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A Pandemic of Exclusion:
The Revanchist Overtones, Quest for Peircean Firstness,
and Nascent Dialogisms in the Wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic

By

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has upended the lives of people across the world, but perhaps none more dramatically than people experiencing homelessness. Drawing on an assortment of documents, including social media posts, podcasts, and government documents, I argue that the pandemic has exacerbated the socio-spatial exclusion of homeless persons in the contemporary American neoliberal city. This exclusionary process pervades all spaces of the city, including subways, charities, and online spaces. This emergent exclusion is experienced by homeless persons as a deleterious rupture in the everyday routine necessary to cope with the traumas of homelessness, leading those most affected to seek a monadic, trance-like state similar to what Charles Peirce labeled firstness. The exclusionary rupture produced by the pandemic has frequently crystallized into permanent constraints, driven now by the perceived need for revitalization in the wake of the pandemic. However, I argue that the pandemic has also led to a dialogic and collective political movement, one in which housed and unhoused communities ally themselves in the fight for housing justice, a marked contrast from the hegemonic revanchist NIMBYism which has become universal since the 1980s.

April 2020

For over two decades, following the surge of homelessness in New York City that began in the 1980s, Crossroads Community Services dedicated itself to providing both the necessities for survival and a welcoming, inclusive community to penurious and homeless New Yorkers. This small, volunteer-led organization located in the basement of a historic church prided itself on its "family dinners" with shelter guests each night, the restaurant-style sit-down breakfast that fed upwards of 300 guests three times a week, and their annual "Fare Share Friday" event, held the day after Thanksgiving, bringing homeless New Yorkers and privileged donors together for a meal and conversation. Even as murmurs of a strange virus coming to the United States and, eventually, New York began to occur in the dining room, hugs and kisses were still frequently exchanged between guests and volunteers. No place is perfect, but the conviviality and community which existed within those walls was something unique and, by all accounts, appreciated by guest and volunteer alike.

As the threat of COVID-19 grew and new restrictions were imposed to "flatten the curve", Crossroads began to urge caution, but otherwise asserted that "our work is continuing as

usual."[1] On March 17, an "urgent call" was sent out for volunteers as several committed volunteers suspended their work due to health concerns. It was also announced that the sit-in breakfast would be converted to merely passing out prepackaged bags at the door. This approach continued for several more weeks, but, as the pandemic worsened and the organization often found itself understaffed, what felt like the inevitable occurred via email on April 15. On that evening, the executive director of Crossroads issued a statement announcing the suspension of "all programs and services" for the foreseeable future. She praised the work done throughout the pandemic thus far but asserted that "even the most heroic can find themselves fatigued and in need of rest. The Crossroads community has reached that place; our people have spoken, and we have listened." The breakfast program remained on hiatus until the following November and, even at the time of this writing over a year after the pandemic began, is continuing operations only in a limited capacity, sacrificing much of the community and dignity that the organization felt made it unique. The shelter remains closed. Although it is hard to argue with the path Crossroads chose to take throughout the pandemic, it is necessary to note that, while this anecdote is told from the perspective of a volunteer, the guests themselves were certainly "in need of rest" as well; and quite a bit more than just rest, considering the greater than 100% increase in meals served in the week before the closure. Crossroads, in addition to a plethora of other New York organizations that shut down or were limited during this time, previously provided that place of rest and sustenance. What did homeless persons[2] do in their absence?

The New York City subway system is certainly a place of rest for the city's homeless, perhaps providing the most reliable shelter the city can offer. On April 28, that reliability would experience a major rupture as well. On that day, in his daily COVID-19 briefing, New York's governor, Andrew Cuomo, would display the cover of the morning's *New York Daily News*

depicting a homeless subway rider with a large cart carrying his belongings. Cuomo referred to the state of the subways as depicted in that article as "disgusting", although not because of the inequities that engendered the need for thousands to call the subways "home" each night, but rather due to the "disrespect" that these conditions show to "essential workers." Note that it is solely the essential workers who "deserve better" in this scenario and not the people experiencing homelessness with nowhere else to go. Cuomo's policy response to the conditions of the subway demonstrates the lack of concern for homeless New Yorkers: several restrictions were placed on subway ridership that disproportionally affected those who are homeless, including an unprecedented shutdown of the subway system each night. Additionally, while politicians attempted to emphasize hopes for outreach workers to convince homeless persons to take refuge in the shelter system, the fact that the Metropolitan Transit Association's (MTA) main response was to call for more police and hire private security guards shows that funding was directed towards removal, rather than assistance. This trend towards policing over outreach would continue throughout the pandemic: following a subway stabbing spree in February 2021 that left two homeless individuals dead and two others injured, New York City's response was to deploy an extra 644 NYPD officers to patrol the subways.[3]

In many respects, the two coeval narratives presented above are quite different: the former focuses on a private institution, while the latter is a matter of public space and governance; the former also lacks the overt hostility to New York's most vulnerable that is seen in the latter. However, the overlaps are essential for understanding the phenomenon of the exacerbation of socio-spatial exclusion during the COVID-19 pandemic. In both cases, a space providing a service essential for the survival of indigent and homeless New Yorkers was restricted, if not completely taken away. The frame here is also important: despite the lack of

overt antagonism in the former case, both private and public organizations focused on those deemed more "essential", with little overt reflection on those most impacted by these changes. Finally, as the pandemic began to wane in New York and, currently, as vaccinations ramp up and restrictions continue to be eased, it is odd that there is no discussion of lifting the subway restrictions put in place last April, nor has Crossroads put a shelter resumption plan in place as of this writing. As life in New York City rapidly races toward normalcy, there is a sense that these spatial exclusions are crystallizing into a condition of permanence. It is this process of exclusion – its inception, the lived experience it provokes, the political activism it makes possible, and its afterlife – that is the focus of this thesis.

Understanding Homelessness During a Pandemic in the Revanchist/Neoliberal City

Various forms of urban exclusion and marginalization are, of course, nothing particularly new and constitute a modern history of homelessness that accompanied the neoliberal turn in the political economy of the United States that began in the mid-1970s and continues to this day (see, among others, Barak 1991; Davis 2006; Lyon-Callo 2008). In fact, New York City provided an early experimental ground to test this political-economic restructuring following the city's declaration of bankruptcy and subsequent bailout in 1975, an event that "amounted to a coup by the financial institutions against the democratically elected government" (Harvey 2007: 45). The deleterious results for the city's marginalized population speak for themselves. In the early 1970s, homelessness in New York was largely confined to the Bowery, to the point where the city's lone shelter removed its beds and relied solely on flophouses and gospel rescue missions to provide emergency shelter (Hopper 2003: 45). Today, in 2021, a sprawling shelter-industrial complex has emerged that spans all five boroughs and serves as a refuge for 55,000 people each night (Coalition for the Homeless 2021).[4]

The effects of the neoliberal turn, however, should not be interpreted as being limited to a proliferation of homeless persons and the shelters that house them. Rather, it has fundamentally altered urban policy and resulted in an exclusionary rupture in the urban spatial fabric. This trend in urban policy was labeled "revanchist urbanism", derived from the French word for "revenge", by Neil Smith in the 1990s and has attracted a significant amount of scholarly attention. Smith writes that "the emerging revanchist urbanism of the *fin de millenaire* city, especially in the United States, embodies a revengeful and reactionary viciousness against various populations accused of "stealing" the city from the white upper classes. Gentrification, far from an aberration of the 1980s, is increasingly reemerging as part of this revanchism, an effort to retake the city" (1996: xix). The main feature of revanchist urbanism is the "annihilation of public space" through legislation such as bans on sleeping in public space and "aggressive panhandling" (Mitchell 1997). This has resulted in what can be considered a "criminalization of the homeless" (Amster 2003) and has also been labeled a form of "class cleansing" (Gowan 2010: Chapter 7). More recent work on revanchist urbanism has highlighted the ways in which putatively compassionate institutions are implicated in this class cleansing of urban space (Hennigan & Speer 2019; Clarke & Parsell 2020). Writing specifically on the United States, Hennigan and Speer write that "although both care and punishment have different means and represent separate ideologies, the ends can sometimes be the same: to spatially manage poor and homeless populations to shore-up capital projects in revitalising urban spaces" (2019: 917-918). Despite the authentic desire to help, the expansive shelter systems of American cities often end up reinforcing this "taking back" of the city from the putative unruly and undeserving poor.

In this thesis, I argue that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an exclusionary restructuring of urban space which has disproportionally impacted marginalized groups,

especially the homeless population.[5] Prior exclusionary practices have been exacerbated while former places of refuge have been sealed off. In some respects, what I elucidate below is a fairly standard account of urban spatial exclusion of the marginalized in the interest of luring capital and the wealth to the city. However, there are few notable differences between this account and prior documentations of revanchist urbanism. First, these changes are occurring during the most significant public health crisis of the last century. Because of this, many of the spatial transformations discussed have at least ostensibly been in the interest of the public health of all residents of the city, as opposed to being in the interest of reviving the city's economy (although several fulfill both goals simultaneously). This adds a sense of scientific legitimacy to many of these decisions. Relatedly, because of the nature of the crisis, many of these restrictions, rather than promoting unregulated free markets for the wealthy and reserving authoritarianism for undesirable poor, have had significant impacts on the everyday lives of all New Yorkers. This has led American conservatives to decry the government response as an unwarranted intervention into everyday life and violation of freedoms.

