

About the Project

Homeless in Seattle – The Movie (working title)

The title of this article is a bit facetious because ever since the famous film, *Sleepless in Seattle* came out in 1993, the phrase itself has entered the American lexicon in several different forms. *This* in Seattle, or *that* in Seattle. For the most part, the city itself is exactly what you've heard about it. More trees than houses, home to more than a few tech companies, and the headquarters for Boeing, Microsoft, Starbucks, and other famous corporations. There is the Space Needle, the Pike Place Market, the stunning beauty of the waterfront, and the multi-million dollar sports stadiums. (For the record, our upcoming movie will NOT be titled *Homeless in Seattle*, which we thought was trite.)

But there is a dark side to the jewel of Puget Sound, and that is the approximately 12,000 people living homeless on its streets and under its bridges. The total population of the city is about 700,000, which means about one in sixty of its residents are homeless. This problem is not restricted to Seattle, of course. Most statistics you'll find on a Google search say about 550,000 people are homeless across the United States, with almost a quarter of that total in California alone. But that statistic is misleading, since it fails to count runaway youth, or anyone who doesn't want to be counted. The TRUE number, [according to an article at Mother Jones](#), is actually over FOUR MILLION nationwide. African-American kids are also 83% more likely to be in that group, (rather than white kids) and LGBT kids over 100% more likely to be without a home. The truth is that many of these people fall through the census cracks, or the attempts of volunteers to count them, so no one really knows. However, if the true number nationwide were only a half-million, we would barely notice, and this writer believes the Mother Jones reference is more likely the real truth. If the four million figure is true, this would mean about one in eighty people across America are homeless, making Seattle's problem slightly worse than the nationwide average.

When cinematographers Tomasz Biernacki and Chris Karges teamed up with me to produce a movie about homelessness in the Seattle area, we wanted to do some initial research first, before figuring out how to approach the project. (Right now it's January 2018 and shooting is scheduled to begin in March or early April.) All three of us are still trying to get a handle the problem, i.e. to get up to speed on the issue. But I've already formed a few opinions based on our research:



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1. **It's a myth that homeless people migrate to where services for them are best.** Interviewers find that almost 90% of homeless families give a local address as the last place where they had a regular home or apartment. If they DO migrate for better services, it usually means just locally, not from one state to another.

2. **Homelessness is not a city, county, or even a state problem, except perhaps in California.** It is a NATIONAL problem, and should be addressed on the Federal level.

3. **When people said back in the 1990's that 'welfare was breaking the country,' that statement was total baloney.** Aid to Families With Dependent Children, (welfare) Food Stamps, lunch programs, after-school programs for needy kids, etc. has never accounted for much more than two percent of the yearly Federal budget. Former President Bill Clinton knew that, but when he put a five-year lifetime limit on welfare, all he really did was toss poor families into the street. We spend almost twenty times that much each year on defense, and ten times as much just paying the interest on the National Debt.

4. **Former President Jimmy Carter made a good effort to improve the Section 8 program, which took a great many families off the streets and put them into stable housing.** But getting past the HUD requirements, and a waiting list that can run for years has stalled the program to a degree.

5. **Not all homeless are alcoholics or drug users.** Only SOME of them. And those types of people exist in normal society as well. But living on the street just makes their problems worse.

6. **Homelessness is nothing new.** It's just gotten worse lately, and I want to discover WHY, as well as getting to the root of some possible solutions.

Karges, Biernacki, and I haven't developed any other opinions on this issue. Not yet. Which is the purpose of the movie. Our plan is to start by interviewing some of the people who deal with the homeless each day, such as the service providers and the folk who run the shelters. From there, we will do interviews with homeless families on the street, and then move on to the encampments. I would love to do this from coast-to-coast, but frankly we don't have the budget and we live in the Seattle area. So we will do a microcosm of the problem, restricting the movie to Seattle.

Meet the Team



ROBERT



CHRIS



TOMASZ

Robert M. Blevins

Managing editor and co-founder for Adventure Books of Seattle. Puget Sound resident since 1967. He spent his early years being dragged around the Pacific Rim by a wonderful single mother. Grew up in places like Manila, Kwajalein Atoll, Midway Island, Guam, Hawaii, and Mexico. Finally ended up in the Seattle area. Author of the science fiction novels *Say Goodbye to the Sun*, *The Corona Incident*, and *The 13th Day of Christmas*. Has edited more than fifty books for other authors to date.

Chris Kages

A Seattle native, Chris got his visual start in the film & television industry working as an art director and decorator. He eventually moved into photography, working as a producer & art director for Eddie Bauer, and then in the stock photography industry for Getty Images and other agencies. His stock images have been licensed by Dell, Yahoo!, Bank of America, and other Fortune 500 companies.

Chris is based in Seattle. He spends his spare time with his family, playing rock n' roll with his friends, dreaming about owning a big boat, and combing the thrift stores of our fair city, looking for the perfect bad office sweater.

Tomasz Biernacki

Originally from Poland, now living in West Seattle, Tomasz spend most of his professional life in the illustration industry working with corporate and commercial clients in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle. After 18 years he sold his illustration business and became involved in film. With a few documentaries under his belt, Tomasz brings editing and cinematography skills to this project. An avid backpacker, outdoors man, wood worker, gardener, and a licensed FAA Airframe and Power plant mechanic, Tomasz sees himself as a practical problem solver.

Questions? You can reach us at adventurebooksofseattle@gmail.com