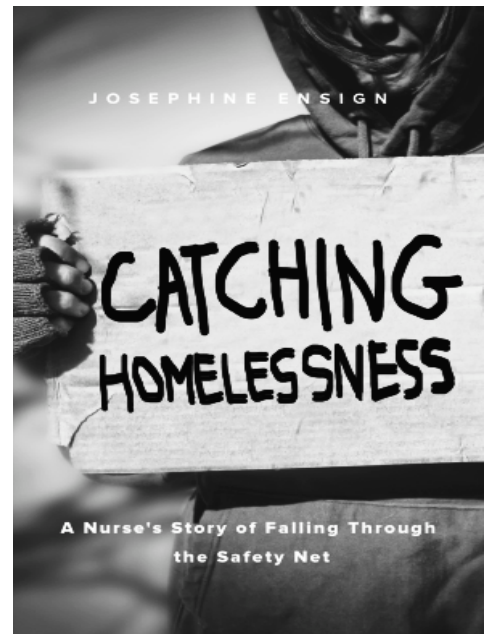


UW Health Sciences Common Book Series

Catching Homelessness by Josephine Ensign

2016-2017



“How do you work with this sort of material every day, keeping lists of dead people, picking maggots out of wounds, being named as next of kin to people dying alone of AIDS, and not get bitter, angry, resentful at the world, at the people you are ostensibly trying to help, and angry at yourself for caring and for even being there?”

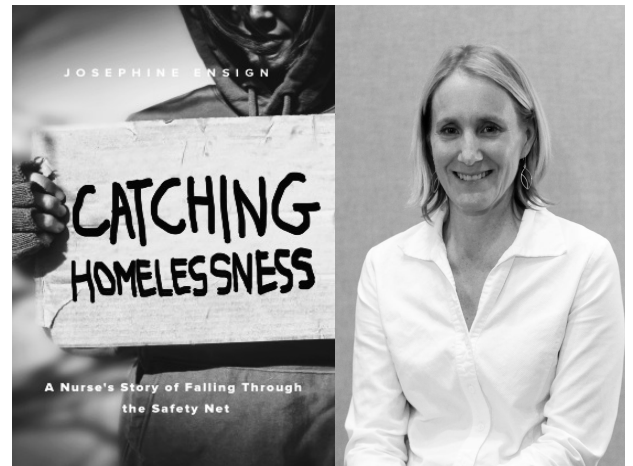
-Josephine Ensign



2016-2017 Health Sciences Common Book Series Overview

Each year, the Health Sciences Service Learning and Advocacy Group selects a common book that engages students from across the health sciences schools in substantive, interprofessional dialogue about pressing topics related to health equity and social justice. This year's timely selection is *Catching Homelessness* by UW Nursing faculty member Josephine Ensign, which will provide a springboard for conversations to occur about the connections between the commodification of housing and healthcare, homelessness, and associated health disparities. Students, staff, and faculty who participate in this series will be able to:

- Develop awareness about how personal and institutionalized bias against people who are homeless manifests in health care and social work settings.
- Understand and contextualize present-day crises related to housing and homelessness as result, and continuation of, a history of colonization and racism.
- Imagine what it would take to create systems and institutions that ensure all people have access to a place they comfortably call home.
- Cultivate consciousness and skill building regarding the roles and responsibilities of (future) health professionals to challenge structural policies and systems that create unequal health outcomes on the basis of categories such as race, gender, class, veteran's status, drug user and other social identifiers.





It's time to read like you give a damn!

Please join all Health Sciences students this summer in reading *Catching Homelessness* in preparation for the 2016-2017 Health Sciences Common Book Series, during which time you will have the opportunity to explore the topics this book raises in more depth (see the tentative Series outline below!).

The Common Book Series will invite you to dialogue and engage with peers from across the health science schools, with community and academic experts, and most importantly with people who are working together to create alternative and humanizing systems that deem everyone to be deserving of health, humane working conditions, adequate housing, safety, freedom of movement, freedom from economic displacement, and self-determination. In addition to developing a broad framework for understanding the systems and structures that produce unequal health outcomes and life opportunities for people who are unstably housed and/or experiencing displacement, this series will equip you with skills and competencies that will enable you to understand the varying contributions health professionals can make in the fight to address and end homelessness. Lastly, engagement with this series offers you the opportunity to identify what your own contribution will be to ongoing struggles toward justice, dignity, and health for all.



