During the week of November 6-10th, 2017, the undergraduate and graduate students of USC Homelessness Action Committee will be putting on their third, bi-annual USC Homelessness Awareness Week (HAW) on campus. In support of this effort, the USC Initiative to Eliminate Homelessness in Los Angeles, and the broader movement to end homelessness, we encourage you to consider spending a small amount of time during USC Homelessness Awareness Week to integrate some discussion of homelessness into the course(s) you teach.

While homelessness is simply defined by the lack of stable housing, the causes of and solutions to homelessness are varied and complex. Given intersectionality of homelessness as a social illness, there are many ways to bring discussion of homelessness into your classes. Here we provide some suggestions, but encourage you to be creative and do what works best for your students and your class.

Some ideas for how to bring Homelessness Awareness Week into your classroom:

- **Advertise** USC Homelessness Awareness Week (link to schedule) and encourage your students to get involved in the planned events, including panels, documentary screenings, and a volunteer fair with homeless service organizations from across Los Angeles.

- **Encourage your students to volunteer for the 2018 Los Angeles Homeless Count**! For the second year in a row, a team of USC researchers is serving as methodological and logistical consultants for the annual homelessness census. As a part of this effort, thousands of volunteers and surveyors will mobilize across the county on the nights of Tue Jan 23, Wed Jan 24, and Thu Jan 25 to better understand the state of homelessness in Los Angeles. Volunteer registration will be opening soon to be a part of the street count. Check [http://www.theycountwillyou.org/](http://www.theycountwillyou.org/) and your usc.edu inbox for updates.
  ○ If you teach students who with a particular interest in survey methods research, you may also choose to advertise this opportunity to become a paid data collector for the 2018 Los Angeles Homeless Count Demographic Survey.

- **Share the story of an individual or family that has experienced homelessness**. To experience homelessness can be extremely dehumanizing. Moreover, for those of us who are stably housed, it is often easier to emotionally shut ourselves off to the realities that our unhoused neighbors are up against when we move through our everyday lives than allow compassion and empathy to take hold. Storytelling can be one of the most effective ways to combat this. If you or someone you know has been impacted by homelessness, telling that story can be a great way to help your students relate to the issue. Alternatively, consider sharing a story from invisiblePEOPLE.tv with your students:
  ○ In an effort to humanize and make-visible the real people impacted by homelessness, Mark Horvath, an activist (and former HAW speaker) created invisiblePEOPLE.tv, a platform that gives individuals experiencing homelessness the opportunity to tell their own raw, unfiltered stories through video testimonial.
● Take a few minutes to share some of these “Questions for Reflection” with your students from the HuffPost Kindness Blog, or share some of your own original questions!

● Help to dispel myths and encourage broader understanding of the issue of homelessness on a national level using the incredible information put together by the National Alliance to End Homelessness, such as: Homelessness in America: What Causes Homelessness, Who Experiences Homelessness, and Homelessness Statistics; Ending Homelessness: Solutions and Policy; Frequently Asked Questions; and other homelessness resources.

● Help your students understand the state of homelessness in Los Angeles: Share some of the findings from the 2017 Los Angeles Homeless Count using these slides.

● Encourage your students to get involved in the 11th Annual United Way Homewalk, coming up on Saturday, November 18th at Grand Park in Downtown Los Angeles!

● Talk to your students about the USC Initiative to End Homelessness and what it’s all about!

● Emphasize the intersectionality of homelessness with your class by exploring one of the discussion topics below, or another topic of your choosing:
  ○ What are LA City and LA County doing to address homelessness? Who is involved?
  ○ Homelessness and human rights: Is access to affordable housing a human right?
  ○ What is the relationship between homelessness, systemic racism, and incarceration?
  ○ How do macro economic trends impact homelessness and housing affordability in America?
  ○ What are the different policies at the federal, state, and local level that have the largest impact on homelessness?
  ○ What is the role of technology in addressing homelessness?
  ○ What role can architects and urban planners play in helping to address homelessness?
  ○ How can the creative arts, including music, dance, drama, and cinema play a role in helping to address homelessness?
  ○ Education and homelessness: the McKinney-Vento Act, homelessness in public schools, homelessness on college campuses.
  ○ What is the role of social entrepreneurship and innovation in addressing homelessness?

We appreciate any time you are able to dedicate to this important issue in your class(es), but also understand that it may be difficult to take time away from your planned lessons. If you have any questions about any of the provided resources, USC Homelessness Awareness Week, or the many exciting things going on across the university and region related to the issue of homelessness, please do not hesitate to reach out to the contacts on the following page.

Fight on!!!

Sincerely,

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Background on Homelessness Awareness Week and Homelessness Action Committee:

Los Angeles continues to experience a ballooning homelessness crisis. According to last year’s annual homeless census, an estimated 57,794 Angelenos experience homelessness in Los Angeles County on a given night, representing a staggering 23% increase from 2016.¹

In response to this unprecedented crisis, Los Angeles voters approved two ballot measures in the past year to address homelessness: Proposition HHH, a $1.2 billion bond measure approved by City voters last November to build thousands of units of supportive housing, and Measure H, a quarter-cent sales tax approved by County voters in March to raise an estimated $355 million annually to fund the provision of support services for those experiencing homelessness. However, securing this funding is only the first step in addressing homelessness in a lasting and meaningful way.

In April 2016, the University launched the USC Initiative to Eliminate Homelessness in Los Angeles, aligning USC with community-based organizations, local government, and the private sector to address one of the most pressing issues of our time. Following the launch of this initiative, USC students from across schools and disciplines stepped up to the plate as well, forming the USC Homelessness Action Committee to raise awareness and demand action to address homelessness in Los Angeles.

¹ 2017 Homeless Count, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)