many cuts and reforms to welfare, social programs, and food security plans. These cuts led to more people on the streets with no place to shelter. These were also the years that included major changes to public housing and its funding.

As more people lost their homes and became unsheltered the Reagan administration continued to defund and shrink public housing initiatives. Todd Depastino wrote in his book, “As

⁸ Rashmi Chimmalgi and Meghan Kissell, “The Not So Simple Truth About the Gender Pay Gap,” *The Not So Simple Truth*, February 2025, https://www.aauw.org/app/uploads/2025/03/The_Simple_Truth_Gender_Pay_Gap_2025.pdf

⁹ McAndrews, *The Presidents and the Poor*, 104.

¹⁰ McAndrews, *The Presidents and the Poor*, 109.

the number of poor people rose in the 1980s, the availability of low-cost housing declined by 30 percent in absolute terms.”¹¹ With the funding running out plans to gentrify these areas continued the urban renewal in cities. Depastino continues, “The result was a rapid loss of affordable housing at the low end of the market, increasing the likelihood that some of the very poor would go without shelter.”¹² This shortage of low-income housing caused more people to be without a roof over their heads or staying in shelters. Many of those that felt the absence of housing were women and children. “By 1980 two out of every three poor adults was a woman, and one out of every five children was poor...would at some point find themselves without shelter.”¹³ An added group of homeless had been growing in number for over thirty years, the mentally challenged were facing their own poverty story.

Deinstitutionalization is defined by Merriam-Webster as, “the release of institutionalized individuals from institutional care (as in a psychiatric hospital) to care in the community.”¹⁴ In the book *Agenda for Social Justice* the authors analyze the premise of deinstitutionalization as a culprit for the uptick in the number of homeless on the streets.

The tail end of the era of deinstitutionalization – a period of time in which people were transferred out of the confined spaces of asylums and into community oriented care – is often associated with increased homelessness, but deinstitutionalization as a primary cause is disputed and, importantly, this period coincided with a confluence of additional factors such as reduction of welfare (including the dismantling of social sector housing), wage stagnation, declining union strength, growing income inequality, and rising house costs.¹⁵

¹¹ Depastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 255.

¹² Depastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 256.

¹³ Depastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 257.

¹⁴ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “deinstitutionalization,” accessed July 27, 2025, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/deinstitutionalization>.

¹⁵ Greene, *Agenda for Social Justice*, 127-28.

While there are mentally ill homeless people more than one study has shown that the deinstitutionalization, that started in the 1950s, was not the only reason there was an increase in the homeless population. In Marian Moser Jones journal article, “Creating a Science of Homelessness During the Reagan Era,” she cites a study done in Los Angeles to explain homelessness. “Most reported mental illness in about a third of the homeless population they surveyed, as well as finding elevated rates of substance abuse.”¹⁶ Alcohol has always been equated to a homeless problem since the days of the Hobo. The use of drugs became a major factor in people becoming or remaining homeless.

Many researchers agree that drugs may not have been what initially landed a person on the streets, but staying on the street led many to develop a drug addiction. As Kenneth Kusmer writes in his book, “Given the sometimes hellish nature of life on the street, it should come as no surprise that many homeless persons become mentally disoriented or turn to alcohol and drugs.”¹⁷ In *Homelessness Handbook*, the authors shared insight on why drug and alcohol treatment is not made for the person on the streets.

There is an irony in the world of the services for the extremely poor in North America. On one hand, “low demand” (no-questions-asked) services for the poor and homeless delivered in places such as shelters, soup kitchens, and day centers attract high numbers of people, yet have few professional staff. On the other hand, treatment programs that require people to leave the homeless milieu, even programs designed specifically for the homeless, have large attrition rates before and during treatment.¹⁸

¹⁶ Marian Moser Jones, “Creating a Science of Homelessness During the Reagan Era,” *The Milbank Quarterly* 93, no.1 (2015): 157.

¹⁷ Kusmer, *Down and Out*, 243.

¹⁸ Levinson and Ross, *Homeless Handbook*, 206.

Many of these services are out of reach for the poor and unhoused. The continued spiral of drug addiction and alcohol abuse has proven to be a cause for continued life on the streets.

Domestic violence is a key contributing factor to the rising numbers of homeless women and children over the years. Battered women have long remained in a violent situation knowing if they leave they will have nothing. There have been a plethora of studies done on domestic violence and its aftermath. The ACLU Women's Rights Project authored an article entitled "Domestic Violence and Homelessness" that helped to explain some of the reasons women stay in those situations. "As the report accompanying the ABA's (American Bar Association) recommendation explained, 'Until we stop asking women to choose between being beaten and being able to feed and shelter their children, we cannot expect to rid our society of domestic violence.'"¹⁹ Congress took steps in 1994 to help lessen the stress of domestic violence survivors that were in public housing.

Sarah B. Lawsky writing for "The Yale Law Journal" explained how the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was linked to the Nineteenth Amendment. The Nineteenth Amendment gave women the right to be political citizens of the United States, not just citizens. Lawsky wrote, "A culture of violence against women allows men to dominate women and forces women to reshape their actions, desires, and beliefs, thereby interfering with their self-determination and, in this republican country, with their full

¹⁹ Unknown, "Domestic Violence and Homelessness," *ACLU Women's Rights Project*, March 21, 2006, <https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/dvhomelessness032106.pdf>

political participation.”²⁰ Although Congress had passed the bill it only covered government subsidized housing. Many states in the following years approved their own state laws to expand upon VAWA by mandating protections from eviction or discrimination.

