

Foreword by Paul Hawken • Closing by Alice Walker
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DREAM of a NATION

Inspiring Ideas for a Better America

A SEE INNOVATION PROJECT

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National Priorities Project

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United for a Fair Economy

Veterans For Peace

and many more



As long as it's been since I was homeless, the pain is still buried deep inside. When I see a person in that place, I recall that pain.

When my ex-husband returned from Vietnam with a heroin addiction, I made the decision to leave. Even working, I found it hard to maintain my previous lifestyle and ended up homeless, walking the streets of DC with my two young daughters.

I was soon in a shelter where I stayed for six months. The situation may seem inconceivable to most but I've seen so many people who are just one paycheck away from homelessness.

And the reality of being homeless—without a permanent place of residence—is just one part of the issue. The embarrassment, the self-pity, the stares, the taunting, the rejection—it all compounds the situation. I felt the terror my children did that their schoolmates would find out about us. I felt I couldn't call my parents or friends because I was afraid of what they would think. I know too well the stigma our society assigns to people experiencing homelessness; if you're homeless, people seem to think it must mean you're an addict, disturbed or just lazy.

In my time living in shelter, I met people insincere in their efforts and unable to understand my situation.

But today, that's changed. Today there are more programs, more strategies and more people who are dedicated to helping others move forward. I've seen programs that emphasize rapid re-housing, supportive housing, job opportunities, healthcare and other social services critical to helping vulnerable people move forward with their lives.

As a woman with intimate knowledge of the issue, I am truly blessed to serve on the Board of Directors of the National Alliance to End Homelessness. In this work, and in my personal life as a realtor helping people access housing, I feel that I am returning the blessings that helped me out of homelessness. Words can never express the joy of someone who's experienced homelessness, stabilized and turned around to lend a helping hand to another in need. It is a joy that I know and embrace wholeheartedly.

an author's story



It's move-in day for a family because of the help of EveryOne Home. The family had been dealing with chronic homelessness for over a year.

Ending homelessness may be a dream for our nation; but with a good plan, it is a dream that we can achieve.

Other cities are also experiencing impressive results as they implement plans to end homelessness. Quincy, Massachusetts cut chronic homelessness by over half. Chicago, Illinois and Fort Worth, Texas reduced overall homelessness by ten percent in just a few years.

Nationally, between the time that homelessness first emerged and the onset of plans to end homelessness, the number of homeless people annually had been increasing, from 550,000 (1987) to 800,000 (1997). Since then, the number has been decreasing (at least until the recession, when it flattened out). Because of a federal focus on ending chronic homelessness with permanent supportive housing, we have done even better in that area: Chronic homelessness has been reduced over 30 percent.¹¹

A similar approach has been implemented in Wichita, Kansas. New permanent housing units and services worked to reduce homelessness by 50 percent. An evaluation of the first 12 women housed revealed a 50 percent reduction in emergency room visits and a 90 percent reduction in in-patient hospital stays. These, along with other reductions in public service utilization, have saved the community roughly \$41,000 annually for those 12 women alone.¹⁰

Ending homelessness may be a dream for our nation, but with a good plan, it is a dream that we can achieve. We are not there yet, but we are beginning to see what ending homelessness might look like. While today's 20-year-olds may believe homelessness is inevitable, their children may have to use their imaginations to think of a world where homelessness exists.

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Nan Roman, president and CEO of the National Alliance to End Homelessness (endhomelessness.org), is a leading national voice on the issue of homelessness. She developed a pragmatic plan to end homelessness in ten years. To implement this plan, Roman works closely with members of Congress and the administration, as well as with cities and states across the nation. She collaborates with Alliance partners to educate the public about the real nature of homelessness and successful solutions.



Irene Mabry Moses is the founder and CEO of Faith Realty LLC and has served as a board member for the National Alliance to End Homelessness since 2008. The realtor, who once experienced homelessness herself, is an active member of her community, her church and charitable organizations focused on housing and poverty.

(See left for Moses' picture and story.)