Links to places you can purchase or borrow the book:

This book will officially be published August 9th, 2016. However, early & advanced copies are available via [Amazon](#) (to be delivered mid-July) and on reserve through the [Health Sciences Library and in the Odegaard Undergraduate Library](#).



Questions to consider as you read:

1. Why do you think people end up homeless and from what evidence are you drawing these conclusions? Pay attention and notice if your perspectives on this change while reading the book. Are there additional push and pull factors and forces that lead to homelessness that you wish were covered in the book?
2. Some people argue that both housing and health care should be human rights. Others argue that housing and health care should be free and universal rather than commodified. Still, some argue that people should have to work for what they get, and that nothing should be free. Which perspective do you align with the most and why? How did the book reinforce or change your beliefs?
3. In Chapter 1 (page 16), the author reflects on the codes of professionalism she was taught in school and the ways these codes rubbed against her own moral and ethical sensibility in practice that arose from a desire to honor the dignity and humanity of her patients. Do you think she crossed professional boundaries by giving her patient a ride to the emergency room? What would you have done in a similar situation? Do you think certain situations call for less of a black and white view on what defines the boundaries of professionalism? Why or why not?
4. In Chapter 4 (page 58-59), the author shares some of the dominant narratives used to describe neighborhoods occupied by poor white people and poor black people. “Both neighborhoods were seen as sources of moral contamination spreading like infection or mold through the city, sapping its vitality, keeping Richmond from becoming a leader in the New South” (p. 59). She then discusses the cavalier way in which a highway was built through both of these neighborhoods, displacing thousands of residents. It is inferred that some of these people probably became patients at the homeless clinic at which the author worked.
 - a. In reflecting on where you grew up and where you live today, what stories are you told about poor and working class neighborhoods?
 - b. How were and/or are those stories racialized?
 - c. What function do you think narratives like this serve in supporting and facilitating policy decisions that involve displacing people?
5. The entire book offers a narrative reflection on her personal relationship to a sense of place, history, and home. In Chapter 5 after narrating an ultimately futile search for a patient she had served, the author reflects on how “the land is heavy with the remains of the displaced” (p. 96). In this reflection, she includes her patient along with enslaved people of African descent, the Powhatan Tribe, and Civil War soldiers. With this kind of frame, how would you describe your own understanding and lived experiences with place, history, home and homelessness? What makes a home? What does homelessness and displacement look like in your community or communities?
6. In Chapter 6, the author discusses how her role and scope of practice as a nurse practitioner were called into question after ideological and practical disagreements (particularly related to her rank as nurse

<p>practitioner and her stance on reproductive health and divorce) surfaced with Clinic Administrators. This story raises several questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How do you think medical hierarchies both aid and detract from providing comprehensive and quality care to people who need it the most? What role do you think spiritual and religious beliefs can and should play in determining health care policies and practices? Do you think what the author experienced was discrimination?
<p>7. In Chapter 7, the author reflects quite candidly on how her own burnout sometimes leads to less patience and compassion for her patients. In addition, when you encounter trauma and death frequently in your personal and/or professional life, it takes its toll. What practices do you have to challenge burnout, secondary trauma and bitterness in the face of a broken system that makes adequately serving marginalized patients and clients difficult?</p>
<p>8. In Chapter 8 (page 143), the clinic Josephine helped to start makes a decision to focus on the “working poor” instead of “throwing pearls before swine” by working with the homeless.’ While this is a more blatant take on there being deserving and undeserving classes of people, what do you think about this general line of logic?</p>
<p>9. In the epilogue, the author discusses how definitions of who is “homeless” are often problematic. When you imagine someone who is homeless, who do you think of and why? Where do you think images of homelessness come from? As a follow up question, how might suspending assumptions and stereotypes about who is homeless make you a more effective healthcare professional or social worker? How might awareness of a person or family’s status as homeless or unstably housed make you a more effective healthcare professional or social worker?</p>
<p>10. In the epilogue (page 194), the author poses the question as to whether free health clinics are helping to address or hindering the entrenched poverty and severe health inequities that exist in the United States. What do you think?</p>
<p>11. What parts of the book were new and surprising to you? What parts of the book left you feeling uncomfortable or wanting to know more?</p>
<p>12. How did reading this book help you to understand the systems of power (e.g. racism, sexism, colonialism, militarism etc) that contribute to health disparities in homeless populations today?</p>
<p>13. What key takeaways from this book will change how you engage in your personal and professional life?</p>
<p>14. In what ways do you see our current health and social service systems failing people who are experiencing homelessness?</p>
<p>15. What would it take to create a world, including a health care system that produced health and dignity for all people? What interventions and actions do you imagine yourself taking to create this world?</p>