There are a multitude of reasons why the number of homeless people continues to rise and why women are only recently being seen as part of that population. With the lack of affordable housing mothers with children are staying in shelters, instead of on the streets, for their safety. Prior to the 1980s women were not counted in many of the homeless studies since they were in shelters, on a friends sofas, or with extended family. Since they were not being seen on the streets most assumed they were not being affected by the changes over the years. Todd Depastino summed up this premise in his book, “While the homeless mentally ill attracted a great deal of attention, the most striking feature of the new homelessness was the unprecedented proportions of women, children, and nonwhites living in shelters and on the streets.”²¹ The question remains, what will it take to end homelessness and keep men, women, and children safe?

²⁰ Sarah B. Lawsky, “A Nineteenth Amendment Defense of the Violence Against Women Act.” *The Yale Law Journal* 109, no. 4 (2002).

²¹ Depastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 256.

Chapter 6: Possible Solutions

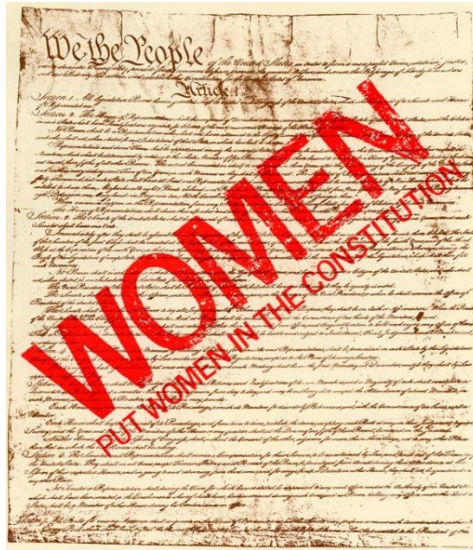


Figure 15: Poster Advocating the Equal Rights Amendment¹

Many improvements have been made to ease the burden of homelessness on women's shoulders. Unfortunately, many of the social programs are always at the mercy of the current administration, both at the federal and state level. It has been proven over and over again that each President had their hand in legislation that would affect the homeless. Some Presidents provided assistance and programs that were intended to keep people working and off the streets. Others worked tirelessly to dismantle the federal obligations to lower-income families. Shouts of balanced budgets and social responsibility rang through the halls of Congress. There are a few possible answers to bringing women up to a fair and equal level.

The first step in bringing women equality is by adding an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution, that is clearer than the original that went before the states in 1972.

¹ Unknown, "Poster Advocating the Equal Rights Amendment," Library of Virginia, <https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/oc/stc/entries/poster-advocating-the-equal-rights-amendment-ca.-1972>

Clear language is needed to make sure that the equal protections under the law are afforded to all men and women. The National Organization of Women (NOW), in 1995, began working on a revised amendment called the Constitutional Equality Amendment (CEA) to replace the original amendment. According to Jane Mansbridge, who authored an essay titled “Whatever Happened to the ERA?” NOW does not still support adding the original ERA to the Constitution. “The problem is not so much the wording of the original ERA as the understanding of it that prevailed during the 1972 legislative debate, which suggested that the amendment would not affect issues such as combat exemption, sex discrimination in insurance, taxation of single-sex schools, and abortion issues.”² Legislating equality has been a high hurdle over the years, but gaining that right would open a door to more assistance for women in bad situations.

Bringing the pay gap to a close could boost the economy and allow women to be paid fairly and equally for the same job as men. In the AAUW article about the pay gap it reads, “Closing the gender pay gap could add billions of dollars to the U.S. economy annually. From 1967 to 2021, the pay gap has cumulatively cost women \$61 trillion in lost wages.”³ This disparity in earnings is a key issue in women finding themselves at risk for homelessness, as they are likely to have lower paying jobs and more time away from work. Wage equality would also allow women to contribute more to their Social Security and retirement. The ability to bolster their retirement can help to balance the time off that many women have for child bearing and parenting. “Reduced lifetime earnings for women result in the loss of Social Security retirement benefits, with mothers receiving 16% less retirement benefits than women without children.”⁴

² Jane Mansbridge, “Whatever Happened to the ERA?,” *Women and the U.S. Constitution: History, Interpretation, and Practice*, (Columbia University Press, 2003), 373.

³ Chimmalgi and Kissell, “The Not So Simple Truth,” 2.

⁴ Chimmalgi and Kissell, “The Not So Simple Truth,” 2.

Insufficient retirement income can be a factor in housing-insecurity for women. The wage gap also causes inequality in education based on wealth level.

Education has long been an imbalanced institution when it comes to men and women. While advances have been made to ensure that education is available, equitable, and affordable for everyone there is still an educational gap in today's America. Starting as early as elementary school the gap between poor students and wealthy students is apparent. As Elizabeth Anderson writes in her article, "Fair Opportunity in Education: A Democratic Equality Perspective", "A just K-12 educational system must prepare students from all sectors of society, and especially those disadvantaged along any dimensions, with sufficient skills to be able to succeed in higher education and thereby join the elite."⁵ Many children who come from lower-income households are not as prepared to start school as their wealthier peers. In a 2012 New York Times article titled, "Education Gap Grows Between Rich and Poor, Studies Say", author Sabrina Tavernise wrote, "One reason for the growing gap in achievement, researchers say, could be that wealthy parents invest more time and money than ever before in their children ... while lower-income families, which are now more likely than ever to be headed by a single parent, are increasingly stretched for time and resources."⁶ This divide will only worsen if students are not afforded the same opportunities in their education.

