

Speaking Outside the Box: Raising Critical Consciousness Through Storytelling

John A. Gaither Jr., Damien Haussling,
Teddy Maddox Jr., Mark Schumann, Tony Simmons



Baltimore Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau

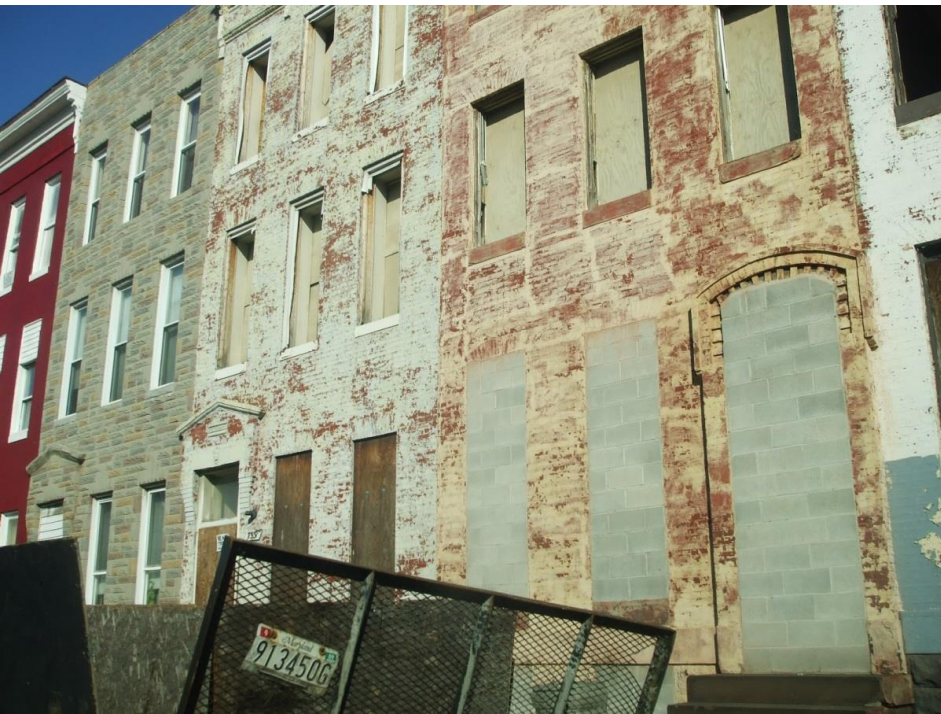


HEALTH CARE
for the HOMELESS
INC.



Dominant Narrative





Selected Neighborhood Data

2013 Comparative
Neighborhood Data

	Baltimore City	Roland Park	Upton	Guilford	Sandtown- Winchester
Population	620,961	7,377	10,342	17,464	14,896
% African American	63.80%	7.90%	92.40%	11.80%	96.60%
Life Expectancy	73.5 years	84.1 years	62.9 years**	82.2 years	65.3 years**
Median Household Income	\$40,100	\$112,702	\$13,835	\$80,904	\$23,565
Pop. w/income <\$25,000/year	34.50%	10.30%	65%	20.10%	52.90%
Pop. w/income <Poverty Level	24.5%*	0.80%	50.60%	3.90%	37%
Renters paying >30% income	53.80%	48.70%	58.40%	54.10%	58.30%
Crime Rate/1000 pop.	63.6	28.6	76.2	27.7	64.2
Shootings/1000 pop.	2.4	0.1	3.7	0.1	6.4
% Pop. 16-64 Employed	54.40%	69.30%	35.20%	55.60%	42.20%
Banks/1000 pop.	0.2	0.7	0	0.1	0
Dirty Streets/Alleys Report/1000 pop.	65.3	13	58.9	14.7	152.7
Households w/no vehicle	29.60%	4.20%	63.60%	13.90%	59.70%
% Area Covered by Trees***	27.40%	58.60%	14.50%	49.50%	15.40%
% Vacant/Abandoned Properties****	19.70%	0.10%	34.00%	0.20%	32.60%
% VacantsOwned by City*****	15.00%	0.00%	45.20%	0.00%	21.10%

