

Rachael Gangelhoff

From: Lynelle Wilcox <lynelle@comcast.net>
Sent: Monday, September 22, 2025 4:16 PM
To: CityRecorder
Cc: Julie Hoy; Vanessa Nordyke; Paul Tigan; Linda Nishioka; Shane Matthews; Deanna Gwyn; Dr. Irvin M Brown; Mai Vang; Micki Varney; Gretchen Bennett; Trevor Womack
Subject: Public comment for City Council meeting agenda item 1.4.a

Mayor Hoy and City Councilors

My name is Lynelle Wilcox. I live on Norway Street in Ward 1.

The Salem Human Rights Commission partners with WOU students to develop and share Salem's annual Belonging/Discrimination survey, and to summarize the results.

I've taken the survey to the streets with WOU students, on my own, and with other advocates. Some students have shared their thoughts, fears, and experiences doing the survey. The essays below are shared with their prior permission.

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### Gathering Discrimination Survey Responses in Salem - Summer 2021

By Justin Crosswhite - Posted to Western Oregon University Class Forum 5/9/2021 [1] [SEP]

"WOW!" I left Saturday afternoon's time gathering survey responses defining it as one of the most thought-provoking experiences I have ever had, and I am very thankful to have had that opportunity. I found myself pacing in my living room before I left, a pit in my stomach thinking about what the next few hours would bring. I truly had no idea what to expect.

I knew I was about to be way outside my comfort zone, but I also knew I wasn't alone. Upon meeting with Lynelle, Jen, Cody, Marianne & Josh (Marianne's son) we set a game plan. Marianne brought many wonderful snacks to hand out, while Lynelle provided homemade bars, trash bags, & sanitary wipes. I can't fail to mention how calming Lynelle's presence and knowledge of the situation in Salem truly is. She really does care about understanding and being a resource for people in Salem, it's remarkable. [1] [SEP] [SEP]

We started at the Arches parking lot, but there were only a handful of people nearby to complete the survey. We approached the first group as a team & Lynelle led the charge. That first woman was very open with us, and the first thing that struck me was she just wanted to be heard. My perception of who the homeless people really are was already changing just with this first interaction. [1] [SEP]

Given not many other people were in the arches parking lot, we packed up and moved to the I-5 underpass on Market Street. This is home to one of the larger tent camps I've seen throughout the city. We divided and conquered and moved throughout the area, staying within the eyesight of one another.

The first gentleman Cody & I ran into turned to be my highlighted interaction from the day. He was younger, probably somewhere in his early 20's, who has lived on the street his entire life. He dove into the negative perception the public has of homeless people. He said, "many people drive by screaming get a job!!" He also dove into a tragedy that occurred last week when one of the women in their community passed in the underpass. He described how they covered her up to keep her warm as she slept, just to find her later, basically translucent and rotting away. It hurt to hear someone describe one of their neighbors passing away right inside their community, as we could tell many within this community are close with one another. We even witnessed a small memorial closer to one of the cross-walks in memory of this woman. [SEP]

Nearly every single person we saw was approachable, thankful for the goodies we brought, and very happy to complete our survey. My perceptions of these people are have changed dramatically. They are simply people, too, simply trying to survive and get by. They simply just want to be heard and treated as human. The final two women at the underpass who completed our surveys are the epitome of this. One woman said, "We aren't bad people."

The other woman had a conversation with Cody about the homemade bars Lynelle had made. After Cody had mentioned they remind him of home, she offered one of the two bars we had just given her to Cody. Really, really awesome gesture! [SEP]

The discrimination of the homeless people in Salem is unfair as it seems they simply don't have a voice to be understood or heard. Residents of Salem can drive by all day, but until they take the time to dive into what is truly going on, they will never fully understand. I never thought this population of people would be so approachable and ready to openly share their lives with us. I am excited to dive into the results of these hard copy surveys and read some of the things they took the time to write for us!