Legislation has recently been enacted that will roll back the advances made for equality in education. In the recent "Big Beautiful Bill," the Trump administration and Congress have

⁵ Elizabeth Anderson, "Fair Opportunity in Education: A Democratic Equality Perspective," *Ethics*, no. 4 (2007): 595-622.

⁶ Sabrina Tavernise, "Education Gap Grows Between Rich and Poor, Studies Say," *The New York Times*, February 9, 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/10/education/education-gap-grows-between-rich-and-poor-studies-show.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all#.

enabled cuts to be made to public schools, food assistance programs, and Medicaid. In the article written by Gbenga Ajilore, “House Republican Reconciliation Bill Would Harm Rural Households, Communities, and Economies,” the repercussion of the new legislation is explained. “Considering the bill as a whole, households with the lowest incomes would end up worse off relative to current law – they would lose significantly more from the cuts in healthcare and food assistance than they would gain from tax cuts.”⁷ The inequality between the wealthy and the poor will grow even wider as time goes on. Lower-income children will suffer from food-insecurity, many may lose their healthcare, and their schools will lose funding as well.



Figure 16: Homeless Population: Top 10 States⁸

⁷ Gbenga Ajilore, “House Republican Reconciliation Bill Would Harm Rural Households, Communities, and Economies,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2025.

⁸ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development/U.S. Census Bureau, *Homeless Population: Top 10 States*, 2022, <https://www.voroniapp.com/Demographics/The-10-States-With-the-Largest-Homeless-Populations-347>

Housing, whether public or privately owned, has been an ongoing struggle due to the constant fluctuations in the economy and demand for homes. Public housing has deteriorated over the decades since its inception in the 1930s. According to Susan J. Popkin in her article, “Lessons from 40 Years of Public Housing Policy,” public housing is still needed to assist the lowest earners. “Even after years of decline, in 2023, public housing still provided homes for 1.6 million people with very low incomes – people who would not be able to find affordable or suitable housing in the private market.”⁹ The crisis in public housing is the lack of funding for upkeep of the living spaces. Popkin points out that in 2020, “the total backlog for public housing – the amount required to address needed repairs and rehabilitation – was estimated at about \$70 billion.”¹⁰ The federal government appears to have forgotten that funding is essential to keep these homes available to the people are one disaster away from being homeless.

In Josephine Ensign’s book, *Skid Road*, she tells of a study conducted by researchers and the Seattle and King County Housing Authority concerning the use of housing vouchers. “The researchers want to test the hypothesis that poor families would voluntarily move to higher-opportunity areas if they were provided the support to reduce the barriers to do so.”¹¹ Early reporting showed that having assistance with finding a house, handling discussions with landlords, and financial help with deposits was a great start for these families. “Families in the experimental group were four times as likely as the control group families to move to high-opportunity areas of Seattle-King County.”¹² On a small scale this helped families find new

⁹ Susan J. Popkin, “Lessons from 40 Years of Public Housing Policy,” Urban Institute, June 2024. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Lessons_from_40_Years_Public_Housing.pdf

¹⁰ Susan J. Popkin, “Lessons from 40 Years”

¹¹ Josephine Ensign, *Skid Road: On the Frontier of Health and Homelessness in Seattle*, (University of Washington Press, 2021), 191.

¹² Josephine Ensign, *Skid Road*, 192.

potential for leaving poverty behind and gaining better opportunities for the next generation. The government could implement this on the federal level or allocate money to the states to continue to give poor families a chance to break the cycle of poverty.

States and local communities have made good strides with the government funding they have received to confront the homelessness issue, but many have taken more initiative to curb the crisis. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness in their request for more funds from the federal government, “In 2024, homelessness rose by a record 18%, driven largely by an unprecedented number of households experiencing homelessness for the first time.”¹³ While that is a rise in the national number of homeless, there are programs around the country that are making a real difference.

Sample Communities Solving Homelessness in 2024 (Progress made since 2023)	
Spokane County, WA	Unsheltered homelessness down 54%
Dallas, TX	Unsheltered homelessness down 14%; overall homelessness down 12%
State of Maine	Overall homelessness down by 36%

Figure 17: Sample Communities Solving Homelessness in 2024¹⁴

The state of Maine has established many homelessness initiatives that have changed the landscape of their state and the lives of many poor families. Working with state government, nonprofit organizations, and other sponsors Maine has created nine Homeless Response Hubs throughout the state. “Hub teams identify gaps and inconsistencies by working with a cross-sector team of service providers, municipalities, housing providers, people with lived experience,

¹³ “How Congress Can Help Solve Homelessness,” National Alliance to End Homelessness, accessed August 3, 2025, <https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/FY26-Homeless-Assistance-Grants-How-Congress-Can-Help-Solve-Homelessness.pdf>

¹⁴ National Alliance to End Homelessness, “How Congress Can Help.”

and others who interact with people experiencing homelessness.”¹⁵ Maine has joined with a national movement called, “Built for Zero,” to help eradicate homelessness in their communities. The Built for Zero website details their mission and how to achieve it. “Built for Zero communities work to render homelessness rare and brief for populations, working to achieve functional zero, a dynamic end state when they can sustain “net zero” homelessness, where fewer people are experiencing homelessness than can routinely exit homelessness in a month.”¹⁶ This group has worked successfully within some communities to maintain “net zero” for years.