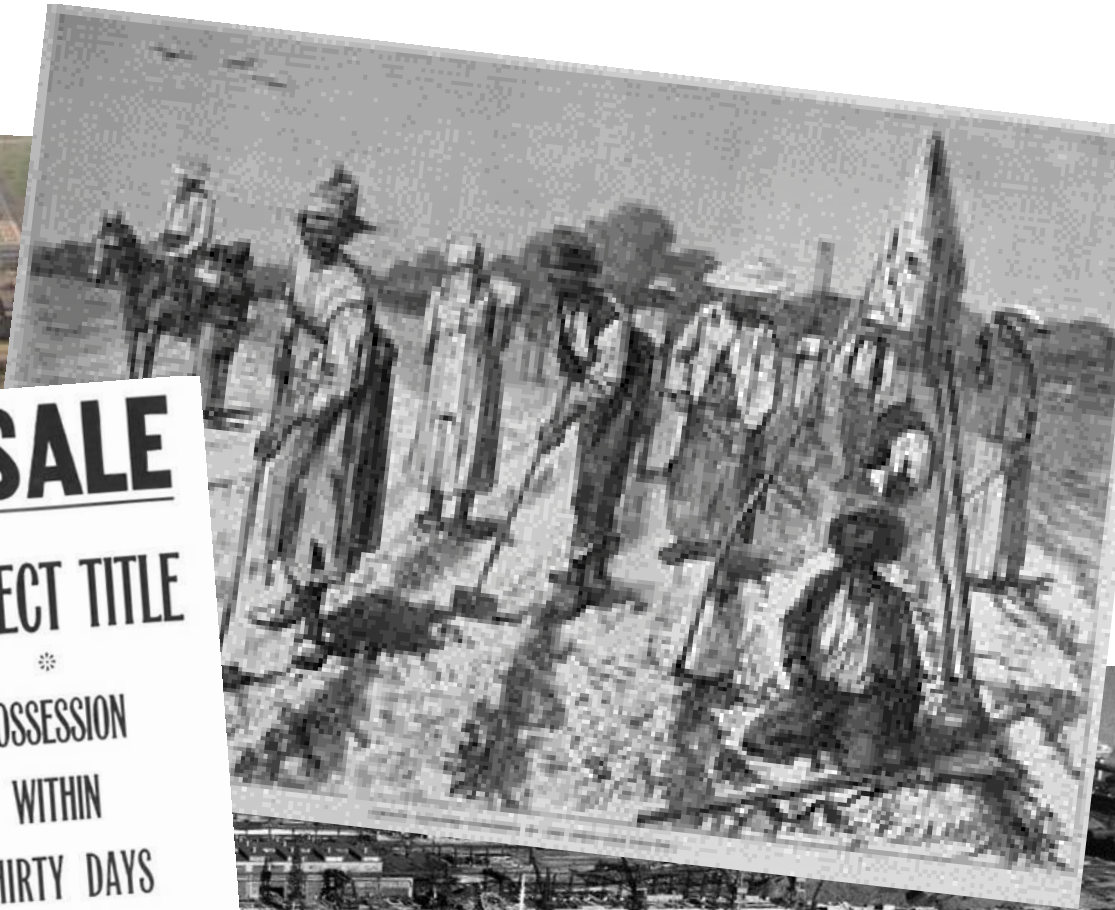
Dominant Narrative



Who looted whom?



Who looted whom?



INDIAN LAND FOR SALE

GET A HOME
OF
YOUR OWN

*
EASY PAYMENTS



PERFECT TITLE

*
POSSESSION
WITHIN
THIRTY DAYS

FINE LANDS IN THE WEST

IRRIGATED
IRRIGABLE

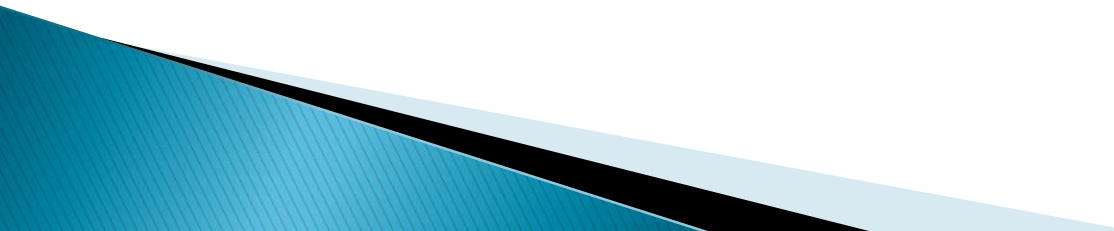
GRAZING

AGRICULTURAL
DRY FARMING

IN 1910 THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR SOLD UNDER SEALED BIDS ALLOTTED INDIAN LAND AS FOLLOWS:

Location	Acres	Average Price per Acre	Location	Acres	Average Price per Acre

What do you hear people say are the main causes of homelessness?

