

000133 Hear Us Presents: My Our Four Walls

[Screen reads:] Some of these kids mention issues covered by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act. For more information see the resources at the end of this video.

[Music] [Screen reads:] Homeless kids experience adult-sized realities before their time. They live with the instability of poverty. Their best hope for coping is school. Their courageous plea is "HEAR US..."

[Screen reads:] My Own Four Walls Voices of young homeless children

[Screen reads:] Mt. Vernon, AR. Population: 144 Child: Even if I would stay with my aunt or cousins, we are living in a motel because we have no where else to go -- we are still homeless.

[Screen reads:] Sharon, PA. Population: 16,328 Child: My little sister needs to be in school so my mom can look for work.

[Screen reads:] Hawley, TX. Population: 646 Child: She can go to preschool even if we don't have a home of our own.

[Screen reads:] Over 1.5 million children and youth are homeless in America. Losing my home

Tiffany: My mom told me, she's like, "Well, I can't afford this house anymore. Your grandma's not paying nothing, and I don't have the money for it and I'm not working right now since I just had a baby, and so it's hard" and like that, and then she's like, "We might just have to go to a homeless shelter," and I didn't want to go. But then, like two weeks after we had to move out.

Jordan: "I don't know, but we're losing our house, and I got..." and I'm like, "Why?" and she said, "I can't explain it to you right now, I can explain it to you when you get more grown up." And it's kind of heartbreaking 'cause you've lived there a long time, and it's kinda hard. And you're not going to know nobody there; it's kinda scary.

Deshaud: We weren't exactly poor, we just didn't have a home to live in. [Screen reads:] Losing my space

Child: My mom can choose to send my little brother to kindergarten at our old school, or to the kindergarten near the shelter. Child: My mom is ashamed to talk about where we're living. Maybe someone could ask her, or even me about our home, and if that's why I'm having trouble in school. Child: She needs to know that we won't get in trouble because we're homeless.

Destiny: I don't like living in it because it's not that fun, living in a church. Christopher: I don't like it here. It's just not cozy over here. It's, there's too much strangers.

Lisa: And sometimes I can't find my homework or my shoes or my clothes or my backpack. Lacy: People be stealin' in your room, and they come in your room when you not there and they steal your toys.

Brianna: It was crowded, it was small, there was only one bed. Woman 1: One bed? And how many people? Brianna: Three or four. Child: Don't ask the landlord at my aunt's if we are living there, because he might kick us all out.

Child: Then we would all be homeless, even worse than we were now. Child: I need to go to school right away. I could also eat free breakfast and lunch and other things that cost too much for my mom and dad to pay for. Tiffany: We lived in a motel and we didn't get no breakfast or nothing. Lisa: We go to the family food center sometimes when we don't have food.

[Screen reads:] Losing my friends Taelin: It's hard for kids to go from one school to the next, one school to the next, one school to the next 'cause they have to make new friends, they have to get adjusted to the school, and then after they get...if they get adjusted and everything, they make new friends, then they have to move again.

Julius: The thing about moving alot, and mostly I can, I'm not very smart in school 'cause I have a disability. Ja'Che: I mean, when it was a new school, you knew they're brand new and then you're there and afraid to be new, and then you don't know no teachers' names, and then, it wasn't last year and nobody's gonna know you yet... Lacy: I have to make new friends (sigh).

Child: I need the school to help me and my mom get me to school, even if I don't live nearby anymore. [Screen reads:] Living with the secret Tiffany: Could you not tell nobody I'm homeless?

Ja'Che: When I tell someone, it hurts, and I feel sad, and I feel mad about it because I don't want nobody to hear my secret. Child: Even if we lose our house, I might still need to go to the same school I was going to before. Child: That's where my teacher and my friends are.

Child: I like it there. Child: Besides, the law says I can stay if I want to. Taelin: I would want to be the first woman president. Juan: I wanna be a lawyer.

Willie: I want to be a train driver. Lacy: I want to be a lawyer so I can buy my mom a house. [Screen reads:] Not since the Great Depression have we seen so many homeless families on the streets of communities of all sizes and economic compositions.

Tiffany: "Oh my God, they're homeless, I'd better treat them really nice" and stuff, and they act like it's a disease that they'll catch. Child: We're no different from them. We're all human. Child: Even if we get our own home the end of school year, I can decide to stay in the same school and to finish with my friends and teachers.

Deshaud: I'll do better in school if I don't have to change schools. Lacy: Stop judging children because they might be going through something. [Screen reads:] Thanks to the courageous kids who shared their secrets with us.
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