Built for Zero approached the homeless issue from a slightly different direction than most homeless programs. A large part of their research is centered around, “the power of reimagining how homeless response systems work to prevent homelessness before it occurs, detect it when it does, and resolve it quickly.”¹⁷ Using data driven methods they are focused on ending both veteran and chronic homelessness. “Communities in Built for Zero are confirmed for achieving functional zero using their quality, by-name data, which is updated at least monthly.”¹⁸ This method has proven to be successful in that fourteen of the communities participating have reached functional zero for at least one of the groups they are working to help, with three having resolved both groups. While this is a national program, it is still a grassroots organization, that is working toward the goal of a roof over everyone’s head.

¹⁵ “Homeless Initiatives,” MaineHousing: Maine State Housing Authority, accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.mainehousing.org/partners/partner-type/homeless-service-providers/homeless-initiatives>

¹⁶ “Talking About Built for Zero,” Built for Zero, accessed August 3, 2025, <https://login.builtforzero.org/hubs/resources/talking-about-built-for-zero/#community-list>

¹⁷ Built for Zero, “Talking about Built for Zero.”

¹⁸ Built for Zero, “Talking about Built for Zero.”

The need for job training and assistance is a key component for women to escape the cycle of homelessness. Most women who find themselves homeless are a product of their upbringing. Trapped in a cycle of poor education, abuse, and no marketable skills with which to get a job, many become unsheltered. The cycle can only be broken by offering a helping hand to better their lives with education and a plan. One such program was started in King County, Washington (Seattle area) in 2021 called the King County Jobs and Housing Program. According to the King County website the program, “provided temporary jobs, career preparation, and housing and support services.”¹⁹ These temporary jobs lasted six months to a year, paid well, and included benefits for health and transportation. Case managers continued working with the workers to help navigate childcare, transportation, and housing issues under the Rapid Rehousing model. “Rapid rehousing services include help finding housing, rent and move-in assistance, and case management services.”²⁰ This program helped over one hundred fifty of these applicants find more secure housing. According to the website, this program is no longer accepting applications.

While it is encouraging that many states and communities are taking the initiative to find workable answers to end homelessness, it is hard to understand the minimal investment of the federal government toward a solution. Over time the government has offered assistance to the poor or taken it away depending on who is in office. These changes have allowed more people to fall through the cracks, gaps in income and education to widen, and has added a noticeable uptick in the number of homeless women. Kenneth Kusmer wrote, “The kind of structural

¹⁹ “Jobs and Housing Program,” King County, accessed August 3, 2025, <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/executive/governance-leadership/performance-strategy-budget/jobs-housing>

²⁰ King County, “Jobs and Housing Program.”

reforms that would help lift people out of homelessness permanently- affordable housing, job training, less penurious welfare benefits, and a decent minimum wage- were clearly beyond any municipality to enact and a fundamentally conservative federal government has no interest in supporting such changes.”²¹ All of these reforms would add a new layer of trust that the government was as concerned as the people about the homeless problem.

As mentioned before, the rights afforded to the women of the United States need to be equal to those that are enjoyed by men. In recent Supreme Court decisions it seems that America is taking women back to the age of men know best. History has proven to us that when women are not considered full citizens their issues are not as important to society. Women have fought to vote, to be educated, to work where they want, and to have control over their own bodies. At every turn women have met resistance, judgement, and disrespect as they have pressed for equality. In her speech entitled “Women’s Rights are Human Rights” Hillary Rodham Clinton spoke to the importance of women being seen as equals. “As long as discrimination and inequities remain so commonplace around the world- as long as girls and women are valued less, fed less, fed last, overworked, underpaid, not schooled, and subjected to violence – the potential of the human family to create a peaceful, prosperous world will not be realized.”²² Women need to feel empowered to make any intolerable circumstance, like homelessness and poverty, better.

²¹ Kusmer, *Down and Out*, 245.

²² Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Women’s Rights are Human Rights,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 24, no.1/2 (1996): 100.

Conclusion

This capstone project explores the historical and contemporary issues surrounding homelessness in America, with a particular focus on the often-overlooked population of homeless women. It examines the evolution of societal perceptions, family dynamics, cultural shifts, policy changes, economic factors, and potential solutions related to homelessness, emphasizing how women's experiences differ significantly from men's and have been marginalized in scholarly discourse and public policy.

Much of the early scholarship about homelessness was male focused and completely disregarded the concept of homeless women. Women were to be protected and depending on class level, pampered and valued. Women were seen as an extension of their husband, father, or male relatives with no individuality of their own. Expectations of women for centuries were to be the mother, caretaker, and unpaid worker of the home. In one of the quotes used in this paper the author refers to Jack London leaving his job to travel as, "no longer defining himself in terms of a "worker" living a feminized "uneventful existence."¹ London's implication that by being a worker his job made him feel undervalued or lacking autonomy, as if he were being subjected to a woman's existence. The negative inference was commonplace at the time of Jack London's travels.

