

Homeless real story  
by liz murray,  
describing her



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Homeless Youths and Their Education                      In today's society, homelessness is a major issue in not only the United States of America, but worldwide.

There are no exact statistic numbers of homeless people in the U. S, however, according to a recent report, over a half million people are living on the streets, in cars, and in shelters, and unfortunately, a quarter of them are children. In the book called " Breaking Night" by Liz Murray, the author wrote her life experience about how she lived through homeless life until she graduated from Harvard University. As the author's life, there are thousands of children living on the streets due to abusive and drug addicted family.

Only in Bay Area, the number of homeless children is at an all-time high, and there are more than twenty thousand of them, however, the bigger issue is their education. Education is the key to succeed in their life and to stand on their feet again. Majority of homeless children are facing difficulties and having hard times on their relationship to education. They need the essentials to have a successful transition to adulthood and start new lives as a normal people.

Breaking Night is a real story by Liz Murray, describing her life journey from homelessness to Harvard. Liz Murray grew up in the Bronx in 80's to drug addicted parents, who love their children, though unable to provide anything for Liz and her older sister Lisa. Her family survived on welfare from government, however her parents would spend all their monthly checks for drugs, leaving Liz and Lisa without food.

As she mentions, at the age of 6, she already knew how to do drugs and also how to care for parents who are supposed to take care of her. She knows that her mother began doing drugs at the age of thirteen to escape her own painful childhood. Her mother falls down under the unhappy memories and a

diagnosis of HIV. At this point, her mother finally decides to recover and leaves her father, Liz decides not to go with her, staying in the bad environment she grew up in.

However, having no home to stay leads to her nonattendance from school, and she eventually went to foster care. She is released into her mother's care, but she decides to stay on streets, making her life homeless at the age of fifteen. During this time Murray looked for shelters, slept in friends' apartments and in stairwells, and kept skipping school.

When her mother died from AIDS, Murray finally felt motivated to return to school and look for her own stability in life. Although she was still homeless, she decided to finish high school in two years and earning everything she needed. As she approached graduation, she began to think of college and applied to a New York Times scholarship and gained access to Harvard, which she achieved both. Then, she rents an apartment with her sister, finally creating a true home. It is not only her story, there are many people who went through this life whether they succeeded or failed, and there are many people who are living in this unpleasant life. Regardless of whatever situation, every single homeless child must go to school and get their education in order to move forward in their lives. Although they are still able to attend public schools, schools often do not provide what they exactly need and resulted in most of them refuse to attend school.

The increase in the number of homeless families in the United States has brought an increase in the number of homeless children going to public

schools. Meanwhile, the U. S. public school system is struggling to meet the education essentials of their homeless students.

As the U. S. Department of Education reported, there are approximately 615,000 school-aged children who are living as homeless, which is more than double the number in 1989. Both increase in the number of low-rent housing and working poor families are main factors, according to a recent report by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Also, drug addicted and abusive parents are other factors for homeless children because they are seeking safe places to sleep and escaping from their homes, and ending in shelters and streets. Saddest part is that "there is no indication that homelessness among children and youth is getting any better," said David J. Davidson, president of the National Association of State Coordinators for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. "The impact on their well-being and education is devastating.

" (Rodriguez and Maryellen). In 1987, there are more than 50 percent of homeless children were not attending school. In spite of the rising number of homeless children, current government funding for the McKinney act's education program (\$28.8 million) is the same as in 1995 and remains at only 58 percent of the \$50 million approved by Congress. The program has never been completely funded. Just 3 percent of public school districts across the nation get McKinney funds. In majority of districts, any additional services provided to homeless students would come from the school budget.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, is a federal law that provides funds for homeless people, was passed by the United States

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Congress on July 22, 1987. Housing stability is an important part for the positive development of youth. Housing stability ensures children and youths keep connected to their family and community, providing them with right support to develop emotionally, socially, physically and mentally. As time passes day by day, economics of U. S is getting unstable resulting in increasing payment of food and rent. Specifically, in Bay Area, mid-class family can barely afford their needs, and lower than mid-class families are at the risk of becoming homeless. There are some homeless children who attend school, even college.

They seem more likely to succeed in their career and achieve their dream. On the other hand, majority of homeless children choose not to attend school because of the school's lack of support. There are some unbelievable facts that homeless students feel they should leave school. For instance, once, school district withheld the homeless student's academic record because the student did not return a textbook. It is unimaginable that world's most powerful country could not be able to provide textbooks to homeless students. There must be solution to these children. Children are born to be happy with their family, they do not have to go through this life.

Homeless children usually do not attend school. Most of them help their family to find foods and shelters, and it is obvious that they do not get enough sleep. With all that information about their life, we are able to solve issue. To give homeless youth the best possible chance to succeed, it is significant that we provide them with high-quality education services, wherever they go, and maintain strong partnerships between local education agencies and housing authorities. In fact, we must do more to prevent

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youth homelessness in the first place, and if they already become homeless, housing must be our first priority. Also, schools should have a club created for students who support other homeless students.

They can all be in the club together so the homeless students will not feel left out and be more involved. They should do fundraising or other fun activities, so that they would be interested and want to come school more often.

Another solution could be that regular family offers a housing to homeless children.

Exchange students from foreign countries must stay in local families. When the family decides to let the students stay in their house, they get some discount or decreased percentage on tax or some services. Why could not we offer the same to homeless children? It is hard for families to let homeless children to stay in their house, but giving them last chance to get on their feet is the best support that we can be able to give. They do not choose this life, they do not deserve this. What we offer to our children tells them what it is that we value. By prioritizing the needs of homeless youth, we tell them that we believe in them and are willing to be advocates on this challenging pathway called life.

As the research has demonstrated, homeless children getting education is important to succeed in their life and achieve their dreams. In today's society, many homeless children are going through difficulties in their life and having hard times on their education.

It is important that we provide the right essentials to them to have a successful life. Number of homeless are increasing day by day in the U. S as well as homeless children, but the support they get from both government

and us is not enough to help them to get on their feet again. Although the U.S government took an action on homelessness and created McKinney Act to help and support them, it has not been that effective for fifteen years.

Thus, it is our obligations to find another solution to help them until we find the right one. We are all born to be humans and have equal opportunities and lives, if ones do not have them, it is our job to change them. Loving is the one thing we can give and get for free and unlimited.