

# Power Up: Housing

October 6, 2021



The ACLU would like to

**ACKNOWLEDGE**

**THAT WE ARE ON**

**INDIGENOUS LAND**

of the traditional territories of the  
Coast Salish people,  
specifically the Duwamish Tribe.

Whose land are you on? <https://native-land.ca>

# Zoom Logistics

- This call is being recorded and will be sent to everyone who has registered for this training.
- No breakout rooms tonight
- The success of Power Up is built on participation!
  - On the Zoom toolbar, you can raise your hand to be called on or type a question or comment in the chat box.
  - Press \*6 to unmute yourself on the phone.

# Agenda

## 1. Introductions

## 2. Let's dig in!

- Overview of the housing crisis in Washington
- How did we get here?
- Can we truly end homelessness?
- How to get involved

## 3. Wrap-Up & Announcements

# Introductions

- In the chat box, please introduce yourself:
  - Name
  - Pronouns
  - Where you're joining from
  - One thing you're hoping to learn or take away from today's conversation

# **Housing and Homelessness in Washington**

# The Housing Crisis in Washington

- Washington state, along with Seattle and King County have some of the highest rates of homelessness in the country and rates continue to increase disproportionate to national growth
- More than 22,923 people experience homelessness on a given day in Washington
  - Nearly one quarter of Washington state renters expect to be evicted when moratoriums lift
  - In many cities, a majority of our houseless neighbors are forced to live on public property in tents, vehicles, and make-shift shelters
- People who experience homelessness are disproportionately BIPOC, have disabilities, and/or otherwise directly impacted by systemic oppression