The historiography of homelessness did not start to include women as truly homeless until the time of the Great Depression. In early America women were considered "worthy" poor if they were widows or older and ailing. Poor houses were set up so they had a roof over their

¹ Lennon, "Can a Hobo Share a Box-Car?," 7.

heads. When communities set up shelters and poor houses they were able to house the destitute and keep them relatively safe. While this process was helpful to most, it did not fix homelessness in the truest sense of the word. People who are without a home of their own are homeless. Being in a shelter, staying at a friend's house, or being in a poor house does not take away the label of homelessness. Many of the scholars who have written about the homeless have neglected to include women in the picture they are presenting about this population.

Society had refused to acknowledge that women were as affected as men when wars broke out, when farms failed, or when sickness left few survivors. The transient life that came after the Civil War was primarily prescribed to men who had lost everything and could not find a job. The Hobo Era began and almost all of the writings or news articles spoke of the men who rode the rails. Women who became displaced and took to the road were characterized as invaders of a man's domain. Todd Depastino wrote, "By making these and other "adjustments" to gender and sexual norms, concluded Reckless, women will "invade hobohemian and the jungles just as women generally have encroached upon all the original provinces of men."² The Reckless that Depastino references is Walter C. Reckless, a student of Robert Park, a sociologist, and author, who wrote an article entitled, "Why Women Become Hoboes," in 1934. His article captures the sentiment of the time that women on the road were a sign that heralded a change to "patriarchal authority."³ Women were again assigned blame for things out of their control.

During the Great Depression, the government stepped in to help get people back to work, but they focused primarily on men. These programs were designed to help men with dependents and did nothing for the woman who was single and without family to back her up. The launch of

² Depastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 203.

³ Depastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 203.

Social Security could have been a boon for all workers, but it was biased toward men who were working at companies that participated in the program. Many women were ineligible as they worked as domestic help or were paid in cash. This gave a leg up to the men who could be saving for their retirement while earning a competitive wage. Social security would again hinder a woman's retirement income anytime she had a child or was not working. Again a government program that did not take into account, and still does not, that women need financial stability as well to keep themselves off the street.

The advent of World War II saw a marked change in the number of homeless as women were asked to work in place of the men who were overseas. Incomes were rising, people were working, and America was winning the war. When the war ended and the men returned women were again asked to return to the home. Women, who did not have a family, were again left in the cold when higher paying jobs went to the returning men. The government again stepped in and offered the G.I. Bill for returning servicemen and women. Women were hindered from higher education by the archaic belief that women should be wives and mothers only. Men could be engineers, doctors, and lawyers, but women were offered courses that prepared them for life at home. While the federal government was trying to offer social welfare to avoid another period of unemployment like the Great Depression, they did not include all Americans that would benefit from the program.

The 1970s and 1980s saw gross negligence on the part of the government to protect families of every kind. The antiquated view that men were the only head of household in a family would become an issue as Congress and Presidential administrations worked to undo the welfare programs of the New Deal and after. As programs were cut or reorganized the most

affected were the women and children who depended on federal aid. As new parameters were put in place, households headed by single mothers found themselves having to make impossible choices. Cuts to food stamps, Medicaid, and work dependent aid were a few of the obstacles that single mothers had to face. Mothers were forced to choose between food, medicine, and housing. Many of these women moved in with family or friends if they could. Many did not have those options available to them so they ended up in shelters. Since they were not on the streets they continued to be the invisible homeless.

The federal government has failed to make the eradication of homelessness a priority in years past. When legislation has been presented that contains significant money for affordable housing or homelessness prevention programs they do not pass. In Joe Biden's administration the "Build Back Better Act" was not passed in the Senate due to the amount of money being proposed for use as a social safety net. "Citing concerns over the level of spending on social safety net programs and climate policies, Manchin said he could not find a way to support the bill."⁴ This bill would have included \$150 billion in affordable housing projects. The problem for Congress is to determine the level that the government is comfortable spending on social services. More conservative administrations want the onus on the states to take care of the homeless instead of more government welfare. Unfortunately, the ones most affected by these decisions do not have a voice in the fight.

The ongoing struggle for women's rights and equality remains central to reducing homelessness and ensuring that all individuals have access to safe, stable homes. Equal pay, education, and benefits are needed to reduce, or even eliminate, homelessness in women. Equal

⁴ Sante Mastriana, "Build Back Better Stalls, Maybe for Good," Close Up Washington DC, accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.closeup.org/build-back-better-stalls-maybe-for-good/>

protection under the law to remove themselves from an abusive environment and thrive in a safe place. A voice that can be heard when it comes to reproductive rights, affordable housing, and social programs that meet their needs without putting them in impossible positions. There has been scholarship that touches on some of these points. The need for more research into the areas where women were ignored as homeless is valid. As we know history will repeat itself if it is not examined and learned from.