## Saturday Afternoon in Salem

By Jen Pardy - Posted to Western Oregon University Class Forum 5/10/2021 [SEP]

In the few days between our Thursday class, leading up to the Saturday afternoon outing, I carried this unsettling feeling around in the back of my mind that would occasionally make its way to the forefront of my thoughts: Fear? Dread? Worry? all due to the unknown. Beyond knowing it would be incredibly uncomfortable, I also worried if I would be safe. I was very unsure how to approach or speak to someone...the casual "Hi, how are you" approach seemed inappropriate—they are living in the streets for heaven's sake!! Seemed like a terrible question to lead with!

I also wondered if somehow those we encountered would further be made to feel "less than" by a group of people coming to survey them as if they were a science project? I am still ruminating, trying to sum up into a tidy explanation my overall observations and experience of collecting responses from homeless individuals in our state Capitol. It is equal parts upsetting, overwhelming, enlightening, and sobering; below are a few thoughts around these:

Upsetting - Sometimes these individuals experience the worst treatment from the very people who are sworn to protect and serve the city. One story told by a woman we met was of a couple of specific local law enforcement officers who go out of their way to harass and upset people living in a certain section of downtown. Individuals who are held to a higher standard abuse their power to the detriment of others. Hard to imagine how such “trusted agents” can look at themselves in the mirror every day.

Overwhelming - the emotionality triggered by the lack of humanity these individuals experience and the depths of pain you can see in their eyes is what resonates the most with me. Maybe this is the cross I bear as a total empath, although it is hard to imagine anyone with a pulse not being impacted. We heard a number of times from a variety of the individuals we met that they aren’t bad people looking to hurt others, who choose not to work, and would rather steal from others just to survive. But that is how they are labeled and, thus, treated. Not only by strangers, but also by former employers who treated them so poorly based on their housing status (which we know is a form of discrimination) the treatment eventually drove them away from a paying job.

Enlightening - I am no different than the thousands of other “passersby’s” who glance at homeless encampments and piles of trash while driving by or parked at the traffic light adjacent to them and wonder “why...? how...? maybe if they/or someone just did ‘X’ they wouldn’t be on the streets, why can’t we find a place for them to call home besides the side of the road, etc, etc.” All of those questions are very easy to ask from the comfort of your car. It is an understatement to say the problem is complex and it was found to be even more complex when you are immersed in their world. It is easier to blame them, the system, the government, the landlords, the pandemic....the list is endless.

The fact of the matter is, what places a person in this situation does not get resolved with a one-size-fits-all solution; but we owe it to their humanity our efforts to try and find options for safe spaces and better choices than those between abuse and squalor, because when it’s nobody’s problem it’s everybody’s problem. I can say with a newfound perspective and a high degree of confidence that if you don’t meet people where they are you will never understand the complexities and true needs of each person—another human being. Each able-bodied person can do one small part which could lead to enormous improvement overall.

Sobering - members of our very own human race are being marginalized in broad daylight, in plain eyesight, and somehow that it is everyone else’s fault and nobody’s responsibility. A newsflash for those who believe one’s housing status is license to disregard, disrespect and denigrate another human: they still have rights and feelings. We have probably all heard the statement that “many of these people choose to live on the streets” as if this somehow justifies the mistreatment. Yes, some do choose to live on the street because they chose that over something horrific such as living in an abusive situation.

It turns out that just saying hello, having a conversation, listening to their concerns and thoughts, and treating them with dignity and respect like you would every other stranger is all that was required! They were grateful for our time and concern, the treats and supplies, and

the civil conversation. I will certainly carry this experience with me as I look for ways to be part of a solution to the humanitarian crisis in my own city and community.

## Understanding the Unheard Lives

By Cody Warner - Posted to Western Oregon University Class Forum 5/11/2021

This experience was jaw dropping for me. The first thing that happened as Lynelle was speaking with 3 people about the survey, the sound of the road noise made it to where I could not hear what they were saying well, so I decided to pay attention to all the by standers and how they acted. It was pretty gross to put it lightly.

Nearly every car driving by a person pointing, laughing, staring, giving bad looks, mouthing curse words, just to name a few. All we were doing was standing around not even on the sidewalk. As the experience went on this just continuedly got worse as we moved to under the I5 bridge on market street, as the cars would rev their engines, honk, and just be generally obnoxious while we would try to speak with people about their experiences and the survey.

