



Youth Homelessness: An Overview

compiled by Montray Henry and Marichaele Branch

Montray: An estimated 3.5 million to 4.2 million young adults (aged 18 to 25) experience a form of homelessness in a given year, from couch surfing to living on the streets. At the high end, that's one out of 10 young adults. At least 700,000 adolescent minors (ages 13 to 17) experience a form of homelessness in the course of a year. That's one out of every 30.

For half of the youth who experienced homelessness in the past year, it was the first time. About 42 percent of them experienced two or more episodes of homelessness.

Many homeless youth become homeless suddenly. Homeless youth

are different from homeless adults because they often have not learned the essential life skills needed to live on their own, like how to drive or ride a bus, get a job, or pay bills.

Youth homelessness affects urban and rural youth about the same.

Education is important for all young people, but it is especially important for runaway and homeless youth. Youth who do not have a high school diploma or GED had more than a 346-percent higher risk of homelessness than the young people who completed high school. Youth in households making less than \$24,000 a year had a 162-percent higher risk.

Youth who are unmarried parents had a 200-percent higher risk.

LGBTQ youth are at more than double the risk than others, and had over twice the rate of early death among all homeless youth. According to a national survey, nearly one in four young LGBTQ black men aged 18 to 25 reported out-and-out homelessness in the last 12 months.

African-American youth had an 83-percent higher risk. Hispanic youth had a 33-percent higher risk.

Homeless youth are at an increased risk of harm in comparison to other youth their age. They are

more likely to experience mental illness, suffer poor health, drop out of school, and become involved with or become victims of criminal activity. Life on the streets is dangerous and unpredictable, leaving homeless youth vulnerable to being exploited, abused, or killed.

MONTRAY HENRY is 16 years old and was born in Denton, TX, and raised in Dallas, TX. He attends University High School in Waco, TX, and wants to be a mechanical engineer when he grows up.

Sources: Voices of Youth Count: Missed Opportunities; Missed Opportunity: Youth Homelessness in America; "Youth Home-



lessness in America: National Estimates," 2017; "LGBTQ Youth Homelessness in America," 2018; "Pregnant and Parenting Youth Experiencing Homelessness in America," 2018; "Counting Youth Experiencing Homelessness in America," 2018; "Youth Homelessness in Rural America," 2018.

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Q & A

Interviews by Leon Smith



Meet Jamie Jones

Jamie Jones* was born and raised in Waco, TX, and is about to go into the 12th grade at Waco High School.

How did you become homeless?

My mom, myself, my girlfriend and my sister got into it and my mama put us out of the house.

What was it like to be with out a home?

What was it like, man? I had to sleep in my car. I didn't have a bed, none of that.

Who has been the most helpful to you during this experience?

My brother and my coach.

What has been the hardest thing about being homeless?

Not seeing your family everyday and not eating.

What do you think you have learned from this experience?

Never turn your back on family.

Meet Maria Martinez

Maria Martinez* was born and raised in Waco, TX. She is about to go to the 12th grade at Waco High School. She has 10 siblings in total and is 18 years old.

How did you become homeless?

I moved out because I was tired of arguing with my family.

What was it like to be with out a home?

It was difficult living with someone other than my mom.

Who has been the most helpful to you during this experience?

Both of my grandmothers.

What has been the hardest thing about being homeless?

Not being able to see my siblings and my mom.

What do you think you have learned from this experience?

To keep my head up and to know that everyone goes through something for a reason.

Meet Stephanie Simpson

Stephanie Simpson* is 16 years old and will attend Waco High School this fall.

How did you become homeless?

Well, I was not the only one homeless. My mom and my sister were homeless, too. My mom was going through a rough marriage. We had to leave the house because it was dangerous.

What was it like to be with out a home?

It's very hard and difficult. It's scary because you never think you will be without a stable home or a stable life.

Who has been the most helpful to you during this experience?

I listen to music. Michael Jackson lifts my spirits.

What has been the hardest thing about being homeless?

Worrying about what you are going to eat, are you go be able to shower, are you going to be able to wash your hands, will you have clothes? Stuff like that.

What do you think you have learned from this experience?

To never get married and sure you have a back-up plan in case something happens between you in your significant other.

LEON SMITH was born in Forth Worth, Texas. He is going into the 11th grade at Waco High this fall. He is 17 years old and what he would like to do is go to Baylor.



**The names have been changed to protect the interviewees' privacy.*

What the Cove Does for Us

by Lina Diaz and Marichaele Branch

The Cove is a non-profit organization in Waco, TX. The Cove is a teen-nurturing center designed to provide a safe place for students who have experienced homelessness. They offer plenty of things like: showers, a washer and dryer, snacks and tutoring. They help with our school attendance by helping us make up hours. It is an after-school program and they also have a summer program.