Taking these two considerations into account, I intend to contribute to the literature on neoliberal and revanchist urbanism in two ways. First, this study will help elucidate the social nature of public health (Foucault 2003) and the problems of broad, technocratic approaches to governance which fail to take into account social inequities. It may be in the public interest to stay at home, but how does one respond to this demand when one has no home? Second, this study can begin to investigate whether seemingly interventionist and anti-free market regulations can still have the effect of excluding the poor at the expense of the wealthy as seen throughout more standard forms of neoliberal urbanism. This will only become clear after the pandemic and

after seeing what a "return to normalcy" looks like, but, a year in, we can start to see the direction in which New York, and the United States more broadly, is heading.

The revanchist tendencies of urban governance have generally been politically and legislatively successful through the everyday, racially-charged fearmongering about crime, disorder, and blight.[6] However, as I argue is the case with the COVID-19 pandemic, there is precedent for crisis creating a kind of state of exception in which neoliberalization can be facilitated with reduced friction. While much attention has been paid to this phenomenon as it relates to economic debt crises or wars and military coups (Harvey 2007: 7-8, 98-115; Klein 2007), perhaps the most comparable situation in terms of natural disaster may be the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Gotham argues that New Orleans became a laboratory for "a variety of neoliberal redevelopment policies and tax subsidies directed to stimulating private investment" (2008: 1055). As is also the case with non-crisis neoliberalization, this post-Katrina process involved exclusionary practice, both in the immediate aftermath of the hurricane, with the National Guard drawing allusions to the war in Iraq in their goal to "take back the city from looters", as well as the later rebuilding, which resulted in the poor African American community of the city facing "a concentrated campaign to disperse them to other regions, permanently removing them from New Orleans" (Lipsitz 2008: 464). A pandemic, like a hurricane, is perhaps best thought of as a facilitator of structural change in addition to simple destruction or illness.

Yet, a structural rupture such as a pandemic cannot be understood solely as top-down constraint passively received by the city's most marginalized. Rather, it is an intrinsically felt and embodied experience, one which profoundly alters one's manner of being-in-the-world and, therefore, cannot be ignored. To address these issues of the lived experience of homelessness during a pandemic, I draw on the burgeoning literature on urban phenomenology within

anthropology and sociology (see Kidder 2009; Low 2015). However, while ethnophenomenology is, to a large extent, built under the assumption that lived experience is dependent on variable cultural structures, therefore complicating often taken-for-granted notions of emotions and the senses, many ethnographies that take this approach tend to attribute this variation to somewhat static, overarching cultural practices (Desjarlais 2003). Alternatively, when viewing cultural environments as being more dynamic and diversified, ethnographies from this perspective tend to treat political-economic factors as something in the background to be briefly reflected upon only in conclusion (Halliburton 2009). The few works that take this approach vis-à-vis homelessness (Desjarlais 1997; Rennels & Purnell 2017) tend to feature the same lacuna, treating political-economic dynamism as a background to the foregrounded immediate spatial environment. While all these works are essential for laying the groundwork of ethnophenomenological inquiry, the importance of considering neoliberal political economy in lived experience is growing increasingly pertinent, and, for reasons described above, is essential for this study. There are several ethnographies which situate an anthropology of the emotions (Parla 2019) and the senses (Farquhar 2002) in a political-economic context, but neither focus heavily on the role of the production of space or the specific spatial formation of the city in their analysis (Lefebvre 1991). Because of this, the two strongest models for my work, are Bourgois and Schonberg's (2009) fusion of Marxism and post-structuralism in their analysis of homeless subjectivities and O'Neill's (2017) work on the neoliberal production of "spaces of boredom" for homeless persons. Taken together, this body of literature provides a strong basis for understanding the impacts of a structural and spatial rupture on lived urban experience.

Finally, while the dislocations and displacements of a spatial rupture can be interpreted as constraining, I argue that this nascent structural constraint is never all-determining and can also

be viewed as an emergence of new structural conditions of possibility. As Giddens argues in his theory of structuration, "[a]ll types of constraint […] are also types of opportunity, media for the enablement of action" (1984: 117). The restrictions put in place to address the pandemic have constrained the ability of homeless persons to act and fulfill their basic needs, but according to Giddens's theory, these structural shifts also have engendered new forms of agency. Much recent work in anthropology has taken a similar interest in the ways in which agency is shaped by political economic structures. Although agency has previously been theorized primarily as the ability to resist social structures, new research has presented a much more multifarious view of the concept (Gershon 2011; Chen 2013; Shachar & Hustnix 2019). Specifically, vis-a-vis homelessness, Lyon-Callo (2008) argues that a neoliberal orientation to social services promotes an agency that fits a normative view of how a "responsible" and "self-governing" person should behave (i.e. getting a job, taking personal responsibility, etc.) as opposed to promoting activism that could actively change the structures that allowed such widespread homelessness in the first place. Parsell and Clarke (2019) come to a similar conclusion, although they argue that this "going along with the system" approach is no less agentic than more subversive forms of agency, complicating the notion that this response to neoliberal forms of governmentality is the result of false consciousness. While these works expand agency to a binary view, there is little reason to believe that agency is confined to just those two opposing tendencies. In this thesis, I build upon the work of the authors mentioned above and further investigate the many ways in which agency is dialectically both determined by and determinative of broader social structures.

In sum, I treat the concept of a pandemic as not merely the global spread of harmful microbes, but as an event, one that must be declared by authoritative governing bodies, that produces profound structural changes that exist both in the moment of crisis and expand

outwards to redefine a previously taken-for-granted futurity. The structural rupture that a pandemic engenders introduces new forms of disproportionate constraint in an abstract sense, in terms of what one can and cannot do. Yet it is also a felt experience, one that becomes embodied as those who are directly impacted – in the case of a pandemic, the whole world – struggles for survival in unequal ways. In addition, this shared embodiment, in a manner that is contested and complex, also enables, creating the structural conditions of possibility for new, yet precarious, forms of both resistance and collectivity to emerge. In this sense, COVID-19 as a pandemic, similarly to what has been argued vis-à-vis tuberculosis (Packard 1989), can only be understood as a "social disease", one which both reproduces itself as result of preexisting political-economic inequities and reshapes those inequities. I will address these three components of a pandemic – exclusionary structural rupture, phenomenology, and dialogic collective action – one-by-one, while remaining cognizant of the ways in which they interpenetrate each other, in the remaining sections of this thesis.

In this thesis, I take a bricolage approach to studying the structural transformations that have impacted homeless individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic. I had initially planned to conduct in-depth interviews with those most affected, yet issues of building necessary trust with potential interlocutors given the restrictions on in-person research, issues of access to the stable internet necessary for remote interviews to occur, and the exceptionally high rate of outright "refusal" (Simpson 2007) to engage in research forced me to change course. Instead, I primarily focused on the large number of stories and information that people experiencing homelessness were voicing on their own terms. As such, I draw from social media forums (of which Reddit's r/homeless subreddit proved most useful), blogs, diaries, news articles, events and interviews led by homeless persons, podcasts, lawsuits filed by homeless activists, a short survey I conducted

through Reddit, and a handful of informal conversations which shelter administrators and activists. While in some respects lacking the depth of semi-structured interviews, this methodology allowed me to encounter a much greater number of people and to more accurately assess the veracity of people's stories than with relying on interviews alone.[7] All identities, except for public figures, have been anonymized through pseudonyms. Geographically, this thesis will predominantly concentrate on New York City, although I also use information from the remainder of the United States when there is no reason to believe that the particular experience/rule/interaction is delimited by that specific context.

The Revanchist Overtones of the Response to COVID-19: Public, Digital, and Institutional Spaces

The Annihilation of Public Spaces of Refuge

"Libraries will get you through times of no money more than money will get you through times of no libraries." This quote, originally coined by Anne Herbert, was stated in a Reddit comment by u/brodymulligan on March 27, 2020, in response to the closure of libraries across the United States. Indeed, perhaps the first loss of public space for homeless persons, even before the subway closure, during the COVID-19 pandemic was the closure of public libraries. Libraries occupy an essential place in the everyday lives of many homeless persons. As respondents to this Reddit thread indicated, although libraries provide books that allow one to pass the time, they are "so much more than just books." Commenters mentioned that libraries provide easy access to toilets. They also provide access to computers, printers, outlets to charge one's phone, and the internet, with library staff available to help fill out essential documents such as job applications. And, if nothing else, libraries provide a safe and warm refuge in which a person can spend "from opening til close everyday." It is a "place to go", for a group that is defined by "being deprived of claim to place" (Gowan 2010: 80). As such, it should probably not

come as a surprise that a significant chunk of posts, occurring almost daily, on the r/homeless subreddit beginning in mid-March involved a combination of mourning, fear, and anger relating to the closure of libraries. These posts included one Reddit user posting an image of an announcement of a library closure with the caption of "Damn it man!" and another calling the practice a "fucking outrage" while advocating for governments to allow homeless persons to have hotel rooms as compensation. And, while the despair of these closures has transformed into resignation as the months have passed, until May 2021, all three public library systems in New York City only offered to-go service, with the usage of bathrooms, computers, seating, and other amenities prohibited and, as of this writing, continue to operate only on a very limited basis.[8] Unfortunately, the contemporary library is, and has been for the last year, "just books." With the use of such an essential and multifunctional space restricted, posters on the subreddit turned their attention to the street, speculating on the most bearable places to weather the storm.