The first person I interviewed to do the survey was autistic, and he said he chose to stay with his wife and child rather than staying with his parents due to the ultimatum they gave him. He had the opportunity to leave them in order to have a better life for himself. He chose to be homeless, but take care of them. As we continued the survey (I was asking him the questions), Justin and I helped him build his tent and got more insight about his life, and the experiences he has had. He talked about a person in the community who had recently passed away. He said they just covered her up and forgot about her because they thought she was sleeping. Moving over to by where she lived, there was a memorial to her and I later learned they held a vigil for her.

I learned through this, that these tents on the side of the road aren't just random homeless people living next to each other, they are communities, almost like a small neighborhood. They all care for and help each other out.

Another experience with a person that stuck out to me, was after we finished a survey with a lady who was very outgoing and eccentric. We gave her some supplies that we had been handing out, one of which was homemade chocolate chip cookie bars. She had 2 or 3 of them, and when I made the comment they look just like the ones my mom used to make, without missing a beat she immediately handing me one, trying to share with me. I declined because we had many more in the bag still, however the gesture was very powerful to me. It made me feel happy to be there and experience this side of a group of people that I would have never expected.

I could go on all day about the experience I had during this outing, but these were a couple that really stuck out to me and had an impact. Through all this I learned that within Salem, the homeless community are treated very poorly. Many of them are never even given a chance and shoved aside by society. They are treated worse than dogs many times even though they are the same as each of us. Many of them were just happy to have a normal conversation with

a person without them talking to them condescendingly. I know one comment on a survey I got was "Thanks for keeping it real." The things that matter to many of them the most are the things we take for granted everyday.

## Reflections on Conversations About the Discrimination Survey with Salem Residents Experiencing Homelessness – OL 607, Spring 2022

By WOU Student #1

My 12 year old daughter and I were humbled by the opportunity to work with people who are homeless. The exploratory research we gathered was humbling and tragic.

At the Arches building, we talked to a gentlemen who was limping and wincing in pain. As I initiated conversation with him I asked if we could sit down and conduct a survey. He smiled and warmed up to the idea of sharing his thoughts about discrimination. Covid resulted in him losing his job as a welder two years ago and he lost his house due to not having the means to pay rent. His countenance fell as he talked about the skills he has without the ability to use them. Last week he had his third surgery on his right leg that needed a skin graft to cover the loss of tissue from sepsis. He had broken his leg and it got infected as he lived on the streets. He suffered through the pain and infection for months before his second surgery that repaired the original surgery and removed the infection. My daughter noticed him starting to cry from the pain he was currently experiencing. As we completed the questionnaire, he shared how people dismiss him daily and judge him without knowing his situation. He was also a veteran who wrestled with military operations that took the lives of countless enemies. He spoke about the enemies as mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters who didn't deserve to die. His sense of humanity and compassion for the loss of life was surprising. He felt personally responsible for the impact he caused families in Afghanistan. The sorrow and tragedies were still raw for him and made him ashamed of his military service. He mentioned that it was good that we were reaching out to people like him and it would be even better to stay by his side for 24 hours to witness the discriminatory behavior he receives day and night. His discriminatory rating for Salem was extremely negative. He kept saying that no one cares, no one gives a shit, I'm an open wound that people spit on and have no interest in helping me heal. Ugh, this was hard to hear and reflect how little I had done to improve this reality. I thanked him for his time and shared some of the Lynelle's supplies as we concluded our conversation. I debriefed the conversation with my daughter who was in tears. She was overwhelmed by the eye-opening reality he lives with everyday.

We noticed someone across the parking lot carrying some items. As we approached and requested to speak with them, they dropped the items in their hands and stormed toward us. My daughter jumped back because one of the items clanged loudly on the pavement. It was a bicycle fork that looked menacing. They promptly stated that we were just who they needed to talk to. She was nonbinary and preferred they/them. They used pressured speech to convey they were stuck in Salem after their car broke down from Portland. They spoke about being kicked out of every shelter and resource center because of their sexual orientation.