When we go there, we get snacks and we chill for a bit, and then we go to a meeting to talk about the activities for the day. After the meeting, we do homework or read a book. Then there's dinner and clean up and then we meet with case workers. After that we wait for the bus to take us where we're living.

We also sign up for a mentor and then we meet with them, plan trips with them. We sometimes go out to eat, and sometimes we go to the mall.

About 16 people come to the Cove at one time. It is for high-school students, so the ages range from 15 to 18. They help us get our drivers' licenses and give us rides to places we need to go. The Cove also helps us get jobs, like our jobs that we're doing right now as Junior Servant Leader Interns for the Freedom School.

The people at the Cove care about us and help us as much as they can. They are there when we need them.

LINA DIAZ is 18 years old and was born and raised in Waco, TX. She is going to the 12th grade at Waco High and wants to go to cosmetology school when she is older.

MARICHAELLE BRANCH is a 16-year-old student from Waco, TX. She will attend Waco High School in August, and one day hopes to be a physical therapist.



Overview,

continued from page 1

Marichaele: Homeless is an issue all across the US, and the city of Waco is no exception. However, many Waco organizations and programs have been created to offer help to the local individuals and families who find themselves without a place to call their home. However, the reality is that there are still homeless children in this community. The Waco Independent School District (ISD) estimates about 1,200 of its students per year are homeless.

In the spring of 2016, the Sanctuary House, a short-term emergency housing program for homeless families in the Waco ISD opened in an attempt to help the problem. Homelessness isn't the only problem some Waco children may be facing. About 20 percent of residents in McLennan County are considered food-insecure, according to Map the Meal Gap.

This information comes from a recent study done by Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA), in conjunction with other members of the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless (TICH), to submit to the Texas Legislature. The study was conducted by the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work.

— See the first column on this page for Marichaele's bio. Source: www.theotx.org.

Below: The Outcast Project team, from left, Leon Smith, Marichaele Branch, Lina Diaz, Cookie Carter, Eliana Rodriguez (Servant Leader Intern), Montray Henry.



The Outcast Project

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Baylor University Freedom School,
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Staff:

Freedom School Executive Director:

Lakia Scott

Editor:

Katie Cook

Managing Editor:

Eliana Rodriguez,
Servant Leader Intern

Reporters:

Marichaele Branch
Cookie Carter
Lina Diaz
Montray Henry
Leon Smith

Editorial Address

602 James Ave., Waco, TX 76706;

Phone: 254/755-7745;

Fax: 254/753-1909;

E-mail: seedseditor1@gmail.com.

Web: www.seedspublishers.org

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This newsletter was written by Junior Servant Leader Interns at the Baylor University Freedom School. These writers are currently homeless or have experienced homelessness very recently. They were recruited for this summer's work from The Cove in Waco, TX. (See the story on page 3.) The Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools® program seeks to build strong, literate, and empowered children prepared to make a difference in themselves, their families, communi-

10 Facts about Youth Homelessness

compiled by Cookie Carter

1. One single night in 2018, 36,361 unaccompanied youth were counted as homeless. Of those, 89 percent were between the ages of 18-24. The remaining 4,093 unaccompanied children were under the age of 18.
2. Fifty-one percent of homeless youth are unsheltered, sleeping outside or in a car and some place not meant for human habitation.
3. It is estimated that over the course of a year approximately 550,000 young people experience a homelessness episode of longer than one week.
4. In Texas, the number of young people that experience homelessness is 28,495.
5. Physical and sexual abuse can lead youth to run away or move away and the estimates vary, but it is roughly about 40 to 60 percent of the homeless youth population.
6. Homeless youth have an 87 percent likelihood of dropping out of school. Young people without a high school diplomas or GEDs are 4.5 times more likely to experience homelessness.
7. Approximately 40 percent of the homeless teenagers identify as LGBTQ.
8. Over 50 percent of young people in shelters and on the streets report that their parents told them to leave, or they knew they were about to leave and they didn't care.
9. Of the youth who run away, 41 percent have been abandoned by their parents for at least 24 hours and 43 percent have been beaten by a caretaker.
10. According to the estimates by the Urban Institute, nearly one in five youth under the age of 18 will run away at least once in life today.

COOKIE CARTER was born and raised in Waco, TX, and is about to go into the 12th grade at Waco High School. "I lived in the same house for 17 years and have seven siblings. I plan to be the first person in my family to go to college twice and to own a foreign car."



Sources: National Alliance to End Homelessness (1-3); Hunger.org (4); Invisible People (5-6); DoSomething.org (7-10).

ties, nation and world today. In partnership with local congregations, schools, colleges and universities, community organizations, and secure juvenile justice facilities, the CDF Freedom Schools program boosts student motivation to read, generates more positive attitudes toward learning, increases self-esteem and connects the needs of children and families to the resources of their communities. ■