- ▶ Underlying all of these individual issues are
 - Poverty
 - Lack of affordable housing
- 

Definitions

- ▶ The official **poverty** threshold:
 - \$11,770 for individuals
 - \$15,930 for a family of 2
 - \$20,090 for a family of 3
 - \$24,250 for a family of 4
- ▶ Or... the condition where people's basic needs are not met.

Definitions

- ▶ **Fair Market Rent**

The estimated cost of renting a property with a certain number of bedrooms, in a certain geographic area.

- ▶ **Affordable Housing**

Housing deemed affordable to those with a median household income as rated by country, state, region or municipality.

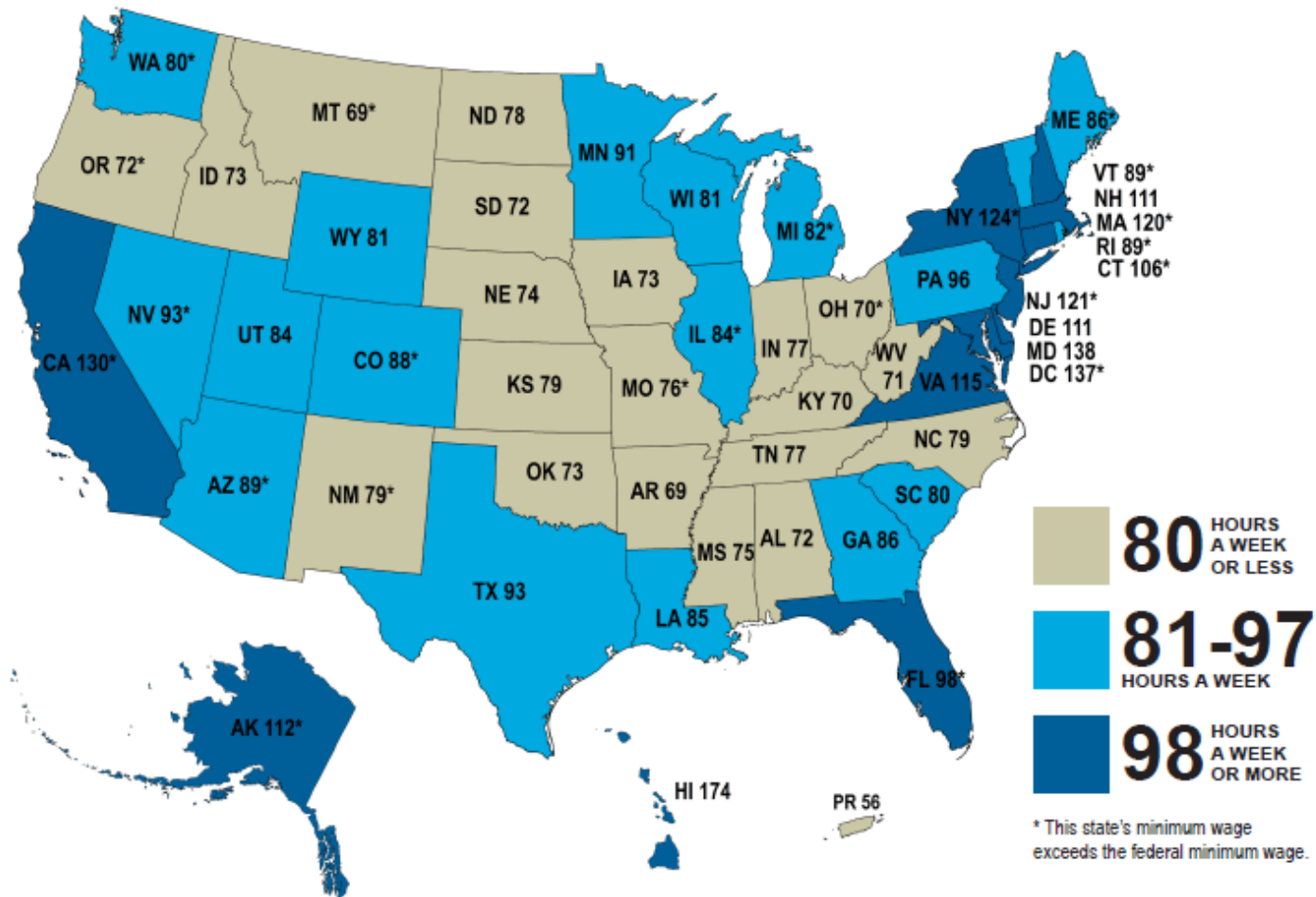
Definitions

- ▶ **Housing Wage**

The wage you would need to earn in order to pay no more than 30% of your income on the rent– the accepted standard of affordability.

2014 HOURS AT MINIMUM WAGE NEEDED TO AFFORD RENT

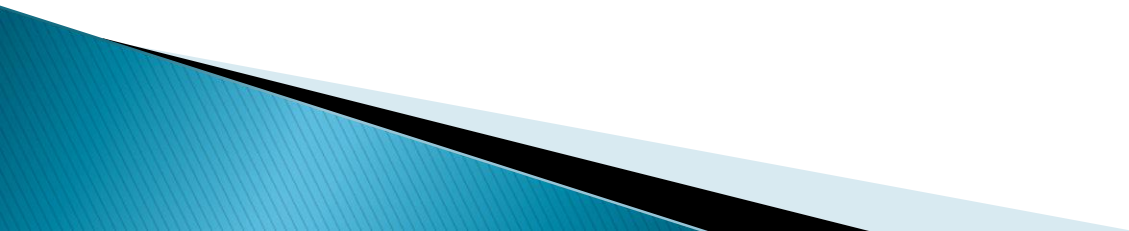
In no state can a minimum wage worker afford a two-bedroom rental unit at Fair Market Rent, working a standard 40-hour work week, without paying more than 30% of their income.

