

National Homeless Youth Awareness Month Book and Movie List

This resource:

- is part of the California Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center's [suite of resources in recognition of November as National Homeless Youth Awareness Month \(NHYAM\)](#); and
- suggests books and movies to help increase awareness of youth and family homelessness as part of NHYAM.

Books About Homelessness

Book: *Almost Home: Helping Kids Move from Homelessness to Hope* |

Authors: Kevin Ryan, Tina Kelley

Inside the lives of homeless teens—moving stories of pain and hope from Covenant House. *Almost Home* tells the stories of six remarkable young people from across the United States and Canada as they confront life alone on the streets. Each eventually finds his or her way to Covenant House, the largest charity serving homeless and runaway youth in North America. From the son of a crack addict who fights his own descent into drug addiction to a teen mother reaching for a new life, their stories veer between devastating and inspiring as they each struggle to find a place called home. Includes a foreword by U.S. Senator Cory Booker.



Book: *Sacred Shelter: Thirteen Journeys of Homelessness and Healing* | Editor: Susan Celia Greenfield

In a metropolis like New York, homelessness can blend into the urban landscape. For editor Susan Greenfield, however, New York is the place where a community of resilient, remarkable individuals are yearning for a voice. *Sacred Shelter* follows the lives of thirteen formerly homeless people, all of whom have graduated from the life skills empowerment program, an interfaith life skills program for homeless and formerly homeless individuals in New York. Through frank, honest interviews, these individuals share traumas from their youth, their experience with homelessness, and the healing they have discovered through community and faith.

Book: *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* | Author: Matthew Desmond

In *Evicted*, Princeton sociologist and MacArthur “Genius” Matthew Desmond follows eight families in Milwaukee as they each struggle to keep a roof over their heads. Hailed as “wrenching and revelatory” (*The Nation*), “vivid and unsettling” (*New York Review of Books*), *Evicted* transforms our understanding of poverty and economic exploitation while providing fresh ideas for solving one of twenty-first-century America’s most devastating problems. Its unforgettable scenes of hope and loss remind us of the centrality of home, without which nothing else is possible.

Book: *Dismazed and Driven: My Look at Family Homelessness in America* | Author: Diane D. Nilan

Diane Nilan's behind-the-scenes look at families without homes in America. Follow Diane Nilan into broken-down RVs, leaky tents, shabby motel rooms, and cramped shelters.

After decades of working with homeless families and adults, Diane Nilan hit the road in 2005 to chronicle stories of invisible families and youth experiencing homelessness in non-urban areas across America. For the past fifteen years, crisscrossing the country in her small van, she filmed scores of interviews with parents and kids. Each was invited to share views on homelessness and the importance of school. In this memoir, Nilan introduces us to people she met, helping us to understand their backstories. And we get to meet this tenacious, caring, prophetic woman who won't let us look away from children and families in need of stability and grace.

Book: *Journeys out of Homelessness: The Voices of Lived Experience* | Authors Jamie Rife, Donald W. Burnes

How do individuals move from being homeless to finding safe, stable, and secure places to live? Can we recreate the conditions that helped them most? What policies are needed to support what worked—and to remove common obstacles? Addressing these questions, Jamie Rife and Donald Burnes start from the premise that the most important voices in efforts to end homelessness are the ones most often missing from the discussion: the voices of those with lived experience. In *Journeys Out of Homelessness*, they gather the first-person stories of some who have not only survived, but thrived, going on to find positive home situations. Highlighting what we can learn from these personal stories, Rife and Burnes combine them with in-depth discussions of key themes and issues and point to the shifts necessary in current policy and practice that are essential if we are to respond effectively to a problem that has reached epic proportions.

Movies About Homelessness

Movie: *The Homestretch*

The Homestretch follows three teens experiencing homelessness as they fight to stay in school, graduate, and build a future. Each of these smart, ambitious teenagers—Roque, Kasey and Anthony—will surprise, inspire, and challenge audiences to rethink stereotypes of homelessness as they work to complete their education while facing the trauma of being alone and abandoned at an early age. Through haunting images, intimate scenes, and first-person narratives, these teens take viewers on their journeys of struggle and triumph. As their stories unfold, the film connects viewers deeply with larger issues of poverty, race, juvenile justice, immigration, foster care, and LGBTQ rights.



How to watch: [View the 4-minute movie trailer.](#) | [View the full 1 hour, 30-minute movie.](#)

Movie: *Homeless: The Motel Kids of Orange County*

This 2010 HBO documentary by Alexandra Pelosi follows the lives of multiple families living in motels in one of the richest counties in the country. Pelosi does an excellent job of capturing the roller coaster ride of emotions experienced by children and their families when living in an unstable environment. The children are surprisingly candid when talking to the camera. They eagerly take Pelosi on a tour of the motel—the cramped rooms in which they live, the tubs where they wash their clothes, and the alleys where they play hide and seek.

Note: Many of the children living in the motels featured in this documentary attend the Project Hope School. Project Hope is a K-8 public school that is open year-round and caters to families who are without a permanent residence. Many of the positive aspects highlighted in this documentary about the Project Hope School, such as free meals and customized transportation to and from school, are carried out in all public schools as required under the federal [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#).

How to Watch: Rent the movie on Amazon Prime Video, YouTube, or other outlets.

View other homelessness awareness videos on the California HETAC's [Awareness Videos resources webpage](#).



A California Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center (HETAC) [NHAM Resource](#)
Funded by the California Department of Education
hetac.org