Webinar
Coronavirus: Homeless Community Adverse Impact from Eviction & Lack of Safe Housing
Who am I?

My name is Robert Robinson

I am formerly Homeless

Spent two years on the streets of Miami from 2003-2006 and 10 months in a NYC shelter
A Transformative Experience

- Learned the importance of sharing my lived experience – encouraged others to share
- Opportunity to change the prevailing narrative and create a new narrative
- Realized early on my lived experience and the experiences of others -- could shift policy
- Led to my advocacy and teaching career in my post-homeless life
Neil Smith distinguished professor of Anthropology & Geography at the City University of New York Graduated Center

“Neil Was Contagious” -We connected through a quote-

“Gentrification leads to displacement--which leads to homeless--which leads to criminalization”

Rob Robinson speaking at Columbia University November 2007
History of Advocacy

- Joined a grassroots community organization called Picture the Homeless in 2007

- Spent 12 years as a voting member on the Steering Committee of the New York City Coalition on the Continuum of Care 2008-2019

- Position gave me access to NYC appointed and elected officials at the highest levels – Space to advocate for better policy
COVID-19 & Homelessness in NYC

- NYC has 550 shelters with a population of over 50,000 ppl on a nightly basis

- Estimated 50,000-100,000 additional ppl homeless some doubled-up with family/friends and the remainder street homeless or living in public spaces

- NYC Dept of Homeless Services has an annual budget is 1.5 billion dollars

- Plus an estimated 2 billion dollars from foundations filtered through not-for-profits
COVID-19 & Homelessness in NYC

As an advocate, I found the following statements problematic!

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“Shelter in Place”

“Stay home”
COVID-19 & Homelessness in NYC
How do we advocate and organize in this moment?

- Reach out to organizers and advocates from across the country
- Gather protocols and information from the Federal government (CDC, HUD, HHS)
- Ask for support from UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing
- Demand COVID-19 protocols from state & local govt’s -- confirm information is being distributed to shelters
COVID-19 & Homelessness in NYC

Many of our appointed and elected officials are often guilty of talking about a problems vs finding a solution

This pandemic required an immediate solution!
COVID-19 & Homelessness in NYC

What was the immediate Solution?

- Distribute materials to street homeless folks and those in shelter as requested by the CDC
- Put street-homeless people in vacant hotels
- NYC as of this gathering has approx. 1000 formerly street homeless person in 4 hotels

https://www.homelesscantstayhome.org/
COVID-19 & Homelessness in NYC

Thank you
American Bar Association
And thanks to all those who joined

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