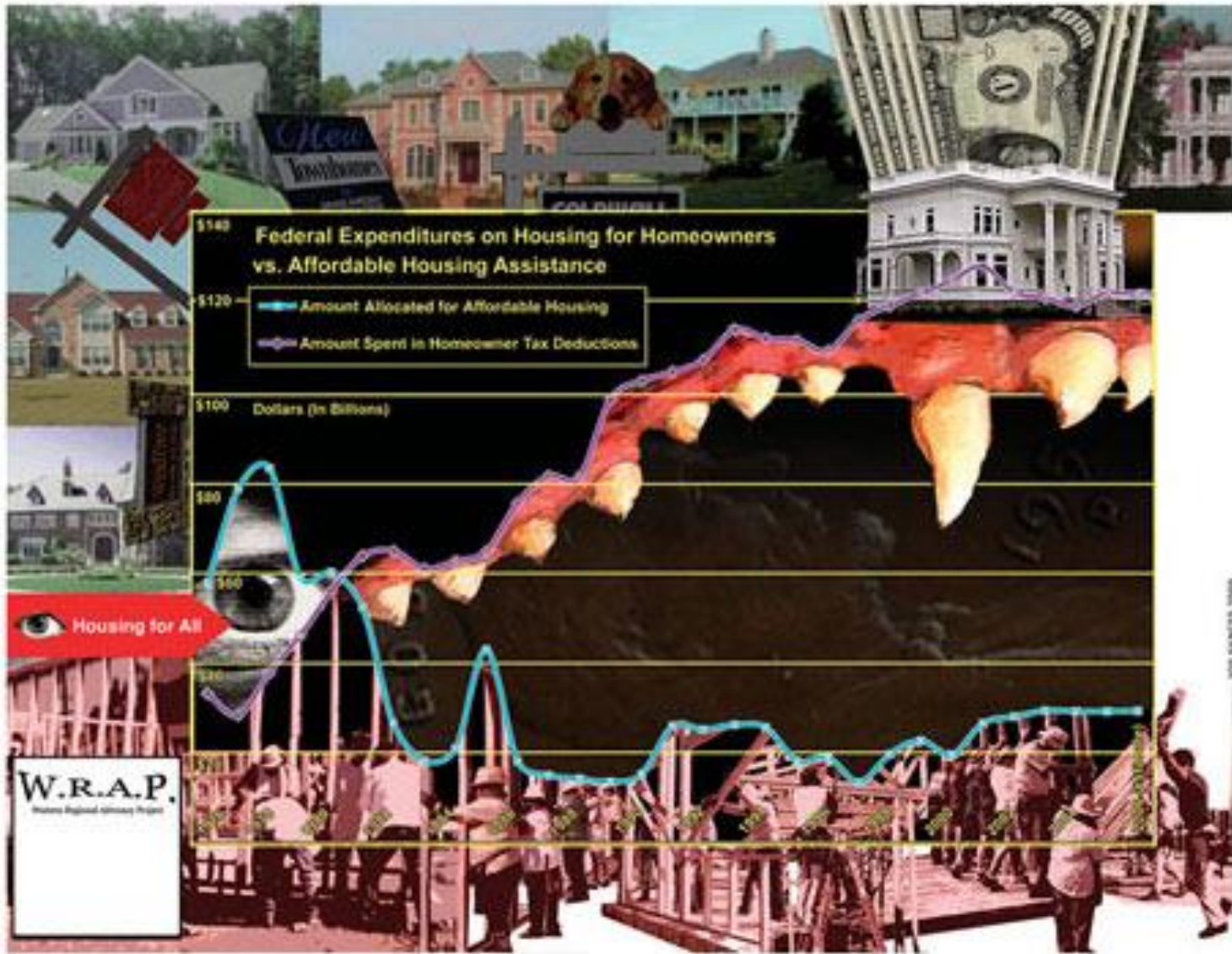


National Low Income Housing Coalition // Out of Reach 2014

National Low Income Housing Coalition, "Out of Reach 2014"
<http://nlihc.org/oor/2014>

Why don't we often hear people say that homelessness is a housing issue?





Definitions

▶ Dominant Narrative

The definitive story that shapes understanding of social reality *as told by people in power*

- *Leads to many unstated assumptions* about behaviors, values, and life course which imposes prevailing “accepted” rules of every day living
- *Hides and justifies power* relationships—privilege and oppression.
- Focuses on individual circumstances at the *exclusion of structural issues* in community and society
- Accepts as “given” things that are *neither natural nor inevitable*



<https://www.google.com/search?q=what+is+the+cause+of+home>

homeless - Google Search



Family



Children



People



Sign



Why is the dominant narrative dangerous?

- ▶ Justifies privilege and oppression
