The cardboard signs held by a man or woman as they stand on the side of the street often read "Hungry, please help;" "Veteran"; "Homeless-will work." Lining a sidewalk in a major city, sometimes covering blocks, are tents holding valued possessions of the residents. Across the nation and around the world millions of people from diverse cultural backgrounds, are living through unplanned homelessness and unsheltered conditions. At times, their lives in these settings are endured for a short term, but for far too many the time goes on for months, turning into years.

In the spirit of recognizing the broad field of housing and the unhoused, sheltering and the unsheltered; funding mechanisms for residences; biases and prejudices against the Other; policies and regulations, this issue of ENGAGE! will be the first of two. Our intent is to raise the voices of social workers and students; of administrators and the challenges they face in providing programs. Naming some of the critical failings of the largest building sector of the U.S., home construction, the contributors to this issue present extant data-filled reports; share personal narratives; use quantitative and qualitative methods; reflect on city, state, and national trends.

Structural factors leading to inaccessibility and discrimination confronted by gender-expansive people are described by Daniel Soucy. After describing the gaps in emergency housing services Soucy draws our attention to the experiences of LGBTQ+ gender-expansive youth and the damaging effects of harassment, discrimination, and bullying they experience.

Caitlin Mello examines the policies affecting social work licensure and the effects of the shortage of social workers on homelessness. The brief proposes the expansion of state-level legislation; the possible elimination of a social work licensure exam; and the expansion of licensing to non-degree holders. One idea is that the workforce supporting homelessness services can be changed to reflect the population being served.

Interviewed for this issue, Mary Provence shares how, at a very early age, the ethic of caring and the desire to become a social worker and researcher was developed through family travels; unsolicited reading material about her future career, and interacting with community-based organizations. She tells of the many barriers blocking and preventing much needed support structures for unsheltered people. Her lived experiences provide insight into what advocates can do to humanize agencies.

In collaboration with a community based, non-profit organization working to address the issues and context of homelessness in a college town, Josie McQuillan and Rachel Downey shed light on the specific barriers that prevent unsheltered individuals from securing stable housing. The authors narrow their focus to the lives of "Hoosiers" in Bloomington, Indiana.

In the student voices section, "Speaking Up and Speaking Out," H. Jad Rea a MLIS student in the IU Luddy School, soundly pronounces homelessness as 'systemic cruelty' while offering some approaches that make a difference in the lives of unsheltered million. In addition, Mahasin Ameen and H. Rhea Jad contribute an extensive compilation of homelessness and housing organizational profiles to serve as accessible resources for readers.

Many resources are available throughout this issue. For example, below are links to a newly launched data base (December 2023) produced by SAVI a research center of the Polis Center at Indiana University. The database provides useful information about the ongoing efforts to address the challenges of evictions, high costs of housing, policies, and practices of realtors. The causes of evictions may best be described, according to the web site, as a 'synergy' of rising rent costs, poverty and low wages, inflation, drug and mental health challenges, citizens living paycheck to paycheck, common life occurrences like unexpected bills and the reduction of work hours. The dashboard features many resources for tenants, researchers, and stakeholders. "The goal of the tool is to raise awareness of evictions in Indiana and provide a resource to empower communities to instill change; users can explore trends of evictions and foreclosures; examine important associations between socioeconomic variables and evictions data; and take the opportunity to provide anonymous stories of their

eviction experience on a qualitative data page." Empowering Indiana Communities with Evictions & Foreclosure Data - SAVI (https://www.savi.org/empowering-indiana-communitieswith-evictions-foreclosure-data/)

Another resource for information is the Melville Trust. For instance, researchers at the Trust state there is evidence that homelessness impacts some communities more than others. Black Americans make up 13% of the US population but account for 40% of all people living without a home. Landlords file evictions against Black renters at nearly double the rate of White renters. "Homelessness is the result of economic, social, justice and housing systems that make quality housing a luxury, force chronically ill neighbors to sleep on sidewalks, and allow employers to pay wages that do not cover basic needs. The racial disparities we see in homelessness and housing instability are a result of deeply rooted inequities in systems like housing, jobs, and healthcare, which create multiple barriers for Black, Indigenous, and Latino/a/x people to obtain quality education, maintain their health, make a living wage, and secure a decent home." The Issues - Data and Insights - Melville Charitable Trust (https://melvilletrust.org/our-work/the-issues/)

The second issue of *ENGAGE!* will bridge these ideas to ones concerned with visioning the future. This country, its leaders in government and private industry, is not prepared to provide caring support, and housing for its aging, over 70 population as reported by the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, "Over the next 10 years, the US population over the age of 75 will increase by 45%, from 17 million to nearly 25 million. The growth is widespread, across urban, suburban, and rural communities, and the sharpest among baby boomers who will begin entering their 80s in this decade." Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies | Joint Center for Housing Studies (https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/) The issues are compounded according to the report, by widening income gaps, inequalities by race and ethnicity, home equity, and housing ownership wealth. "Older renter households are more likely to be headed by people of color." Housing America's Older Adults 2023 (https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/reports/files/Harvard_JCHS_Housing_Americas_Older_Adults_2023.pdf). Who are the designers and planners generating creating responses to climate change

that impact not only plants and animals but the homeless? And how will new ideas spark activism to address the state of housing in the future, a future that regards unsheltered refugees from famine and war?

The National Alliance to End Homelessness conducted a nationwide survey of homeless services employees, to learn about agency staffing challenges; low salaries and financial difficulties; the effects on service delivery and the need for far more resources to meet the needs of all people experiencing homelessness. Working-in-Homeless-Services-A-Survey-of-the-Field_12-5-23_FINAL.pdf (https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Working-in-Homeless-Services-A-Survey-of-the-Field_12-5-23_FINAL.pdf). Moving forward, the plan for the second volume of ENGAGE! addressing homelessness is to reflect community engaged and community based participatory research with leaders of the movement for equity and change.