The street, however, lacks the accommodating nature and safety of the library system. Contrary to the predictions of one Reddit user on March 14, 2020, who argued that "nobody will bother you [if you make an encampment under an overpass], even the cops are going to be busy elsewhere now that coronascare is here" and, contrary to the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) guidance to "allow people who are living unsheltered or in encampments to remain where they are" (CDC 2021), the revanchist annihilation of public space on the streets has continued unabated and has even intensified in some cases. Across the country, many businesses implemented anti-homeless practices, such as playing loud music at night or shining bright floodlights to discourage homeless persons from using the surrounding public space to sleep.[9] Additionally, in direct violation of the CDC guidelines, not only did sweeps of homeless encampments continue, they actually were twice as frequent in New York City during 2020 as in

2019.[10] From March 1 to December 12 of 2020, the city performed 1077 sweeps, or just shy of four per day, as opposed to 543 sweeps during the same date range in 2019. In cases where encampments were not entirely cleared, various forms of COVID-specific coercion were deployed by the state. Outreach workers are typically discouraged from providing assistance to homeless persons who choose to stay on the street; during the pandemic, this included intentionally withholding such safety essentials as hand sanitizer and PPE. Elsewhere, such as Echo Park Lake in Los Angeles, the city shut off water and electricity to the part of the park where a large encampment had formed (see below), effectively preventing residents from ensuring good hygiene and forcing them to rely on buckets of water from neighboring homes.

Perhaps the one truly new method by which public street space has been taken away and given to the private sector has been the proliferation of permanent outdoor dining throughout New York and other cities. As New York City began its reopening following the spring peak of the pandemic, it launched the Open Restaurants program which allowed restaurant owners to easily acquire permits to open outdoor dining, a necessity for a restaurant to pay its rent with indoor dining still closed at the time. Over 10,000 restaurants in the city participated and the results were so overwhelmingly popular that the program was made permanent in September 2020.[11] The presence of outdoor dining became inescapable during the summer, even in areas of the outer boroughs where prior outdoor dining was nonexistent. As temperatures became colder and indoor dining was again suspended due to the reemergent fall/winter COVID wave, large tents, as well as more formal structures, came to dominate the sidewalks of New York City. The expansion of outdoor dining is what appears to be a permanent transfer of public space into private control, thus excluding the one place that homeless persons could exist in some degree of peace. But, as the boundaries of what constitutes the space of the restaurant are blurred due to the

lack of opaque walls, even when not directly occupying the space taken by restaurants, conflict still emerges which threaten to further exclude "undesirables." For example, in New York, restaurant owners have frequently called police on homeless persons deemed disruptive to the restaurant's business and even petitioned the city to close the homeless shelters in the neighborhood.[12] In what is perhaps an extreme example, Gundersson (2020), writing about a public plaza in San Francisco, notes a similarly hostile reaction to homeless persons and encampments by restaurant owners, leading to attempts to privatize the entire plaza and increase security in order to keep the "unwanted crowds" from entering. Outdoor dining, while necessary for keeping restaurants in business and adding a certain exuberance to city streets, can also result in permanent exclusionary spatial transformations.

Finally, in what was perhaps the most overtly hostile constraint placed on homeless persons during the pandemic, I turn briefly to examine the restrictions placed on subway usage. As noted above, these restrictions were enacted in direct response to the noticeable presence of homeless persons on the subways; indeed, the rules are clearly a direct assault on those who use the subways as a space of refuge. In addition to the nightly closure of the subway system, something unprecedented in the century-long history of the system, the following three rules were also instituted: a ban on shopping carts in the subway; a ban on people spending more than one hour in a subway station; and a ban on people staying in the station after a train is taken out of service (Supreme Court of the State of NY 2021: 2). These rules, put into place using Andrew Cuomo's emergency powers in April and made permanent in September,[13] are deemed "arbitrary and capricious" by the plaintiffs of a recent lawsuit by homeless activists, as they disproportionately impact homeless New Yorkers, were presented with no scientific evidence demonstrating necessity, and are permanent restrictions in response to a temporary event. Here it

is also relevant to note that the MTA and city government have long been concerned with the presence of homeless persons on the subway and had previously proposed the expansion of its police force in response to the growth of subway homelessness. While there is little direct evidence indicating that these rules were "in the works" prior to the eruption of COVID, the pandemic served as a golden opportunity to implement revanchist policies that could "take back" the subway system from the poor and homeless. These rules have transformed the subway from refuge to a hostile and constantly policed space. The lawsuit notes that Barry Simon, the main plaintiff, has nowhere else to store his belongings other than his cart and, as a person with a disability, often requires over an hour of rest in the subway station prior to continuing on his way, something for which he has been threatened with arrest by police officers (7). In an event at CUNY's School of Law, Simon noted that these rules are often applied arbitrarily at the discretion of officers; for example, he had never seen an officer measure the length of a cart to see if it violated the new rules. Additionally, there are reports that benches have been removed from subway stations to prevent homeless persons from sleeping and resting on them.[14] These practices are not just deleterious and exclusionary for homeless persons who have few other places to turn, but also have negative impacts on the elderly and people with disabilities.

Struggles and Fears in Institutional Spaces

With many of the common public spaces used for shelter and warmth effectively "annihilated" (Mitchell 1997) during the pandemic, perhaps the only place to turn are towards the various institutions in place to aid indigent populations, specifically shelters and governmental social services. However, these options, less than ideal during the best of times, have been made even more suboptimal over the past year. To begin, the range of services available to homeless persons was drastically reduced due to pandemic-related closures, as

described above with the closure of Crossroads and other charities, as well as the fallout from the closure of libraries. In addition to this, respondents to my Reddit survey noted that various free dinners had stopped, clothes banks had closed, and that shutdowns of public transit had limited the ability of homeless persons to get to the places that remained open. People also noted that access to medical and dental care was limited, in some cases only available to those who had COVID. This was made dramatically and viscerally clear in a series of Reddit postings of a homeless woman having to pull out her own teeth with pliers after being unable to afford the $250 necessary to get them pulled by a licensed dentist.

Frequently on posts discussing shelter conditions, people noted limitations on the amount of space in shelters, both in terms of people being admitted and with respect to the ability to social distance. In fact, among Reddit users, it was a common occurrence to declare a preference for staying out on the street as opposed to staying in shelters specifically because of the difficulties of social distancing. Roberto, a formerly-homeless activist who participated in one of a series of online conversations featuring homeless persons entitled “Home Is A Human Right”, discussed the conditions at his most recent shelter, which he likened to a prison. During the pandemic, beds were spaced just three feet apart and over one hundred residents were forced to share just two communal bathrooms, an “inhumane” situation that made social distancing impossible. Indeed, fears about the risk of the virus in shelters were proven founded as advocates have shown that the age-adjusted mortality rate for sheltered New Yorkers was 78% higher than that of the general population (#Homeless Can’t Stay Home 2021). This number highlights just how dangerous the overcrowded shelter system became during the pandemic and makes clear why so many homeless New Yorkers decided to avoid it at all costs. In response to these deplorable conditions, activists pushed the city to allow homeless persons to reside in the

multitude of vacant hotel rooms for the duration of the pandemic. The city did eventually capitulate to these demands, but only partially. The only people able to qualify for a hotel room are those over the age of 70 and/or who have a preexisting condition placing them at higher risk of severe disease (Department of Homeless Services 2021). Additionally, many of the hotel rooms are double, as opposed to single rooms, mitigating the risk of disease, but not as much as could be done by guaranteeing single rooms for all. As already seen in the conversation on outdoor dining, when homeless persons were given access to hotel rooms, their presence often sparked significant backlash by local residents. The most well-known example during this period was the battle over the Lucerne Hotel on the Upper West Side (see below), which featured a wave of a dozen protests, a newly-formed neighborhood group hiring a Giuliani-linked lawyer to file a lawsuit calling for the eviction of the hotel residents, and even the sending of private investigators by the group to spy on Lucerne residents-turned-activists.[15]

The duration of stays of homeless persons in shelters have been drastically lengthened as well. According to the Coalition for the Homeless (2021), although the number of homeless families in New York City shelters has dropped by 15% during the pandemic, the average length of stay for a family in a shelter has jumped by 18% from 440 days to a record 520 days. This jump perhaps indicates a trend in which fewer new families are seeking shelter (possibly as a benefit of the eviction moratorium in place), but that those who are already caught up in the shelter system are facing extraordinary difficulties in getting out. I recorded a similar narrative in an informal interview with a Salvation Army shelter administrator. She noted that the biggest issue during the pandemic had been quickly getting people welfare services, such as social security benefits. Various offices have been closed and applications for benefits that would allow someone to move out of the shelter which would normally take 7-10 days were now taking

upwards of six weeks. Additionally, she noted that businesses being closed impacted the ability of people in the shelter to find the employment necessary to maintain stable housing. The result is an increased warehousing effect (Parsell & Clarke 2020: 1628), in which people remain trapped in the shelter system, unable to access housing for longer periods of time than they would have pre-pandemic.