- ▶ Popularizes stereotypes and stigmatizes individuals
- ▶ Keeps people in the dark, prevents real change
- ▶ How we define problems defines solutions.
- ▶ It is the system that need fixing! Individual solutions are, at best, only a Band-Aid.

“The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.”

–Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Definitions

▶ **Critical Consciousness**

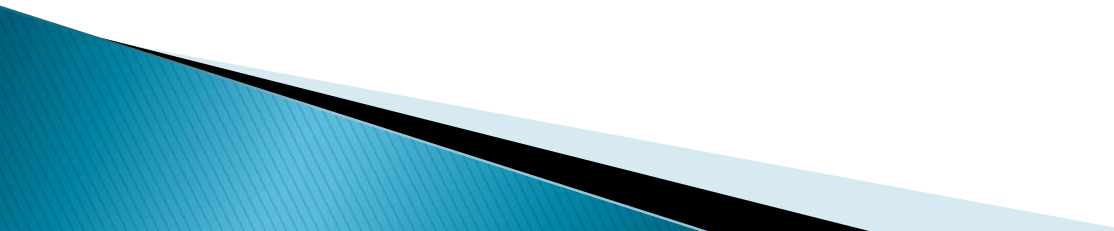
The process of developing a greater awareness and understanding of social, economic, and political contradictions and oppression – and recognition of the power to change them.

▶ **Internalized Oppression:**

The process by which a member of an oppressed group comes to accept and live out the inaccurate myths and stereotypes applied to that group. This can cause feelings of alienation from society and one's true self, and lead to isolation and depression. This process often occurs subconsciously.

Break into small groups

Choose a picture.

