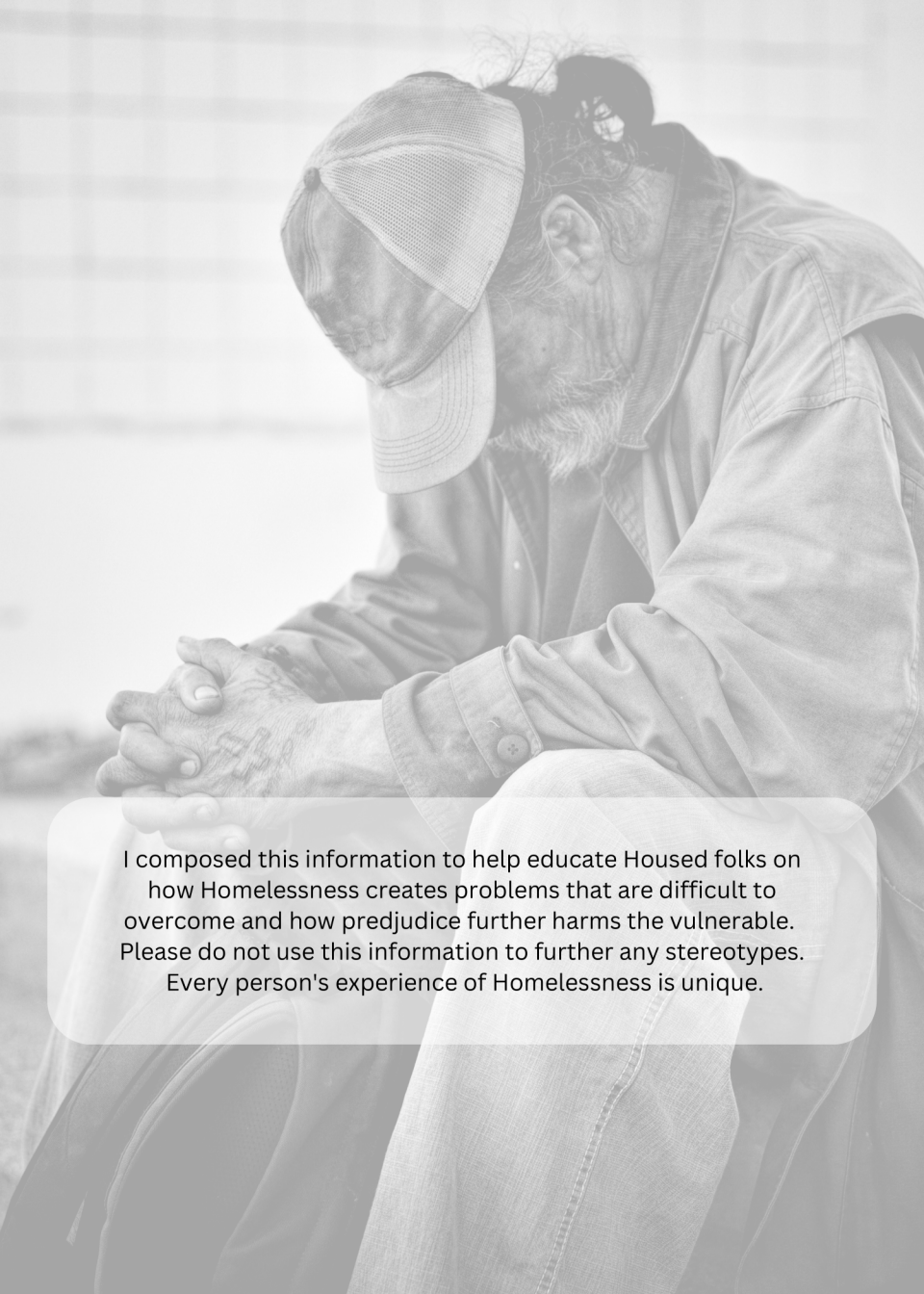




## **HOW BEING UNHOUSED IMPACTS ONE'S APPEARANCE**



I composed this information to help educate Housed folks on how Homelessness creates problems that are difficult to overcome and how prejudice further harms the vulnerable. Please do not use this information to further any stereotypes. Every person's experience of Homelessness is unique.



When I was forced to start living in my van I learned pretty quickly it would be very difficult for me to maintain any facade that I'm not homeless. Without showers, bathrooms, adequate sleeping conditions ... I lost a lot of pride and self-esteem. So many folks think that being Unhoused is a choice. In fact.. it's housed people who make it impossible for us to break the class barrier and live fulfilling lives. Your choices actively endanger us and prevent us from the basic care we need to move out of our situations. Let's look at what being Unhoused can do to a person's appearance. Take a minute to imagine meeting someone for the first time, making friends, taking a job interview, asking for assistance, convincing someone you are competent etc... when you smell poorly and barely look like yourself.