Tentative Schedule of Events:

Check out this preliminary schedule of events (official dates and locations will be made available by the beginning of the school year at www.facebook.com/uwhscommonbook):

FALL QUARTER EVENTS

- **October 5th, 5:30-8:00** in Hogness Auditorium, Health Sciences Service Learning and Common Book Kickoff: Come eat food and listen to and reflect upon **a panel of health professionals, researchers, and organizers** who will speak to the intersections between health, home(lessness), dignity, and displacement!
- **Week of October 24th**: Pounding the Pavement: A place-based walking tour focusing on housing, health, and homelessness in the University District.
- **TBD**: Tent City Collective prep for arrival of Tent City 3.

WINTER QUARTER EVENTS

- **Date TBD**: Film Screening and discussion
- **Week of January 23rd**: Panel of service providers and health professionals who work with people who are experiencing homelessness
- **Week of February 13th**: Day-long teach-in on health and homelessness. Includes evening keynote speech by author Josephine Ensign.

SPRING QUARTER EVENTS

- **Date TBD**: Activism and Advocacy Workshop
- **Date TBD**: Health Sciences Service-Learning Summit – includes presentations from Health Equity Reflections Contest



How to Get Involved and Photo Credits

Get Involved in the Common Book Series: If you have **questions** about the Common Book Series, or would like to **get involved** in the planning process (particularly for the author visit), **contact Kelsen Caldwell** at caldweka@uw.edu.

Photo Credits are in order, starting with page 1:

- Everyone Deserves to go Home: https://c1.staticflickr.com/1/753/22778765680_f6e5064ca2_b.jpg
- Sleeping is not a crime by JP Masser: http://s552.photobucket.com/user/jpmassar/media/berkeley-homeless-sleep-not-crime_zpsbxjxme2o.jpg.html
- Catching Homelessness book cover: https://josephineensign.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/1-22-15ensign_catch3f1d2ac.jpg?w=293&h=453
- Sleeping on Street: <http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/19310/hud-and-va-to-help-more-than-9300-homeless-veterans-find-permanent-homes/>
- Gated community: https://www.transcore.com/sites/default/files/styles/landscape-thumb/public/800x400_Gated.jpg?itok=I5z7TeH2
- Author picture: <http://jackstraw.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Josephine-Ensign-BW.jpg>
- Food bank line: https://fromhungertohealth.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/food_line1.jpg
- Street medicine: <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/550e2bade4b0106109185f16/550e3498e4b02bbdcb53269c/561f307de4b00e50405c83bd/1450663445924/image.jpg?format=500w>
- Shelter mats by TH Mannis: <http://www.redefinehomeless.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Epsworth-Homeless-Shelter.jpg>
- Tent City Seattle: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nickelsville_01.jpg
- Whole Foods / who gets to live and shop where: <http://cdn.pymnts.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/WholeFoods.jpg>
- Development & Homelessness: <http://cdn.geekwire.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Homeless-630x285.jpe>
- No Place to Sleep: http://www.commondreams.org/sites/default/files/styles/cd_large/public/headlines/homeless_child_0.jpg?itok=LRe54nB7