Many of these problems occur in spite of governmental attempts to help those in need. For example, at the time that I conducted my survey, the United States Congress had passed two sizeable stimulus bills designed to directly aid those in need. However, due to such issues as homeless persons not having a stable address (and shelters not allowing clients to use their address), potentially not filing taxes in previous years, and not qualifying for unemployment for an assortment of reasons, including already having a job, homeless individuals generally struggled to receive stimulus funding. In my small survey, completed before the passage of the most recent stimulus bill in March 2021, just 2 out of the 5 respondents received a $1200 check from the first bill, 1 out of 5 received a $600 check from the second bill, and no respondents had received the increased unemployment benefits that have been in place since the first bill.[16] The Salvation Army shelter administrator told me that she estimated that clients at her shelter had more success accessing these resources, but that she also thought that unemployment benefits were more difficult to access and remarked that one woman lost her benefits due to identity theft. Additionally, many aspects of the bills themselves make it difficult for homeless individuals to access benefits. For example, one Reddit poster from North Carolina noted that the rent relief program as part of the March 2021 American Rescue Plan requires that one already have a legally binding lease during the assistance period and that access to health care subsidies is dependent upon qualifying for unemployment, which, as discussed above, many homeless

persons (including the original poster) struggle to acquire. Despite good intentions, the stimulus bills passed thus far have lacked the ability to significantly help those who need it the most. Additional federal support for those who are currently homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, such as the CDC guidance to leave homeless encampments alone or the CDC eviction moratorium, have also been ignored, as seen above, or subject to legal battle.[17]

Community, Digital Spaces, and Access to Education

Since the beginning of the pandemic, homeless persons have noticed differences in interactions, both with fellow homeless persons and with the housed population. Part of this is due to a lack of community and ability for socialization that has occurred since soup kitchens have converted to providing food at the door. The soup kitchen is an important space for bringing people together, homeless and housed, to engage in conversation and thus helping to fulfill a psychological need for sociality (Rennels & Purnell 2017: 505; see also the ethnographic vignette that opened the paper) as well as serving as sites of outreach where service workers can offer assistance (Rowe 1999: 64-70). Passing out bags of food at the door while indigent persons wait in socially distanced lines eliminates many of the physical and mental benefits derived from soup kitchen interactions. Reddit users noted this difference, with one respondent to my survey commenting on the reduction of volunteers and limited "interaction/fellowship" at a local thermal shelter when compared to years past. There have also been frequent comments on changes in the way local passersby on the street regard homeless persons, with one respondent to my survey commenting that, although he always felt the stigma attached to being homeless, since the pandemic started, he has been treated as a "walking germ bomb." Others on Reddit made note of housed people being "scared to approach you" and displaying a "spike in clannish self-preservation" as compared to before the pandemic.

With these transformations, it is interesting to speculate on whether digital spaces such as Reddit have helped to fulfill the role of community and interaction for people experiencing homelessness. Most of the posts on this subreddit directly ask for advice, but there are a significant number of posts sharing stories from one's day, sharing life histories, or just ranting about the structural conditions that have produced such misery. Several times each day, users would post pictures of painful or triumphant moments from their days, allowing the rest of the community to visually enter into a fragment of their lifeworlds. For example, the woman who pulled out her own tooth did not simply tell Reddit about the experience, but also posted a picture of the rotten tooth, viscerally displaying to the community the suffering produced by social neglect. It is unclear whether this latter genre of posts have increased throughout the pandemic, necessitating further study. Even so, if this online space does allow for some level of community formation, as by all indications it does, this community is incredibly precarious, especially during the pandemic. Many homeless persons lack access to smartphones and, with the closure of libraries, computers. And, if they do have access to phones, most locations that offer wi-fi are closed to the public.

The precarity of access to online spaces is most apparent with the issue of access to education for homeless children, an issue centered in a recent lawsuit (Southern District of New York 2020). As the lawsuit indicates, although school during the pandemic requires a reliable connection to the internet, many shelters lack the wi-fi connection necessary to allow school attendance (2). City officials have stated that wi-fi installation will be complete at most shelters by the summer of 2021, yet this results in homeless children losing well over a year of schooling, "an education delayed [which] is an education denied" (3). E.G., the primary plaintiff in the case, has two school-age children, who have attended remotely out of concern for the virus (4). E.G.'s

daughters have been using tablets provided by the Department of Education, but these tablets frequently break down and, when working, E.G. must set up a mobile hotspot using her cell phone, which only allows one child to attend class at a time (10-11). When the daughters were not able to attend due to these restrictions or because E.G. ran out of her data allocation, the school threatened to open up a child protective case against her (11). As this case shows, beyond the annihilation of public space and the limitations and dangers of private spaces, such as shelters, brought forth by the pandemic, the precarity of access to digital spaces has perhaps the most powerful impact, as its effect is intergenerational. Loss of over one year of school is likely to make an escape from poverty, already a fraught path, all the more difficult for these children.

Phenomenology of a Structural Rupture: The Quest for Peircean Firstness

Although the response to the pandemic can be framed solely in terms of abstract and "objective" structural constraint, of what one can or cannot do, this framing skirts issues of subjectivity and lived experience. How has this spatial exclusion been experienced by those most affected? How has it oriented their day-to-day lives? In order to address the issue of phenomenological experience as the pandemic progressed, I draw on Desjarlais's (1997: 128-137) invocation of Peirce's three ontological categories as applied to everyday life in homeless shelters. In his writings, Peirce (1974) was predominantly concerned with creating a theory of mathematical logic, yet this abstract logic is rooted in three "'primal ontological categories' – firstness, secondness, and thirdness – that […] spawn the world and its structures of interaction and intelligibility" (Desjarlais 1997: 129). Although I am hesitant to accept such expansive claims of Peirce's categories spawning the subjective world, I do believe that they can serve as useful analytic tools that resonate strongly with people's experience during the pandemic. The "first" is an originary category that is monadic, undifferentiated, and exists outside of time.

Desjarlais considers it to be something of a trance-like state which can be achieved through substance use, but also through sleep, finding a private space to just be, or fixating on one object for a lengthy period of time (134-135). A "second" is anything which interferes with the first, that interrupts its monadic being. Secondness is typically unpleasant and, in contemporary urban life, can take the form of the police, thieves, or cold weather. Finally, thirdness is that which mediates the first and the second, bringing them into a harmonious relationship which makes the second tolerable. Desjarlais cites shelter rules as an attempt to create a thirdness (181-183), but this category can also apply to routine, purpose, or reason.

According to Peirce, these categories rarely exist in their "pure" states and, instead, one state may have qualities of another (Desjarlais 1997: 129). For example, a firstness of thirdness is a categorical combination which is quite important for people experiencing homelessness. I understand it best as finding a routine that can be pursued, uninterrupted, each day such that a smooth, almost unnoticeable, flow of time can be achieved. This concept is quite similar to the "ontological security" that Giddens (1984) argues emerges from the process of "routinization" of everyday life. While "firstness of thirdness" is a relatively awkward term, it does show how routine and predictability can have monadic, calming, and restorative qualities. And, indeed, routine and purposefulness does seem to have a capacity to maintain sanity among people experiencing homelessness. Take, for example, the following Reddit comment in response to a post about coping mechanisms to deal with homelessness:

> Have a plan. It might seem silly or ridiculous, but make a plan and stick to it..even if that plan is as simple as sitting in a park for an hour, or looking for change or walking across town to find food. This will occupy your time and mind and it will give you stability and reduce that anxiety a little.

A "plan", whether deemed productive or not is a third which can mediate the secondness of the street but can also be a method of passing the time and achieving a state of calm. The importance

of routine in establishing a "firstness of thirdness" as a means of coping with homelessness has been noted by anthropologists, including Desjarlais (1997: 133-134) and O'Neill (2017: 87-93).

A structural rupture, such as a pandemic and its resulting lockdown, almost by definition, disrupts any ability to craft or maintain routine. It constitutes an overwhelming dominance of secondness in almost all aspects of lived experience, from the engendering of physical pain to the failing of mental health to the inability to achieve the basic resources necessary for survival. This dominance of secondness was particularly pronounced for those most vulnerable in the pandemic: people experiencing homelessness who, contradictory to the order to "stay at home", had no safe space to take refuge and, in fact, were often cast out into the streets each day by shelters. Some homeless persons, such as one homeless veteran who gave his story to #HomelessCan'tStayHome, experienced this secondness as an inability to escape into the firstness of sleep: "They say the lockdown will continue into June. I don't know what to do. I'm worried and scared. I'm so stressed out I can't sleep… I don't know how I'm going to survive the next week." Yet the most predominant manner in which the intense secondness of the lockdown manifested itself was through the desperate wandering around the city in search of bathrooms, shelter, or even just a place to sit. To illustrate this, I turn to an illuminating diary of the early days of the lockdown (referred to as the #HomelessLockout by the author), which heavily focuses on his experience walking around the pandemic city, published by a blogger who goes simply by Homeless New Yorker (HNY).[18]

The concept of "walking in the city" has received much theoretical attention over the past century, perhaps most famously by Simmel (1995 [1903]) and de Certeau (1984). These two accounts of walking in the city are antipodal in many ways, but neither truly capture the wandering produced by the rupture of the pandemic. Simmel (1995 [1903]) argues that the

constant anonymous motion of the city leads the flaneur to adopt a mentality of detached calculating intellectualism, a sea of ambiguity in which somehow the "individual" is capable of forming. De Certeau (1984), on the other hand, sees the walker as immanently grounded, connected to the spaces they inhabit. Walking through the city for de Certeau, like writing, is a generative process that creates new representational spaces, "lived spaces", that defy the representations of space of the urban planners (see also Lefebvre 1991). Relying on urban space, and especially public spaces for mere survival, those experiencing homelessness do not have the privilege of detached intellectual reflection, of taking a "god's eye view" of the city; rather, they are users of the city, an orientation which brings them much closer to de Certeau's walker. Yet, when one reads HNY's account of wandering through the city, one does not get the sense of generativity but rather that of being abandoned and left to die by those in power, walking as erasure rather than as creativity.