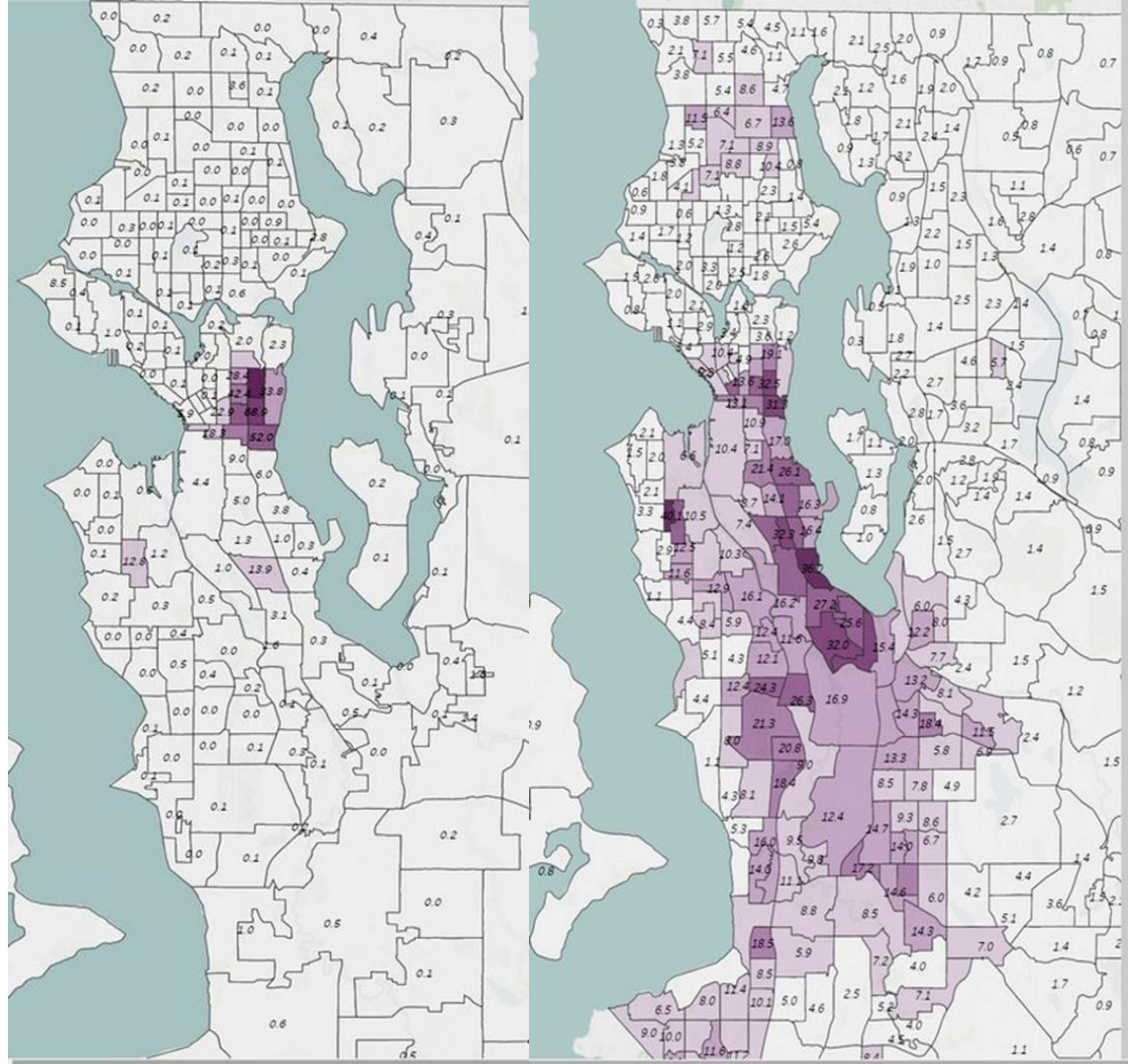


# The Housing Crisis is a Racial Justice Issue

- Home ownership is the primary way in which Americans accumulate wealth
- Numerous policies and practices at local and federal levels actively displaced Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color from their homes and pushed communities into poverty or made homeownership virtually impossible
- Examples:
  - Settler colonialism (e.g. in 1865, the Seattle Board of Trustees called for the removal of Indigenous people and banned Indigenous people from the City)
  - Racially restrictive covenants made it illegal to sell or rent property to Black Americans, Asian Americans, and other communities
  - Redlining further ensured that people of color could not secure mortgages for homes in the only neighborhoods they were “legally allowed”



- The Federal Housing Authority also subsidized the private building of suburbs, where homes could not be sold to people of color
- For example, in Seattle all Black, Asian, and Native American families were locked into a triangle of census tracts in the Central and International Districts



# Discrimination Continues Today

- The Fair Housing Act was passed in 1968, which made it illegal to discriminate in the housing market. But by this point, houses had appreciated in worth and were no longer affordable for the non-white families who were prevented from building wealth for decades.
- Countless other policies and practices continue to exacerbate the housing crisis and its impact on People of Color
- Examples:
  - Black, Latinx, and Asian residents are denied loan applications to buy or refinance a home at disproportionate rates.
  - Discrimination based on race and conviction history in renting or purchasing housing as well as in evictions
  - Discrimination in employment

# The Lack of Affordable Housing Is the Primary Driver of Homelessness

## State Facts

MINIMUM WAGE	\$13.69
AVERAGE RENTER WAGE	\$22.94
2-BEDROOM HOUSING WAGE	\$29.31
NUMBER OF RENTER HOUSEHOLDS	1,055,157
PERCENT RENTERS	37%