Bibliography

- Abelson, Elaine S., “The Times that Have Tried Only Men’s Souls,” in *Women on Their Own: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Being Single*, ed. Rudolph M. Bell and Virginia Yans (Rutgers University Press, 2008), 219-38.
- Abelson, Elaine S., “Women Who Have No Men to Work for Them’: Gender and Homelessness in the Great Depression, 1930-1934.” *Feminist Studies* 29, no. 1 (2003): 105–27.
- Adams, Abigail. “Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March 1776,” Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-01-02-0241>
- Ajilore, Gbenga. “House Republican Reconciliation Bill Would Harm Rural Households, Communities, and Economies.” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2025.
- Allen, Holly, “‘Uncle Sam’s Wayside Inns’: Transient Narratives and the Sexual Politics of the Emergent Welfare State.” In *Forgotten Men and Fallen Women: The Cultural Politics of New Deal Narratives*, 1st ed., 49–67. Cornell University Press, 2015.
- Anderson, Elizabeth. “Fair Opportunity in Education: A Democratic Equality Perspective.” *Ethics* 117, no. 4 (2007): 595–622.
- Armstrong, Barbara Nachtrieb. “THE FEDERAL SOCIAL SECURITY ACT.” *American Bar Association Journal* 21, no. 12 (1935).
- Asaka, Megan. “Demolition on the Eve of War.” In *Seattle from the Margins: Exclusion, Erasure, and the Making of a Pacific Coast City*, 159–86. University of Washington Press, 2022.
- Beall, Lester. “Slums Breed Crime,” 1941, poster, United States Housing Authority, <https://lccn.loc.gov/93509010>
- Boiarsky, Carolyn R. *Lead Babies and Poisoned Houses: Environmental Injustice, Systemic Racism, and Governmental Failure*, (Purdue University Press, 2024).
- Brown, Elizabeth, and George Barganier. “Housing Inequality and the Geography of Residential Racial Segregation.” In *Race and Crime: Geographies of Injustice*, 1st ed., 158–200. University of California Press, 2018.
- Brown, Kathleen M. “Brave New Worlds: Women’s and Gender History,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (April, 1993).

- Built for Zero. "Talking About Built for Zero," accessed August 3, 2025, <https://login.builtforzero.org/hubs/resources/talking-about-built-for-zero/#community-list>
- Burgess, Norma J. "Gender Roles Revisited: The Development of the "Woman's Place" Among African American Women in the United States," *Journal of Black Studies* 24, no. 4 (June, 1994).
- Burt, Martha R. and Barbara E. Cohen. "Who is Helping the Homeless? Local, State, and Federal Responses," *Publius* 19, no. 3 (Summer 1989).
- Chimmalgi, Rashmi and Meghan Kissell, "The Not So Simple Truth About the Gender Pay Gap," The Not So Simple Truth, February 2025, https://www.aauw.org/app/uploads/2025/03/The_Simple_Truth_Gender_Pay_Gap_2025.pdf
- Clinton, Hillary Rodham. "Women's Rights Are Human Rights." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 1/2 (1996): 98–101.
- Cohen, Alex and Wilfred U. Codrington III. "The Equal Rights Amendment Explained," Brennan Center for Justice January 23, 2020, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/equal-rights-amendment-explained>
- Copeland, David A. "Virtuous and Vicious: The Dual Portrayal of Women in Colonial Newspapers." *American Periodicals* 5 (1995).
- Critchlow, Donald T. *In Defense of Populism: Protest and American Democracy* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).
- Dawes, Sarah Elizabeth. *Colonial Massachusetts* (New York: Silver, Burdett & company, 1899).
- Defeis, Elizabeth F. and Joan Hoff Wilson, "Role of Women: An Historical Overview," *India International Centre Quarterly*, 5, no. 3 (July, 1978).
- DeHaven, Tad. "Department of Housing and Urban Development Timeline," <https://www.downsizinggovernment.org/hud/timeline>.
- Demirel, Sinan. "Roots of a Crisis," *Real Change*, , June 29, 2016, <https://www.realchangenews.org/news/2016/06/29/roots-crisis>
- Depastino, Todd. *Citizen Hobo* (University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- Dick, John. "Report of the Woman's Right Convention, held at Seneca Falls, New York, July 19th and 20th, 1848. Proceedings and Declaration of Sentiments," Library of Congress, American Memory, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbcmil.scrp4006702>.

- Dumenil, Lynn. "American Women and the Great War," *OAH Magazine of History* 17, no. 1 (Oct., 2002).
- Ensign, Josephine. *Skid Road: On the Frontier of Health and Homelessness in Seattle*, (University of Washington Press, 2021).
- Gould, Elisa. "Gender Wage Gap Persists in 2023," Economic Policy Institute Working Economics Blog, March 8, 2024, <https://www.epi.org/blog/gender-wage-gap-persists-in-2023-women-are-paid-roughly-22-less-than-men-on-average/>
- Greene, R. Neil, and Wayne Centrone. "Ending the Persistence of Homelessness." In *Agenda For Social Justice 2020: Solutions For 2020*, edited by Glenn W. Muschert, Kristen M. Budd, Michelle Christian, and Robert Perrucci, 1st ed., 127–34. Bristol University Press, 2020.
- Hansan, John E. "Poor Relief in America," VCU Libraries Social Welfare History Project, (2011), <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/programs/poor-relief-early-amer/> (accessed November 10, 2024).
- Harris & Ewing. "Woman Suffrage Pickets," Library of Congress, Harris & Ewing Collection, <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016868585>.
- Heller, Joe. "Homelessness is Complicated," ImmaCare Inc., <https://immacare.org/2019/09/30/homelessness-is-complicated/> (accessed November 7, 2024).
- Higginbotham, Elizabeth and Sarah Watts, "The New Scholarship on Afro-American Women," *Women's Study Quarterly* 16, no. ½ (Spring-Summer, 1988).
- Hine, Lewis Wickes. "Jane Addams of Hull House, Chicago, Ill." National Child Labor Committee collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018676451>
- "Housing and Urban Development," Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, accessed July 26, 2025, <https://www.lbjlibrary.org/news-and-press/media-kits/housing-and-urban-development>
- Howard, Ella. *Homeless: Poverty and Place in Urban America*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).
- Howe, Julia Ward. "Jane Addams on Suffrage." *New York Times*, March 20, 1909, Letter to Editor, <https://www.loc.gov/item/rbcmiller002065/>