HNY begins his diary on March 14, 2020, the day the libraries first closed, echoing many of the Reddit posts discussed earlier. Library closures represent the first blow to his everyday routine, but his sense of ontological security is still very much intact, as after all he "could still hang out at the McDonald's, Starbucks, or Dunkin' Donuts, each of which provides free WiFi, seating, and table space, so what's the problem, right?" (3/14/20). Over the coming days, more and more locations shutter their doors and "the Mission" – the shelter where HNY is staying – mandates that all residents leave the premises for the entire day, seven days a week. Normally just required to vacate for eight hours a day on weekdays, with breakfast being served to go, this new rule sends residents out to wander the streets at a time when government officials are requiring everyone to stay home. HNY attempted to email the shelter director immediately following the announcement of a lockdown and received only a reply that they are "looking into

it" (3/16/20), never to hear back from him with any substantive plan to provide residents with a safe space to spend their days. Cast out into streets at the height of the pandemic, HNY's close friend, Sony, quickly falls ill, although neither knew what the illness was. This near-immediate bout of illness leaves HNY feeling fatalistic, fearing that preventable death was inevitable: "It wasn't hard to predict that daily #HomelessLockout, standing outside for eight hours a day, seven days a week, now extended to ten hours on a slim breakfast, would make some of us sick with cold, flu, and the coronavirus. If any of us were to get seriously sick and die, Sony, frail, asthmatic, and never eating enough, would be among the first to go" (3/30/21).

The following days were spent wandering among previously accessible places in the city, all of which now closed or significantly restricted. A neighborhood bank offers HNY an outlet and floor to sit on one day, only to expel him when he tries to find respite the following day. Unable to find a bathroom, he defecates on himself before making it to a porta-potty in Bryant Park (3/21/20). All the while, it is a particularly cold stretch in New York. Finally, he finds an open Barnes & Noble, which could provide some warmth, although the café and bathrooms are both closed. "After about two hours, my feet hurt more than enough; I had been standing or walking ever since I left the benches behind City Hall. There's nowhere to sit down; I sit on the floor. Almost immediately, a young store assistant carrying a stack of books notices me and tells me if I don't stand up, she'll call security. I stand up and, after another hour, walk out" (3/18/20). Faced with aching feet, days of wandering the city with nowhere else to go, and the destruction of anything resembling dignity, a prior firstness of thirdness has been ruptured and he must look elsewhere to escape the domination of secondness.

While the spatial exclusion and lack of ability even to take a seat greatly contributes to this feeling of secondness, there are two other factors that contribute to the dominance of the

second. First, while it might be reasonable to assume that an emptied-out city may be experienced as a more peaceful city, a city in which one has *more* freedom, this possibility quickly evaporates when one examines who is left in the emptied-out city. The city is abandoned by those who have the most capability and/or willingness to help: HNY goes to the local city councilwoman's office only to find that she is out of the office for at least two weeks. Those who are left in the public spaces of New York are those who have nowhere else to go, such as homeless persons, and security forces, those conscripted to protect space and property in the interim. Indeed, wherever he goes, HNY is confronted either by security guards, such as during his trip to the closed law library (3/17/20), or by the threat of security being called on him, such as the previously mentioned episode at the Barnes & Noble. The people remaining in the city represent a fairly pure second – the possibility of violent expulsion from a given space – as opposed to someone who could provide assistance.

The second factor that contributes to this feeling of secondness is what O'Neill (2017) calls the "space-time expansion" that occurred due to the lockdown. In response to Harvey's (1991) argument that globalization and the increasing prevalence of telecommunication technologies in everyday life have led to a "space-time compression", O'Neill (2017) argues that those who have been excluded from the global economy actually experienced an expansion in space and time. For example, O'Neill writes of how people experiencing homelessness in Romania are pushed to the outskirts of the city, requiring them to travel long distances by unreliable public transportation to get to the city center, where one could earn some money and experience consumerist culture. Similarly, I would argue that the pandemic has exacerbated this compression-expansion divide. For those integrated into the global economy, the "location" of the office or the classroom often compresses spaces from across the nation or even the world into

one simultaneous virtual space, a space-time compression as part of everyday life to an extent previously unseen. For those experiencing homelessness, however, one has to travel greater distances to meet the basic needs of survival. Despite being in the heart of the quintessential global city, during the pandemic, HNY must take a "long walk" (3/16/20) just to reach a place to sit down and travel all the way to Bryant Park to use a bathroom. The cutting of public transit service during the pandemic only exacerbates the length of time it takes to move from one place to another. However, unlike O'Neill's argument that such an expansion leads to "boredom", because the difficulties of moving through space prevent homeless persons from meeting their basic needs, this space-time expansion is experienced as profound discomfort, as secondness.

Much as was the case with Desjarlais's interlocutors (1997: 128-137), the rupture of thirdness and dominance of secondness led homeless persons to seek out a state of pure firstness to allow the body to cope and calm itself. Many of these methods of achieving a state of firstness can fit into Bourgois & Schonberg's concept of "lumpen abuse", a *habitus* generated by "structurally imposed everyday suffering" that engenders "violent and destructive subjectivities" (2009: 19). Their ethnography predominantly concerns lumpen abuse manifesting itself in substance use and, indeed, this did appear to be a common response to the stress of the pandemic. The Reddit comment on coping mechanisms, for example, mentioned as a last resort "smoking a joint or having a beer" to relax for a few hours, as long as you "don't make a habit of it." Another Reddit user mentioned getting on Medicaid, less in order to access medical care than to "at least […] have some pain medication to numb the pain and also numb this homeless life temporarily." Beyond substance use, the quest for firstness could also manifest itself in other forms of self-destructive behaviors. Most dramatic is the case of the woman previously

mentioned who, suffering from severe tooth pain but unable to receive medical care due to all the free dental clinics closed due to COVID, ended up yanking out her own tooth to escape the pain.

Not all attempts at firstness, however, were necessarily self-destructive. Indeed, some people suggested going to church and praying, whether or not one was religious, to achieve some peace of mind. HNY finally would find some refuge in the free public transportation options in the city, such as the city buses (which waived fees for the first wave of the pandemic) and the Staten Island ferry. Forced to be in constant motion, always needing to perform a process of "going somewhere" as one was only allowed to be stationary at a nonexistent home, for homeless New Yorkers, public transportation, when it was running, could fulfill the need for a quiet and peaceful setting while allowing them to maintain the appearance of having a destination. As HNY notes, the constant motion of the bus and ferry do not allow for one to do anything productive, yet this lack of productivity is essential for maintaining a pure state of firstness, which can exist only in a state of untapped potentiality (Desjarlais 1997: 129). He would make this trip on the ferry every day for at least two and half months (and was still continuing as he was posting the diary), showing the importance of this otherwise unproductive activity, and establishing a kind of thirdness of firstness, a routine of escaping into a peaceful monadic state, if only for the 20 minutes it takes to cross the New York Harbor.

Figure 1: "A shower is a shower". Posted to Reddit by u/YoungBuckB0ss on February 21, 2021.

To conclude this consideration of urban phenomenology, I would like to describe the first instance, and what remains perhaps the most surprising and visceral example, that oriented me to the importance of achieving a state of firstness. Posted on Reddit in February 2021, it consists of a single picture (see Figure 1), a picture that I nearly glossed over due to how typical it appeared. It is a photo of a fairly ordinary, if austere, shower. The original poster does not clarify where this shower is located or how he or she got there; the picture is simply captioned as "a shower is a shower." The shower speaks for itself here; only upon delving into the comments is the meaning of something so taken-for-granted revealed. In the comments, the shower is treated as an incredible luxury, like finding a "lottery ticket" or a "gold mine", especially "during COVID." Several comments simply reflect on the pure, unvarnished pleasure that a shower brings. Some speak of the warmth felt by having the water running over you, while others reflect on a certain temporality of homelessness, of being able to sit for hours at peace without being bothered by the outside world. The photo evokes a visceral sensation in those who view it, many of whom, presumably, do not have easy daily access to a shower. It connotes a hope, realized for the poster, a state of pure being, of pure firstness, an ability to escape from the world and let the warm water run over your cold, tired body.

Beyond Firstness: From Resistance to Nascent Dialogisms

This quest for firstness is essential for survival amid times of extreme stress and deprivation; it is a reparative practice, albeit one which is also capable of destroying as it repairs. Yet, an understanding of agency and action during the pandemic cannot be reduced to a single-minded quest for peaceful, monadic existence. Indeed, there has also been a flourishing of political activism among homeless persons during the pandemic. Some of this activity took on traditional notions of spatial resistance, adapted and expanded due to the context of the

pandemic. The most notable example of a resistance movement was the #SeizeTheHotels movement which gained popularity across the United States, from New York to Los Angeles.[19] This movement demanded that government officials relocate people staying in congregate shelters, that are dangerous and inhibit social distancing, into vacant hotels. While various protests in support of this movement took place across the United States and some concessions were made in the early months of the pandemic, the culminating and most militant protest took place in Olympia, Washington in January 2021. As part of this protest, people staying at local homeless encampments booked rooms in a nearby hotel for one night and, with the backing of a large group of protesters, demanded that they be allowed to stay for the duration of the pandemic. The hotel takeover was violently suppressed by the municipal SWAT team and the protesters denounced by the mayor of Olympia as "domestic terrorists", but it did serve as an example of how previously established forms of resistance could manifest during the pandemic.[20] This form of protest, which has been termed in activist circles as "liberating space", draws on the ideas of a Lefebvrian "right to the city" (Harvey 2008). In particular, it can be thought of as a spatial practice that restores the use value of spaces which have been held vacant in order to preserve their exchange value, thus ensuring the "rights of […] inhabitants who 'use' the city" (Kuymulu 2013: 929). Thus, activist organizations such as New York's Picture the Homeless have staged takeovers of vacant lots in order to render them "usable." With the COVID-19 pandemic, hotels became a massive store of vacant, unused space which could be mobilized to provide safe housing for a city's homeless population. As discussed above, this movement did have limited success, with many cities providing hotel rooms for those deemed most vulnerable on the street. But, to my knowledge, no city fully met the demands of the movement by ending the use of congregate shelters and guaranteeing hotel rooms for all.