## Affordable Rent for Low Income Households

Minimum Wage Worker



Household at 30% of Area Median Income



Worker Earning Average Renter Wage



## Fair Market Rent

1-Bedroom Fair Market Rent



2-Bedroom Fair Market Rent



Working at minimum wage

**\$13.69**/hr



Each week you have to work

**70**  
HOURS!



To afford a modest 1 bedroom rental home at Fair Market Rent

DOWNLOAD  
State Report



CONNECT TO NETWORK  
Washington



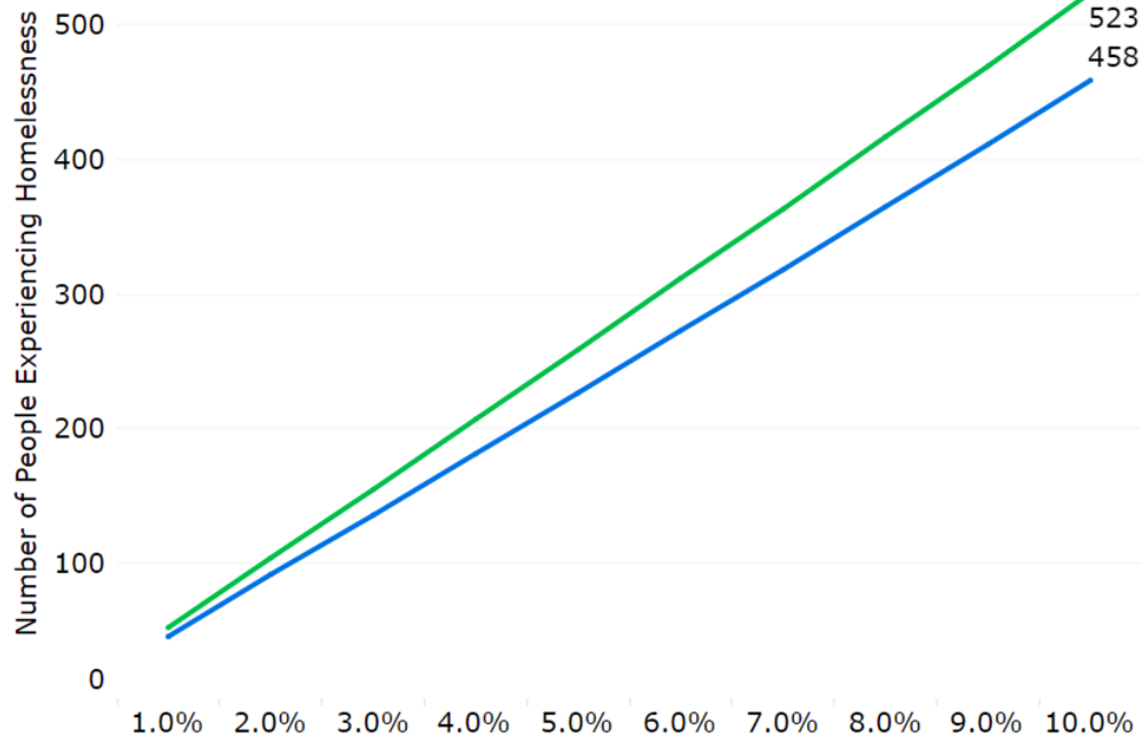
- In Seattle, rental costs have increased by 57% in the last 10 years.
- Nearly 90 percent of evicted respondents in Seattle reported becoming homeless after being evicted; 43.5 percent of evicted respondents were forced to leave the City

## The Effect of Rising Rents on Homeless Populations

How many more people will experience homelessness if rents rise 1 to 10 percent?  
(Estimates are the expected increase in both the homeless counts and total populations.)

Region

Seattle



# A Lack of Adequate Alternatives Forces People to City Property

- Invisible vs. visible homelessness
- Virtually every jurisdiction lacks adequate affordable housing and emergency shelter options, as well as spaces for houseless people to meet their basic survival needs
- Need to increase accessibility and respect autonomy

# Youth Especially Lack Adequate and Accessible Housing Options

- The supply of housing and shelter for unhoused youth is wildly insufficient. Over half of the 39 counties in Washington lack any beds dedicated to homeless youth or young adults. 44% of houseless young adults are served within the adult homeless system
- Alternatives to the child welfare (family regulation) and juvenile legal systems are important prevention tools that are inconsistently available throughout the state.
- Permanent supportive housing is needed for young people transitioning out of behavioral health or residential treatment facilities.
- Independent youth housing that supports young people learning to live on their own is needed.

# Criminalization As a Response

- Criminalizing conduct inherent to being homeless is part of a long legacy of policies that punish and displace poor people and people of color.
- Examples:
  - Camping bans
  - Move-along orders
  - Sit-and-lie ordinances
  - Zoning ordinances/land use ordinances
- These policies are cruel, unconstitutional and exacerbate the housing crisis.