- Imundo, Aimee. "Wam-Bam Thank you Ma'am: The G.I. Bill of Rights and Women's Education in the Post-War Years," *Georgetown Law Library*, 1991, <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/1051278>.
- Johnson, Miriam M. "Sex Role Learning in the Nuclear Family," *Child Development* 34, no. 2 (June 1963).
- Jones, Marian Moser. , "Creating a Science of Homelessness During the Reagan Era," *The Milbank Quarterly* 93, no.1 (2015).
- Kennedy, David J. "Arch Street Prison," Historical Society of Philadelphia, David J. Kennedy watercolors, <https://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/objects/4253>
- King County. "Jobs and Housing Program," , accessed August 3, 2025, <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/executive/governance-leadership/performance-strategy-budget/jobs-housing>
- Kleinberg, Jay S., Eileen Boris, and Vicki L. Ruiz. *The Practice of U.S. Women's History: Narratives, Intersections, and Dialogues* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2007).
- Kornbluh, Andrea Tuttle. "City sex: views of American women and urban culture, 1869 to 1990," *Urban History Yearbook* 18, (1991)
- Kusmer, Kenneth L. *Down and Out on the Road: The Homeless in American History* (Oxford University Press, 2002).
- Kyvig, David E. *Explicit and Authentic Acts: Amending the U.S. Constitution 1776-2015 with a New Afterword*, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2016).
- Lane, Shannon R. and Jennifer McClendon, eds. *Handbook of Social Work Practice with Vulnerable and Resilient Populations* (Columbia University Press, 2014).
- Lawrence, Deliah D. , "Community Development: Can Communities Effectively Fight Displacement Caused by Gentrification?" *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law* 11, no. 4 (Summer 2002).
- Lawsky, Sarah B. "A Nineteenth Amendment Defense of the Violence against Women Act." *The Yale Law Journal* 109, no. 4 (2000).
- Lennon, John. "Can a Hobo Share a Box-Car? Jack London, the Industrial Army, and the Politics of (In)visibility," *American Studies* 48 (Winter 2007).

- Leonard, Thomas C. "Protecting Family and Race: The Progressive Case for Regulating Women's Work," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 64, no. 3 (July, 2005).
- Lerner, Michael A. *Dry Manhattan* (Harvard University Press, 2007).
- Levinson, David, and Marcy Ross, eds. *Homelessness Handbook*, 1st ed., (Berkshire, 2007).
- Link, Bruce G., Jo Phelan, Robert E. Moore, and Ann Stueve, "The Impact of the Label "Homeless" on Attitudes Toward Poor Persons," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (December, 1997).
- Lundblad, Karen Shafer. "Jane Addams and Social Reform: A Role Model for the 1990's," *Social Work* 40, no. 5 (September 1995)
- Lynn, Ethel. *The Adventures of a Woman Hobo* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1917).
- MaineHousing: Maine State Housing Authority. "Homeless Initiatives," accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.mainehousing.org/partners/partner-type/homeless-service-providers/homeless-initiatives>
- Mansbridge, Jane. "Whatever Happened to the ERA?" In *Women and the U.S. Constitution: History, Interpretation, and Practice*, edited by Sibyl A. Schwarzenbach and Patricia Smith, 365–78. Columbia University Press, 2003.
- Marcus, Anthony. "Shelterization Revisited: Some Methodological Dangers of Institutional Studies of the Homeless," *Human Organization* 62, no. 2 (Summer 2003).
- Markstein, Gary. "Make Room," Pueblo Star Journal, <https://pueblostarjournal.org/voices/2024/04/02/make-room/>
- Mastriana, Sante. "Build Back Better Stalls, Maybe for Good," Close Up Washington DC, accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.closeup.org/build-back-better-stalls-maybe-for-good/>
- McAndrews, Lawrence J. "The Revolution That Wasn't: Ronald Reagan, 1981–1989." In *The Presidents and the Poor: America Battles Poverty, 1964-2017*, 103–34. University Press of Kansas, 2018.
- McMein, Neysa. "Y.W.C.A. In service for the girls of the world," New York, American Lithograph Co., 1919, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. <https://lccn.loc.gov/93502256>

- Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “deinstitutionalization,” accessed July 27, 2025, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/deinstitutionalization>
- Meyer, Leisa D. “Interrupting Norms and Constructing Deviances: Competing Frameworks in the Histories of Sexualities in the United States.” In *The Practice of U.S. Women’s History: Narratives, Intersections, and Dialogues*, edited by S. JAY KLEINBERG, EILEEN BORIS, and VICKI L. RUIZ, 280–307. Rutgers University Press, 2007.
- Miller, Alice Duer. “Are women people?: A book of rhymes for suffrage times,” Library of Congress, National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, <https://lccn.loc.gov/15013348>
- Morton, Marian J. “Fallen Women, Federated Charities, and Maternity Homes, 1913-1973,” *Social Service Review* 62, no. 1 (March, 1988).
- National Alliance to End Homelessness. “How Congress Can Help Solve Homelessness,” accessed August 3, 2025, <https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/FY26-Homeless-Assistance-Grants-How-Congress-Can-Help-Solve-Homelessness.pdf>
- Neil, J. Meredith. “Is There a Historian in the House? The Curious Case of Historic Preservation,” *The Public Historian* 2, no. 2 (Winter, 1980).
- Newman, “A Monthly Check to you for the rest of your life, beginning when you are 65,” 1935, Poster, *Social Security Board*, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>.
- “Nuclear Family.” Cambridge Dictionary, Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2024, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/nuclear-family#dataset_cald4-us
- O’Brassill-Kulfan, Kristin. “Vagrancy,” *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/essays/vagrancy/>
- Patel, Kiran Klaus. “REDEFINING BOUNDARIES.” In *The New Deal: A Global History*, 190–260. Princeton University Press, 2016.
- Peters, Mark. “Homelessness: A Historical Perspective on Modern Legislation,” *Michigan Law Review* 88, no. 5 (April, 1990).
- Pope-Levinson, Priscilla. *Building the Old Time Religion: Women Evangelists in the Progressive Era* (New York, New York University Press, 2014).
- Popkin, Susan J. , “Lessons from 40 Years of Public Housing Policy,” Urban Institute, June 2024. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Lessons_from_40_Years_Public_Housing.pdf

- Quigley, Fran. "HOW WE ABANDONED AFFORDABLE HOUSING." In *Lessons from Eviction Court: How We Can End Our Housing Crisis*, 13–20. Cornell University Press, 2025.
- Radio Address of the President, May 7, 1933, p. 9, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1933-1945, National Archives, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/197303>.
- Rao, L. Jaganmohan. "Industrialization and the Family: A World View," *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 3, no. 2 (September, 1973).
- Raphelson, Samantha. , "How the Loss of U.S. Psychiatric Hospitals Led to a Mental Health Crisis" *NPR* (November 30, 2017), <https://www.npr.org/2017/11/30/567477160/how-the-loss-of-u-s-psychiatric-hospitals-led-to-a-mental-health-crisis>
- Rogers, John Rankin. *Home for the Homeless. An argument in favor of a non-taxable homestead* (Seattle, Allen Printing Co., 1895).
- Schuetz, Jenny. "Give Poor People Money." In *Fixer-Upper: How to Repair America's Broken Housing Systems*, 61–80. Brookings Institution Press, 2022.
- Shider, Emily A. "Poverty in the United States: 2023", US Department of Commerce, <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2024/demo/p60-283.html>
- Smith, Daniel Blake. "The Study of Family in Early America: Trends, Problem and Prospects," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (Jan., 1982).
- Soucy, Daniel, Makenna Janes, and Andrew Hall. "State of Homelessness: 2024 Edition", <https://endhomelessness.org/state-of-homelessness/>
- Stoner, Madeleine R. "The Plight of Homeless Women," *Social Service Review* 57, no. 4 (Dec., 1983).
- Surendorf, Charles. "Skid Row" Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.8993503>.
- Tavernise, Sabrina. "Education Gap Grows Between Rich and Poor, Studies Say," *The New York Times*, February 9, 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/10/education/education-gap-grows-between-rich-and-poor-studies-show.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all#
- Unknown, "Domestic Violence and Homelessness," *ACLU Women's Rights Project*, March 21, 2006, <https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/dvhomelessness032106.pdf>

- Unknown, "Poster Advocating the Equal Rights Amendment," Library of Virginia, <https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/oc/stc/entries/poster-advocating-the-equal-rights-amendment-ca.-1972>.
- Unknown, "Two Hobos Walking Along Railroad Tracks, After Being Put Off a Train," George Grantham Bain Collection (Library of Congress), <https://www.loc.gov/item/2006677423/>.
- Unknown, "Victorian Family Portrait," Pinterest, <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/victorian-family-portrait--622693085992930532/>.
- U.S. Army Signal Corps, "Women Making Browning Machine Guns-general view of polishing shop, Winchester Repeating Arms Co., New Haven, Conn.," Library of Congress. <https://lccn.loc.gov/94506155>
- U.S. Department of Housing/U.S. Census Bureau. , Homeless Population: Top 10 States, 2022, <https://www.voronoiaapp.com/Demographics/The-10-States-With-the-Largest-Homeless-Populations-347>
- Watson, Sophie. "A Home Is Where the Heart Is: Engendering Notions of Homelessness." In *Homelessness: Exploring the New Terrain*, edited by Patricia Kennett and Alex Marsh, 1st ed., 81–100. Bristol University Press, 1999.
- Young, Nancy Beck, and Suzanne Mettler. "'Do Something for the Soldier Boys': Congress, the G.I. Bill of Rights, and the Contours of Liberalism." In *Veterans' Policies, Veterans' Politics: New Perspectives on Veterans in the Modern United States*, edited by Stephen R. Ortiz, 199–221. University Press of Florida, 2012.
- Yourdon, Ed, "A Little Kindness Goes a Long Way," Flickr, <https://www.cru.org/us/en/communities/innercity/why-a-homeless-woman-called-me-her-friend.html>