The rising political activism among homeless persons during the pandemic, however, is not limited to these forms of overt resistance. Instead, homeless activists across the country engaged in what I have called "nascent dialogisms" with both political institutions and the communities that have previously excluded them. In this section, I focus my attention on two case studies: the activism of homeless residents at the Lucerne hotel on the Upper West Side of New York and that of encampment residents at Echo Park Lake (EPL) in Los Angeles. These examples are cited here to highlight the national and widespread growth of this mode of political engagement, of this "modality of agency" (Shachar & Hustinx 2019).

Before jumping into of *what* these dialogisms consist, it is first important to discuss *where* they occur. To utilize de Certeau's terminology, while "tactics", such as striving for a state of firstness, are placeless weapons of the weak, political "strategies" rely on "a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it" (1984: xix). In the case of "liberating space", the space of the "proper" is taken through various forms of aggression (tearing down a fence, graffitiing a wall, refusing to leave a building, etc.) in violation of the law and therefore without recognized legitimacy. The liberated/occupied space is thus in constant tension with the state and the legally recognized owner of the space. In this circumstance, any hope for productive dialogue is lost and replaced by "demands", which can either be accepted by authorities or responded to with violent eviction by police. The cases of the Lucerne and EPL, however, are both different in that, while their "proper" spaces were quite contested, there was a legal basis for their right to exist and to strategize from there. The residents at the Lucerne faced often extreme harassment from NIMBY activists on the Upper West Side, but they were initially placed there by the city government and a court ruling in November 2020 temporarily prevented their removal from the hotel. For EPL, it is assumed that the CDC guidance on homeless encampments prevented its clearing for much of

the pandemic,[21] with the aforementioned attempts at coercing people to leave the park by the city ineffective at stopping the encampment's growth from approximately one dozen tents to nearly 200. These spaces were incredibility precarious and always at risk of being taken away, but they were "theirs" for the moment.

This relative stability, which, as demonstrated above was by no means a universal experience among homeless persons, also allowed one to reacquire a sense of thirdness, an organization and routinization of everyday life that could counter the intense secondness initially resulting from the rupture. Staying in hotel rooms, the risk of acquiring COVID-19 was much reduced compared to congregate shelters; in EPL, the open air allowed for what David, an activist and resident of the park, called a "COVID-safe place." Other residents of the park reported that they did not have a single known case of the virus in the encampment. Additionally, both the Lucerne and the community at EPL provided programs to help its residents get back on their feet; EPL, in particular, prided itself on its self-sufficient jobs program that gave residents employment in the park for just under the local minimum wage. This support and relative stability were able to counter much of the emergent "lumpen abuse" which had grown during, and even preceded the pandemic. Da Homeless Hero, a Lucerne resident turned activist has repeatedly noted that he was "alcohol dependent" until programs at the Lucerne "changed [his] life." Similarly, one woman noted that the caring community at EPL helped her become sober, with Ayman, perhaps the most visible of the EPL activists, claiming that "now they [the park residents] have somewhere consistent to go and they feel like they're part of something that's moving forward. It gives them a purpose and they're less likely to go on those drugs."[22]

Returning to an understanding of the political activism which was pursued in these two settings, by dialogism, I am referring to an attempt to build non-conformist collectivity with

housed community members in which homeless residents become political actors who can advocate for their rights while also living in a kind of dignity and harmony with the neighboring community.[23] This type of political action is contrary to more traditional forms of resistant agitation, in that it seeks to integrate itself into a transformative dialogue with systems of power as opposed to overthrowing them. It also contradicts the approach frequently found in shelters of disciplining the person to conform to dominant social structures, in that it is attempting to produce structural change while also fighting for dignified treatment in the interim. The goal of these nascent dialogisms is to end homelessness by entering into dialogue with those institutions that previously excluded the voice of those experiencing homelessness, giving that voice power without reducing it and whitewashing in order to fit a normative mold. I will begin with a brief discussion of creating collectivity with local, previously exclusionary communities, before concluding with a discussion on what a dialogue with political institutions looks like.

The overt purpose of the two case studies under consideration here was to build coalitions across difference, of housed and unhoused communities, in order to fight for political gains but also to ensure that all residents of given neighborhood could live harmoniously and with dignity. The Upper West Side Open Hearts Initiative, an organization formed in solidarity with the residents at the Lucerne in opposition to many of the NIMBY protests which had garnered national attention, makes this dual role of collectivity clear in their mission statement. They write that the goal of the coalition is to both "highlight community support for low-income housing" as well as "to create a welcoming environment, rooted in empathy, compassion and respect, that ensures the success of these placements by building a strong and integrated community." Political gains, in this case, are achieved through and premised upon this building of a welcoming and inclusive community. Collective action occurs through empathy and respectful dialogue. Similar statements were frequently spoken by residents of EPL.

These forms of collectivity were built through several different actions, although they primarily featured two distinct spatial practices. First, collectivity was built through the sharing of space, something which was previously quite rare between housed and unhoused communities due to the stigmatization of disease and uncleanliness associated with homelessness. The importance of sharing space was especially pronounced in EPL, where encampment residents attempted to create a space which would truly become a public resource open to the entire Echo Park community. Most notably, the residents started a community garden which was accessible to all park users for free, allowing everyone to both grow their own crops and engage in the camaraderie of shared gardening. The encampment also featured community showers and was on the verge of opening a community kitchen. For residents of the Lucerne, sharing space with local housed residents beyond simply walking by each other on the sidewalk was more challenging considering that they resided in a hotel as opposed to a public space. Yet the Lucerne residents and the Open Hearts Initiative did organize a collective sleepout in front of the hotel in August 2020, in which several hotel residents and local community members camped out for the night. Additionally, the organization set up triweekly walks around the neighborhood that paired residents with local religious leaders, sending a visible signal to the community of alliance across housing status. The Open Hearts Initiative would also indirectly "share space" periodically throughout the pandemic by drawing messages of love and inclusivity in chalk outside the hotel.

Beyond simply the conviviality that comes with sharing space, homeless residents would frequently attempt to build community by actively fighting against the most common stigma deployed against them: that they are dirty and that their home spaces can be regarded as "trash." In this regard, the active effort to clean up space is an attempt to show that the cleansing of space does not have to include the cleansing of people as well (cf. Amster 2003). The politico-spatial strategy of "picking up trash" in order to reduce stigma does have precedent in the ethnographic

literature, with Gregory noting of his interlocutors in Lefrak City, Queens: "The image of black Lefrak City youth removing rubbish from the streets surrounding the housing complex undermined the construction of Lefrak City as a site of danger and urban blight" (1999: 125). The fact that the main job of EPL's "jobs program" was to pick up trash around the park and that residents prided themselves on the park's cleanliness speaks to similar efforts at de-stigmatization. Similarly, homeless residents who were moved to hotels in NYC during the pandemic also noted a desire to "help out" around the hotel by shoveling snow, sweeping the halls, and cleaning graffiti.[24] There are indications that this emphasis on cleanliness helped build support for the local community, particularly in a group of letters to the editor in the *Los Angeles Times*,[25] with one local resident writing that the encampment "impressed me as the cleanest, most organized and amicable encampment I'd seen in Los Angeles." The willingness to clean up space shows a commitment to the community, one which residents hoped would be reciprocated.

Finally, moving beyond spatial strategies, the rise of these dialogisms was dependent on a rearticulation of homeless persons within the process of the production of knowledge. Holmes & Marcus (2007) coined the term para-ethnography as a call to recognize the ways in which anthropologists' interlocutors produce the knowledge which is used to make decisions and wield influence, a process of production which very often parallels that of ethnography. Because of the interest in making and influencing policy decisions, Holmes & Marcus tend to emphasize studying up, focusing on "experts." However, without having the space to give this issue the detail it deserves, I argue that there has been an increasing trend during the pandemic (although it did exist to a lesser degree before the pandemic) for homeless persons to produce para-ethnographies of homelessness and for the knowledge produced to be treated as "expert" knowledge within political circles. Much of this involves taking seriously subjugated knowledges of lived experience – knowledges that Marcus & Holmes (2007: 237) emphasize are

part of all "expert" decisions, yet are typically dismissed in favor of or rearticulated in terms of quantitative data. This shift could be seen when Da Homeless Hero was able to get top mayoral candidate Eric Adams to temporarily backtrack on a call for more police with a story of a brutal arrest he experienced while homeless. Similarly, homeless activists held a "flipping the script" workshop, in which homeless persons served as teachers for health care workers, educating them on the "intersection of homelessness and health" while critiquing the inequities of the public health system. But it also takes the form of more formally accepted types of research. This includes the research Roberto, a Lucerne resident, began working on while still in a congregate shelter on Wards Island vis-à-vis Gov. Cuomo's homelessness policies and ties to the shelter-industrial complex; it is also present in calculations conducted by Picture the Homeless (2018) activists that show that the cost of sheltering a homeless person far exceeds the cost of providing them stable and permanent housing.[26] It is important to note, however, that this production and deployment of knowledge is not merely to wield political influence, but also to fight for survival. Ayman, an EPL resident, made this point clear in an interview, after giving numbers of vacant rooms in LA compared to the number of homeless persons: "Just to throw numbers that I've had to learn over the past few months just trying to defend my right to exist."