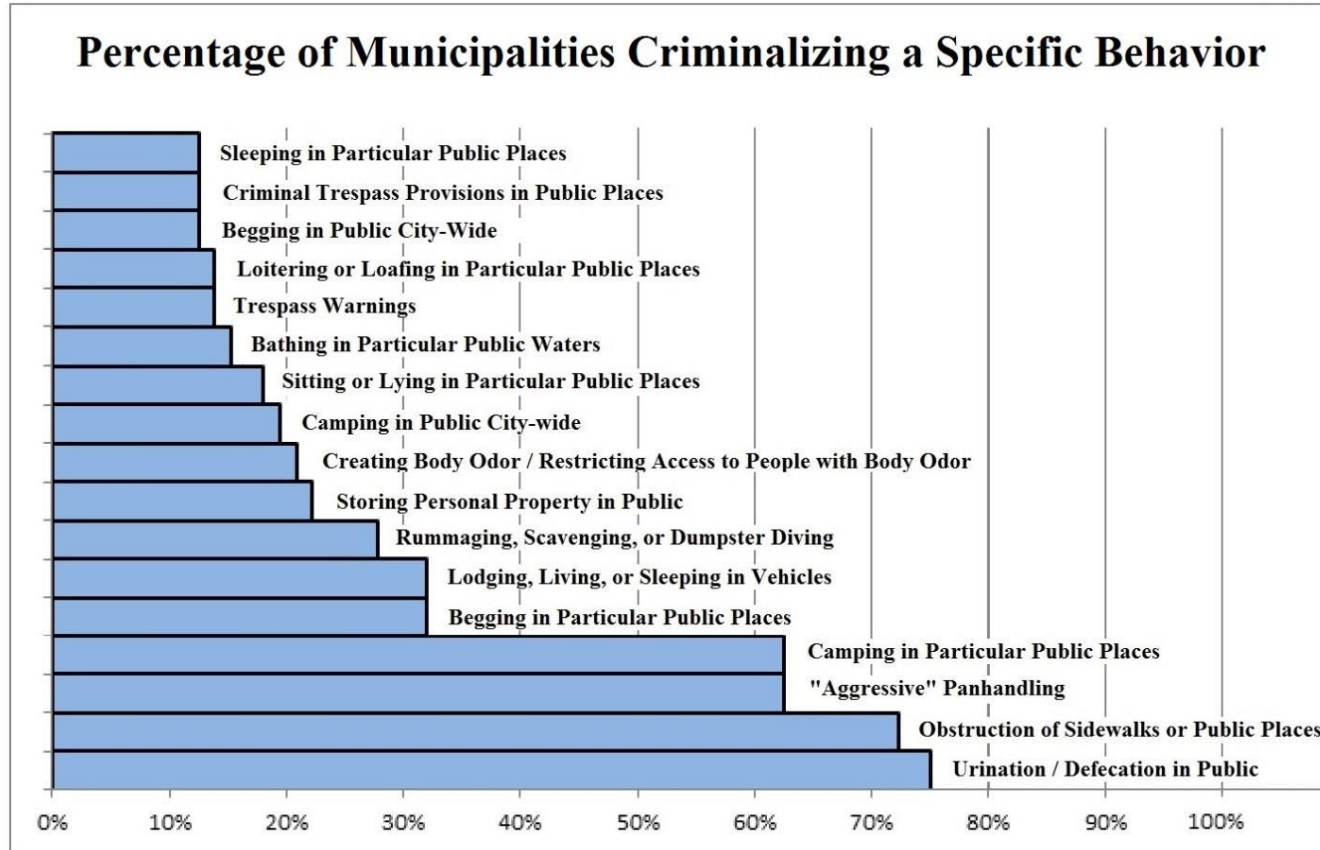


# Criminalization's Particular Impact on Youth

- There is a two-way relationship between youth homelessness and the juvenile system and other systems of care like behavioral health/residential treatment and foster care.
- More than 77% of homeless youths in a national study reported having had an interaction with the police, and 62% said they had been arrested.
- As a result of their frequent arrests, many are dogged by warrants. Youths sometimes stop attending school and avoid shelters because they fear getting picked up.
- Criminal records also hinder young people from getting housing, education, and employment.