## **WEIGHT**

When you are Unhoused your access to healthy foods changes dramatically. For the most part what you eat is no longer at your discretion. When Unhoused folks live in vehicles they often gain weight for this reason, excess of bad foods combined with being sedentary.

Unhoused folks on the street often lose weight for the same reason but the excessive walking they are forced to do combined with lack of food choice makes their weight go down instead of up. Did you know most food banks give canned and frozen food? When you don't have a kitchen that's not super useful.



## TEETH

Not having access to healthy foods also affects one's teeth. Excess sugar, which is far easier to come by than protein, can cause tooth rot. As can stress grinding.

When you combine this with a lack of access to running water to brush one's teeth and inadequate access to medical care you end up with a lot of people in tooth pain or with missing teeth.



## **SKIN & HAIR**

Did you know the largest organ in our body is actually our skin? It takes a lot of time to care for it and housed folks often overlook the benefits of regular showers. Without regular showers people can develop dry flaky skin, severe acne, yeast infections, rashes, ingrown hairs, dandruff and other health issues that are unfortunately very obvious to the casual observer. ... And that's just our skin. Our hair also is impacted by lack of washing. It gets dry, frizzy or greasy depending on ones body composition. "Bad" hair is hard to fix without water and soap .



## **SKIN PICKING**

Skin picking in particular is common in homeless populations. It can have a devastating affect on one's appearance. Skin picking causes open wounds on the skin that are visual to the casual observer. Skin picking can be due to sceral factors. Some of them are: lack of access to showers, dry weather exposure, and an unconscious behavior caused/increased by anxiety.



## POSTURE & GAIT

When Unhoused folk are forced to sleep while sitting up, like they do on a bench or in a car, their body retains water. This results in swollen feet and often bloated bellies. One can look like they have a "beer belly" simply from swallowing air while they sleep. Swollen feet affect our posture, the way we walk, and makes it hard to fit one's feet into shoes. Unhoused folks who have no place to sit also end up with feet problems from walking through rain, snow, and sweat without being able to change their socks and shoes. As a result Gang Green is a common issue street medics see when treating the Unhoused population. Additionally, having people constantly harass you often leads to a pulled-in and rounded posture. It is common for Housed folks to misinterpret a rounded spine and staggering gait as a symptom of criminal activity or instability...thus further belittling the Unhoused.





## **SMELL**

Not having access to showers causes a multitude of losses to one's dignity. One of the most noticeable is an increase in body odor. A wet wipe works in a pinch but eventually one needs to shower so much a wet wipe won't help. To compound the problem, without access to bathrooms many Unhoused folks often end up squatting to relieve themselves and in turn spray a bit of pee on their shoes or the sides of their pants. Or, they can't find a bathroom and have an accident or a bit of pee sneaks out. Without a laundry this smell builds up. Body odor can be particularly dehumanizing.



## **DEMEANOR**

Being Unhoused is rage-inducing. It's being treated so poorly that you are constantly on edge. When you have a person that is a mix of rage and fear you get a person who has a generally unapproachable demeanor. Of course being unapproachable only hardens a person creating an even wider gap between those who need touch, affection and compassion and those who could offer it but choose not to.



## **PAIN**

Pain can be seen in one's appearance and that is why it is included here. Sleeping rough and being subjected to repeated violence/lack of medical care can cause a lot of pain. Our bodies hold themselves more rigidly when we are in pain. Often this gives off a vibe to others as if we are tense or ready to fight when in actuality we are just holding a lot of pain.



## **GENERAL STYLE**

In many ways being Unhoused forces a person to give up their personality. Unhoused folks are expected to be compliant, quiet and grateful for scraps of help that don't offer actual aid. When we aren't we are jailed, harassed or ignored. Without access to mirrors, running water or clothing options a person generally has to give up their care for appearance in order to survive. People lose their aesthetic, style and pizzazz , what makes them unique beyond their situational hardship, so that all folks see is 'just another homeless person'. This has a large impact on one's self esteem and confidence moving forward.



## **GOOD LUCK WITH THE EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW!**

**It's pretty hard to then be the one person chosen for a job, out of several candidates, when you have no means of showering, or changing your clothes, or taking care of your body regularly.**



# **THE INDIGENOUS ANARCHIST**