The results of this nascent dialogic collectivity were, in many ways, quite impressive. The community formed around EPL in Los Angeles culminated in a mass protest event in the defense of the encampment on March 24, 2021, following rumors of an imminent sweep. Hundreds of people, both housed and unhoused, gathered at the park in defense of the encampment. Several local residents and restaurants provided free food to those in attendance. While communities rising up to defend an encampment are not unprecedented, they are virtually unheard of following the massive "erosion of sympathetic support and action" that occurred in the 1990s which reversed the large outpouring of support of the 1980s (Smith 1996: 224; see also

Barak 1991). I would argue that the last example of community support for an encampment of the size and relevance of the community protest in defense of EPL occurred in Tompkins Square Park in NYC during August 1988 (Smith 1996: Chapter 1). The EPL protesters marched with residents to the local councilman's office, where, in true dialogic fashion, the residents did not deliver a list of demands but merely requested a meeting with the councilman. The meeting was ultimately denied, but the outpouring of support was remarkable considering the often hostile and violent reaction of local communities to homeless encampments.

The activists in New York City have been quite a bit more successful in their negotiations with political institutions. In early February of 2021, the residents of the Lucerne in collaboration with the UWS Open Hearts Initiative held the first ever homeless-led mayoral forum dedicated to the issue of homelessness. Far from being a fringe event attended by only the most sympathetic and progressive candidates, every major candidate in the race agreed to come and answer questions directly from the city's most vulnerable.[27] Da Homeless Hero, who was moderating the forum, highlighted just how unprecedented this type of public dialogue between homeless persons and political leaders was: "Today, you're not talking over us. You're not talking about us. You're talking with us. Never, in my history, I don't think ever in our history has that happened for any campaign, particularly when it deals with the issue of homelessness." This collaboration between mayoral candidates and homeless activists would continue beyond the debate as well, with Da Homeless Hero directly helping mayoral candidate Maya Wiley to craft her housing policy. Similar forums were also held with candidates for Manhattan District Attorney and City Council. Rather than overtly resist the system or assimilate into a broken system, homeless activists in New York City are beginning to have a seat at the table, actively working in dialogue to change the structures which have oppressed them for so long.

“Curious to see a bunch of grown men tear down a garden”: The Afterlives of COVID-19

The encampment at Echo Park Lake was cleared on the nights of March 24 and March 25, 2021. In a scene that would not be out of place in Davis’s *City of Quartz* (1992), a militarized contingent of 400 police officers and five police helicopters descended upon the park and forcibly evicted all remaining residents who had not already left or accepted outreach workers’ offers of temporary shelter, an option deemed untenable for many residents. As reports of the imminent raid spread throughout the community, many of the protesters from that morning returned to the encampment to block the police takeover. Unfortunately, it was not enough, with the entire parked cleared of people and fenced off indefinitely, ostensibly to perform “repairs.” 182 people were arrested during the police raid, including several journalists. The total cost of the raid was estimated by activists to be upwards of $1 million. Ayman and David decided to stay in the fenced off park, which they likened to an “open-air prison”, until they were arrested by police on the morning of March 26. While waiting for their arrest, Ayman and David broadcasted a series of Instagram Lives to update their supporters. During one of them, while staring at the community garden, Ayman issued this tragic statement which speaks volumes about the spatial violence of policing and urban policy in the United States: “Curious to see a bunch of grown men tear down a garden.” Many of the scattered residents were scheduled to receive the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine in just a few days; with all of them scattered, it is unclear if they ever received it. The park reopened at the end of May 2021 after the destruction of what remained of the encampment, with most green areas fenced off and with a constant police presence to ensure that the current “order” of the park would not be disrupted. Claudia Peschiutta, a reporter for a local radio station, reported that, while 133 park residents remain in temporary shelter, not a single EPL resident has been placed in permanent housing.[28]

On a larger scale, despite the new hope for a different approach on homelessness under a new mayor, homeless New Yorkers still have to deal with the policies of the current mayor and governor. In addition to the previously mentioned subway and outdoor dining rules being made permanent, New York has switched its discourse from stopping the spread of the virus to one of "revitalizing" the city. Part of this revitalization has included a dramatic increase in encampment sweeps above and beyond the already increased number seen during the pandemic (nearly 10 sweeps a day over the first three months of 2021). This includes a deployment of 80 new uniformed police officers to Midtown to clear homeless persons in order to encourage office workers to return to the city,[29] as well as an extra 250 police officers into the subways, a total which brings the subway's police force to its largest number in the city's history. The De Blasio administration also announced the formation of the "City Cleanup Core", a group dedicated to cleaning up public space. While this sounds promising in theory, one activist with Picture the Homeless mentioned concern that homeless persons' belongings, or even their bodies, will be lumped into the category of trash that needs to be cleaned. Meanwhile, all homeless New Yorkers staying in hotels will be moved back to congregate shelters, or else to the streets, by the end of July, despite FEMA offering to fully reimburse the city on hotel rooms through September.[30] Libraries, so important to the everyday lives of homeless persons, mostly remain closed to the public in spite of Gov. Cuomo pronouncement of a "full reopening" of the state, with just about a third of public library locations offering 45 minutes of computer time by appointment. Thus, despite the thrust back to normalcy, most public spaces where people can take refuge remain limited. It is clear that the exclusionary afterlives of the COVID-19 pandemic will persist into at least the near future.

This thesis has outlined many of the nascent structural constraints that have emerged for homeless persons due to COVID-19 and the government response to the pandemic, as well as the

ways these constraints have been experienced by those most affected. It has focused on the new annihilations of public space, the emergent dangers and limitations of institutional spaces under duress, and the precarity of access to a digital world that has become an inescapable part of everyday life. Perhaps some of these constraints are merely temporary and without long lasting effects: for example, it is certainly possible, if not likely, that Crossroads will return to its standard, inclusive, community-building method of providing services at some point. But other constraints, such as the new subway rules and the presence of outdoor dining, appear here to stay for the long term or will have deleterious effects for the next generation facing potentially inexorable poverty. And it is the permanence of these structural constraints that makes these governmental choices truly revanchist. The American city has become more exclusionary during the pandemic and will likely stay that way, as the post-pandemic city becomes framed as being in need of "revitalization" in order to bring capital back.

Indeed, the very permanence of these restrictions perhaps indicate that there was another path that could have been chosen to aid homeless New Yorkers rather than exclusion or neglect. Parsell et al. (2020), for example, note a nearly unprecedented amount of funding and accommodation for homeless Australians during the pandemic, albeit one that is likely to be temporary given that this support was conceived as an emergency measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to the housed population. As such, the argument of this thesis is not that New York City should not have taken strong action to inhibit the virus, but rather that there is no reason why New York and the rest of the United States could not have taken the same approach as Australia, ensuring that every homeless person had the option to stay in a single hotel room that provided wi-fi while attempts were made to find permanent housing.[31] Rather than using this crisis as an opportunity to assert a "universal right to breathe", as Mbembe presciently warned "a vicious partitioning of the globe [has] intensif[ied], and the dividing lines [have] become even

more entrenched" (2021: S61). The nature of the public health crisis made it appear as though the responses chosen were medically necessary. Yet, as the Australian case shows and Foucault (2003) argued several decades earlier, it is perhaps impossible to separate the "medical" from the "social." Indeed, as these interventions crystallize into permanent exclusions, it becomes more apparent that this attempt to "stop the spread" was, intentionally or not (and, in several cases, I would argue that it was certainly intentional), simultaneously "aimed at controlling the needy social classes" (Foucault 2003: 335).

Still, as someone who grew up watching anti-homeless activists being bussed into my Queens neighborhood to protest the relocation of homeless persons to neighborhood hotels and who spent much previous ethnographic work listening to community members at public hearings calling for neighborhood shelters to be "burned down", I believe that something new and unexpected is emerging. Indeed, I am amazed by the previously unthinkable outpouring of support by local communities for their homeless neighbors and remain hopeful that a more equitable future is imaginable. This is not to declare the death of NIMBYism, but rather to draw attention to those who, for whatever reason (and exploring those reasons should be important in future research), decided to partake in collective dialogic action with the city's most vulnerable during this time. And indeed, this form of collective action has already achieved quite a bit. In addition to the successes discussed above, New York's City Council passed Intro 146 in May 2021, a law which raises housing vouchers for homeless New Yorkers to Section 8 levels, opening up tens of thousands of units of affordable housing. This bill, first introduced in 2018 and tirelessly advocated for by activists, went from something of a pipe dream to reality over the course of the pandemic. Despite the fact that the final bill was altered slightly without the input of activists to impose more stringent eligibility requirements, angering many who pushed for the bill, its passage remains an undeniable achievement.