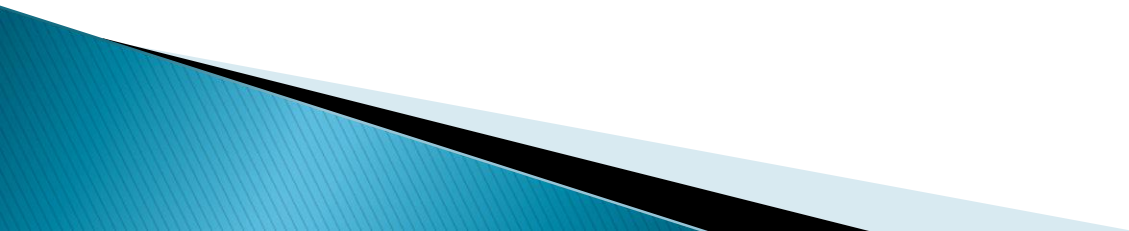
- 1) What's a story you tell about this person or people that is informed by and reinforces the dominant narrative?
 - 2) What's a way of telling a story about this person or people that challenges or undermines the dominant narrative?
- 

In small groups

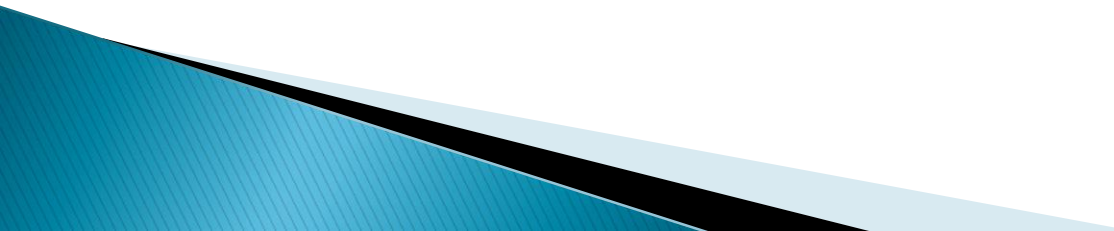
Reflect on the ways the dominant narrative impacts your story or the work that you do.



Were there any themes that emerged from the stories that you'd like to share?



Storytelling is important!

- ▶ We deconstruct the dominant narrative by learning to recognize it and realize its influence on our own personal narrative.
 - ▶ Through sharing our experiences, we begin to see beyond our individual issues and realize that we are not alone!
 - ▶ **As we share our story, we also raise the critical and social consciousness of those with whom we interact—a very necessary ingredient in the fight for social justice and ending homelessness.**
- 

We must always be aware that how we talk about homelessness can...

- ▶ Reinforce or challenge stereotypes
- ▶ Support the dominant narrative or point to systemic causes
- ▶ Victimize and stigmatize those who've experienced homelessness or support their liberation from internalized oppression (self-blame and shame).

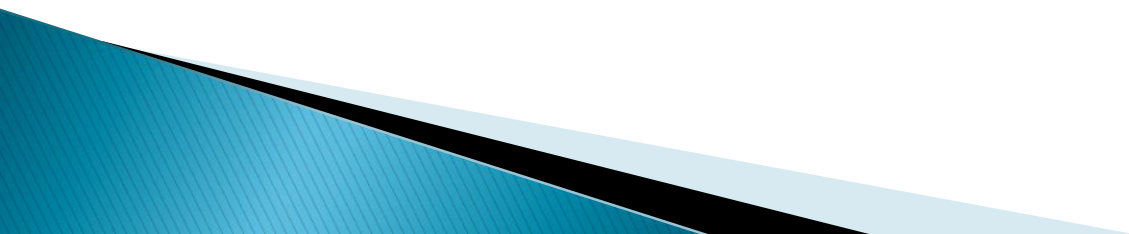
“Homelessness is something I have experienced, but it doesn't define who I am.”

–Mark Schumann

In small groups

Reflect on the ways in which the dominant narrative impacts your story.

How might you use your story to challenge and undermine the dominant narrative?



- ▶ **Critical consciousness** is never achieved—it is an ever-evolving process of becoming aware of the social, economic, and political dimensions that shape our reality.

Questions?

Baltimore Faces of Homelessness Speakers'
Bureau Contact Info:

facesofhomelessnessbmore@gmail.com

443-219-7715

<http://facesofhomelessnessbmore.blogspot.com/>

- ▶ Damien Haussling 410-916-5789
dhaussling@gmail.com
- ▶ Teddy Maddox Jr. 667-214-4181
- ▶ Mark Schumann 443-278-1791
markazelinski@yahoo.com
- ▶ Tony Simmons 443-997-5391
dwaynesimmons675@gmail.com