# Examples of Policies in Washington



# WE HAVE DIGNITY.

Reavy Washington | Seattle, WA | Homeless “sweeps” Plaintiff



After both his parents died, Reavy moved to Seattle in 1994 to work construction with his brother. After several successful years, the market changed and jobs were hard to come by. Reavy ended up living outside where he has stayed for more than 20 years. During that time, he's been moved a lot. "Cops would come in or ICE would come through, looking for people with warrants or immigrants. That's been going on for twenty years in different forms – moving us but not giving us anywhere to go."

But in 2015, the “sweeps” began. The City tells everyone they have a few days to move out of a camp – often somewhere they've lived for years – or their belongings will be destroyed. “Everyone is hoping for more time. Then the day comes and we don't have anywhere to go. We don't have vehicles or help to move things. So you just grab what you can carry.”

Reavy can't tell you how many times he's been pushed out of one place and then another. Along the way he's lost clothes, a radio, grills, heating equipment, tents, bedding, cookware, a bike, shoes, and more. He started going to city council meetings, trying to find a better solution. “I was tired of the double-talk about housing. They aren't providing housing or the services we need. There aren't apartments that are affordable. There isn't a mix of people anymore. This is the United States. ‘United’ means ‘all together’, not separated. We want to have dignity and choices, not be pushed around.”

Finally, Reavy met the ACLU. He's driven to see this through for his community. “A lot of other people don't feel like they measure up or deserve an opportunity to be heard. But my grandmother's cousin was Rosa Parks. My mother taught me when one door closes another one always opens. I've never let the word ‘no’ stop me.”

“Everyone is hoping for more time. Then the day comes and we don't have anywhere to go.”

The ACLU is suing on behalf of Reavy and other people living in camps who have been subject to *illegal search and seizure* and had their property destroyed. People living outdoors still have rights.

# Affordable and Permanent Housing is A Critical Component to Solving Homelessness

- King County alone needs 15,700 affordable units just to house those that experienced homelessness in 2018 and were not permanently housed.
- To fully stabilize the entire county and prevent further growth in homelessness would potentially require up to 37,000 affordable homes.
- And we would still need emergency options and harm mitigation

# Where Do We Go From Here

- Prioritize community driven solutions that address the root causes of homelessness
  - Low barrier affordable and deeply affordable housing units
  - Creating low barrier permanent supportive housing for youth and adults
- Meet material needs of people rather than using police and courts to punish.
- Fair Chance Housing laws and other laws that reduce discriminatory barriers to housing
- Dismantle exclusionary zoning
- Eviction prevention and renter protections

# Want to get involved?!

- Support local groups!
  - <https://www.houseourneighbors.org/>
  - Mutual Aid
  - Stop the Sweeps
- Contact your legislator!
- Stay in touch with the ACLU-WA
  - <https://www.aclu-wa.org/pages/about-getting-help>

**Questions??**

# Additional Resources

- Books:
  - *The Color of Law* – Richard Rothstein
  - *Evicted* – Matthew Desmond
  - *Shattered Bonds* – Dorothy Roberts
  - *Not a Crime to be Poor* – Peter Edelman
  - *Banished: The New Social Control in Urban America* – Katherine Beckett and Steve Herbert
- Reports and Websites
  - [National Homelessness Law Center](#)
  - [Homeless Rights Advocacy Project at Seattle University](#)
  - [ACLU-WA](#)

Links will be included in tomorrow's follow-up email to all registrants.



# Upcoming Events

- Washington Coalition for Police Accountability Candidate Forum – King County
  - Thursday, October 7, 6-8pm
- Vancouver & Clark County: Know Your Rights with Police
  - Tuesday, October 12, 5-6pm
- Belonging: The 2021 ACLU-WA Annual Celebration
  - Friday, October 22, 6:30-8pm
- Flights & Rights: Decolonizing Thanksgiving
  - Tuesday, November 23, 5-6pm







## **For more information:**

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# ACLU

Washington

WE THE PEOPLE