Collectivity, both within academia and beyond it, has become a major concern of theory (Spivak 2003; Fortun 2012; Choy 2020) and praxis (Piepzna-Samarasinha 2018; Publica[c]tion Collective 2018; Hardy, Muyanga, & Sunder Rajan 2020). With the future of the post-pandemic city left in the air, political collectivities, built upon dialogues across difference in wealth, race, gender, sexuality, etc. and capable of fighting for equity and justice will need to be at the forefront of action and protest. The fact that some of these collectivities have begun to emerge, in this time of fear and division, is, for me, an indisputable sign of hope. Yet, when the crisis ends and people return to their daily lives, will everyone return to the old modes of being? Or will the political action seen throughout the pandemic, not just with homelessness but also for racial justice, engender a social movement to guarantee a universal right to the city? The future is uncertain, but the lessons learned over the past year should not be forgotten in the quest for a more equitable world.

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[1]All quotes in this paragraph come from emails sent out directly to volunteers between March 6, 2020 and April 15, 2020. I conducted ethnographic research at Crossroads from October 2020 until the pandemic began.

[2] The politics of representation surrounding homelessness, as with all other stigmatized groups, is important to keep in mind and often quite contentious. In this thesis, I tend to prefer the people-centered language of "people/persons experiencing homelessness" but will also use "homeless persons" (which highlights the heterogeneity of homelessness better than something like "homeless people" or, even worse, "the homeless") when the people-centered terminology would be too cumbersome. "Unhoused" is a term that is gaining popularity in many activist circles, especially on the West Coast, but I use it here only when quoting people who use it. I occasionally use the term "homeless population" when discussing homelessness as a statistical entity, in full cognizance of the epistemic violence that statistical representation requires.

[3] Quotes and information in this paragraph taken from *New York Daily News* (April 28, 2020), "Cuomo calls homeless problem on NYC subway 'disgusting;' MTA pushes for more cops — but officials have no clear answer to problems" and *ABC News* (February 18, 2021), "Homeless advocates slam NYPD deployment of more than 600 officers to patrol subways after stabbings."

[4] The number of people staying in New York's shelters peaked at nearly 65,000 during the winter of 2018-2019. After staying fairly stable for several years, this number saw its first significant drop during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are several possible reasons for this which will be discussed later, but the current drop is largely driven by a reduction in families and children staying in shelters. The number of single adults in shelters peak around 21,000 in December, 2021 and has experienced a consistent surge since 2009 that has only been sped up by the pandemic.

[5] I am aware of and take seriously the intervention that Johnsen et al. (2021) make in this framework, rejecting the revanchist thesis while arguing that when one talks to people "on the ground", the true picture of what they call "enforcement" (consisting of the hostile practices that take center stage in the revanchist argument) becomes ambiguous and can perhaps be better conceptualized as a form of "coercive care" (Johnsen & Fitzpatrick 2010; see also Stuart 2016). However, as will be shown throughout this paper, *contra* their argument, enforcement was almost universally condemned by those most affected, from long-term activists to anonymous Reddit posters. Additionally, there is little that can be classified as "care" within what follows. It is for these reasons, rather than preexisting political stakes, that I have chosen this framework. This divergence of empirical evidence may be due to research focusing on different contexts (the United Kingdom as compared to the United States) or due to difference in sampling methodology.

[6] Although, there is reason to believe that this is changing, if not at the level of elected officials, then at least at the level of the general public. During the early-2010s, racial justice activists successfully pressured government officials to drastically reduce the use of stop-and-frisk, perhaps the most infamous revanchist policy, in New York City. In a more minor concession, in 2017, a law was passed in New York that allowed NYPD officers to use their discretion to issue a civil, rather than criminal, summons for quality of life crimes such as public urination. See *New York Times*, Oct. 20, 2017, "Fewer Criminal Tickets for Petty Crimes, Like Public Urination."

[7] For example, Reddit allows users to upvote or downvote each post or comment. There were several posts which would have been quite interesting to include in this thesis, but that I had to exclude because they were deemed to be untruthful by the vast majority of the online community.
[8] One respondent to my survey, however, did note that wi-fi and outlets were still being offered outdoors at his local library in California.
[9] For one example of this, see the following twitter thread from the activist group, Street Watch LA: https://twitter.com/StreetWatchLA/status/1357767094541012992. These videos and pictures were taken in San Pedro, California and after the thread got significant attention, including a retweet from former presidential candidate Marianne Williamson, the anti-homeless practices were stopped.
[10] *New York Times* (March 3, 2021), "N.Y.C. doubled 'cleanups' of homeless encampments last year, despite C.D.C. guidance to let them be."
[11] See *New York Times*, September 25, 2020, "Outdoor Dining in N.Y.C. Will Become Permanent, Even in Winter." At a recent mayoral debate in May 2021, it was reported that nearly 8000 restaurants are still featuring expanded outdoor dining under the program.
[12] See *New York Times*, September 10, 2020, "The Ugly Side of New York's Outdoor Dining Renaissance"
[13] It was initially unclear if this included the nightly subway shutdown, but, after much lobbying from prominent politicians, including U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, full subway service did resume on May 17, 2021.
[14] See *Gothamist*, February 7, 2021, "MTA Deletes Tweet Explaining Why Subway Station Benches Were Removed." The MTA later issued a statement denying that they were implementing any policies that were punitive towards homeless persons and the benches were eventually placed back in the station.
[15] See, for a condensed overview of this battle, *New York Times*, November 13, 2020, "Homeless Men Moved Into a Tourist Hotel. What Followed Was Unexpected." See also *Gothamist*, March 23, 2021, "UWS Shelter Opponents Accused Of "Stalking" Homeless Activist As Lucerne Battle Drags On."
[16] This difficulty was also apparent in the sheer number of Reddit posts asking if homeless persons are eligible for the stimulus and, if so, how they could receive it. See also *New York Times*, April 5, 2021, "No Address, No ID, and Struggling to Get Their Stimulus Checks."
[17] A Texas court ruled the eviction moratorium unconstitutional on February 25, 2021, although it is unclear what this means for the future of the moratorium. See *Washington Post*, February 26, 2021, "Ruling overturning CDC eviction moratorium injects confusion into housing market." One group of researchers estimated that continuing evictions during the pandemic resulted in 433,700 excess COVID cases and 10,700 excess deaths through September in states that had lifted their moratoria (Leifheit et al. 2020). At the time of this writing, the paper is still awaiting peer review.
[18] The full diary can be found at: https://homelessnewyorker.wordpress.com/
[19] The hashtag itself comes from Los Angeles-based activists, but the general theme of the movement – to take over vacant hotels – is cross-national.
[20] A full account of the hotel takeover can be found in the *Cooper Point Journal* (accessed June 5, 2021): https://www.cooperpointjournal.com/2021/02/27/on-oly-housing-now-at-the-red-lion-hotel/
[21] Los Angeles appears to have been quite a bit better than NYC in this regard.
[22] This argument was backed up by quantitative data by Project Renewal, the non-profit that runs the shelter at the Lucerne, which showed that drug overdoses were significantly down since residents moved to the hotel and that residents reported improved mental health and reduced drug dependency since the move. Data from an April 8 presentation by Homeless Services United. Presentation slides can be found at: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/176EWc4DgXz-cdOf6w5U6PbxaiuHsdAX4XsV6KQdK7ZI/edit#slide=id.gd233e13128_0_874 . Quotes and story can be found in the video on EPL's gofundme page (Accessed June 8, 2021): https://www.gofundme.com/f/echo-park-rise-up-a-vision-or-love-amp-community
[23] To provide a more technical explanation and to link it to Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogue, I understand dialogic political action in this case as the recognition of and respect for the heteroglossia immanent to the everyday social world. It views this heteroglossia as a source of political strength rather than its detriment. In this sense it is vehemently opposed to the monoglossic tendencies of, for example, the manifesto of "the Party", the rigid "code of conduct" or "community guidelines" of shelters, or even certain forms of identity politics.
[24] See, for example, Jefferson's story in *The City*, May 10, 2021: "Homeless Reflect on Life in a New York City Hotel Room, One Year Later."

[25] See *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 2021: "Letters to the Editor: Echo Park's encampment wasn't the hazard it was made out to be"

[26] Picture the Homeless (2018) found that the cost per person in a shelter ranged from $2,275 to more than $5,000 each month, numbers which, even on the low end, would allow for the rending a more permanent and stable apartment. While the organization's analysis of the finances of the shelter-industrial complex was first released in 2018, it's findings became more widespread during pandemic and arguably contributed to the passage of Intro 146 in May 2021.

[27] Andrew Yang, the frontrunner in the 2021 mayoral race at the time, was scheduled to attend but cancelled due to his being diagnosed with COVID-19. The 10 other leading candidates were all in attendance.

[28] Data reported in the following tweet (accessed June 6, 2021):
https://twitter.com/ReporterClaudia/status/1400251326777286657

[29] See *New York Post*, April 20, 2021,"De Blasio orders vagrant sweep, 80 cops to bring Midtown workers back"

[30] On June 28, 2021, the remaining 68 residents at the Lucerne were bused back to a congregate shelter. A legal battle did ensue challenging the transfers, especially focusing on the transfer of homeless persons with disabilities. A court ruling on July 13, 2021 mandated that residents be given 7-days' notice of a transfer and that each individual resident be evaluated for a reasonable accommodation (RA), but otherwise allowed the transfers to continue.

[31] After all, while the United States leads the world in both COVID-19 cases and deaths, as of June 9, 2021, Australia has had just one COVID-19 death since December of 2020. Exclusion was *not* a precondition for stopping the spread of the virus.