

Did anyone here participate in the last point-in-time homeless count? We had lots of volunteers in Alameda County this year, so heartwarming that so many Oakland residents took time to comb all the neighborhoods and count the current homeless population so resources could be distributed where they are needed most. Recent studies have shown however that despite the best of intentions by all who are involved in this undertaking, the numbers fall woefully short. Hell, I coulda told them that years ago. I been homeless for over ten years now and they ain't never counted me. Trying to count the homeless is like being in a rowboat in a lake and trying to count the fish.

I didn't want anyone to know I was homeless. Even now, with all I have recently achieved; I am very uncomfortable revealing this to you all. But now that the secret is out, I must say; I'm pretty damn good at it; a lot of us are. I mean, it ain't so bad, with my phone and free WiFi, I have access to more information and media than the curator of the Library of Congress did just a few years ago. And tolerance has increased nationwide. You know, they keep pushing this figure called the unemployment statistic.....stupid number.....most manipulated statistic.....but thats just people who recently lost their job and are actively seeking another. What they don't tell you is the statistic of adults between the ages of 25 and 50 who are unemployed and are no longer looking for work. THAT number rises exponentially with each passing day.

And it's changed the faces of homelessness. We are everyone and we are no one. The present condition is unsustainable, the revolution has already started, sides have clearly formed.

I got a college degree last year, my first. It's a Bachelors degree from UC Berkeley, this fall I'm gonna get my second degree. And you know what? It wasn't as difficult as I thought it would be. You know whats difficult? Waking up in the morning and not knowing where you will have a bathroom to use, and half the time when you finally get to one, it's not usable.

When I got to Cal, I thought they'd have some answers for me about what I've seen being on the street, but actually I'm the one that had answers for them. They didn't know any homeless people personally. Same with the local government. Since I been at Cal I have worked with people employed to assist the homeless; nice people, but they just don't get it.

Because as we've learned from all other marginalized communities that have come before; and homelessness is a marginalized community; progress can only be made when members are involved in the discussion.

That's why I'm starting the Dick Hildenbrand Foundation for Academic Reentry. This nonprofit will facilitate education for homeless adults. My life has changed so much since I came back to school and I'm dedicating myself to help others follow my path.

The biggest change of course is that I have a place to live now and the ability to keep it. Inside I keep the few possessions I have managed to hold on to during my years on the street. I don't have much, it ain't worth shit, but I went through a lot to keep it. Couldn't have done it without a storage unit. Most storage units these days are places where homeless people keep their stuff until they can get back on their feet, and in the end we usually end up paying more for storage than the value of the items being stored.