They mentioned the loss of identification and the need to connect with an old friend who needed their help. They mentioned that for the past three days they had been assaulted and had markings on their face to support the abuse. They mentioned that my daughter reminded them of their children who were in foster care. They smiled and affirmed that Salem doesn't understand why people are homeless. They rated Salem in the lowest category. The discrimination they live through daily hurts and there's nowhere to hide. They weren't supposed to be in the parking lot we were in and had spent time in jail for trespassing last week. They had lost everything they had when they were in jail because all their belongings were tossed. Without identification, they couldn't apply for benefits or get resources to help make things better. My daughter and I noticed that each person we talked to craved conversation and could have shared thoughts and experiences for hours. As we wrapped up the survey, they expressed appreciation for doing something and trying to help. They were grateful for the toothpaste, floss, shampoo, makeup wipes, and soap. They carefully stowed the items in their pockets and gather up the items they had previously thrown down. As they picked up the bicycle fork, they smiled and stated it was their brain basher. They left the parking lot in better mood than they arrived.

Another opportunity we had was in a church who served people who were homeless. We connected with a woman who lived and worked in a nearby shelter. She had been homeless in Salem for the past four years and eight years before that in California. She was grateful for what she had and the opportunity to live and work with others who understood what it was like to be homeless. She was 69 and became sad as she talked about how she experience discrimination based on age and income limitations. She shared a dream she had of running and storage space for people to keep their important documents and identification safe while they live on the streets. She mentioned that it can take months to get a new identification needed to get jobs and benefits. She rated Salem in the lowest capacity to combat discrimination. She shared stories about people avoiding eye contact with her and briskly avoiding sharing space on the streets she lived on in Salem. She was deeply religious and praised God for her blessings and for how fortunate she is to have a job and a place to sleep indoors. Her positive attitude and bright smile was contagious and we couldn't help but feel appreciative for the interaction.

Our experience with this exploratory research has shifted our perspective and understanding of people we see on the streets. Each one of them have a unique story and suffer discrimination daily. We want to change the way we interact with people who are homeless. We will take time to listen and validate their experiences.

By WOU Student #2

Conducting this exploratory research with unsheltered people has been honestly a great, eye opening experience. We as people all have perceptions, views, bias and even reservations when it comes to people who live a very different type of lifestyle than we do, whether its a different culture, religious practice, or just lifestyle. This doesn't mean that you are a terrible

person. It's normal to have these feelings. It's what makes us human. It's what we do with our own feelings and viewpoints that matter.

I have grown up in areas that unsheltered people were not out of the norm. It was just a normal part of life that people were homeless and it was not uncommon to live and mingle with homeless people whether it was at a park, store or just walking down the street. I have never personally experienced homelessness before. There has been times where it could have been a lot closer than I like it to be, but never have. That all being said, I still harbor my own viewpoint on the subject of homelessness and the people who are experiencing it today.

As I started the day, I went in (as much as possible) with zero bias, zero perceptions, and zero conclusions of why these people were in the situations they are in now. Our eyesight can be a hindrance on those things. Our first impression (for those of us who have eyesight) is vision. The first thing about another person we get a reading on is from our sight. We see someone before any other interaction with them (or at least 99% of the time). Some people that I talked with or saw while talking to someone looked very "rough around the edges", and first thing that popped into my mind was a quick assessment of what their character was like, which I know isn't a fair thing to do. But sometimes it still happened. I quickly threw out those "judgements" and continued to talk with or walk up and talked with them.

I personally don't have a problem talking with anyone that I meet. I like meeting with people I really don't know, because it's always so interesting in hearing some of the experiences they have had in their lives. I think as a whole people just need to talk with everyone because only then will we know them and understand others' views.

There was a few who wasn't interested in taking the survey, which was fine, but I had small conversations with them and they were alright with that. Most everyone I talked with was receptive to having a conversation with me and was open to fill out the survey and just talk about life in general. They all had different reasons of why they were experiencing homelessness and seemed okay talking about it. While talking with some of them, I would sit next to them on the curb or the bench introduce myself and shake their hands and that seemed to be very welcoming to them. You can just tell that that doesn't happen much at all to them. It really seemed to express interest in what you had to say. Maybe it allowed them to see that I am just a person wanting to talk with another person, and treating them just like anyone else rather than a "homeless person", as other interactions they have had. But as I talked with them we both would notice other people in cars driving by just kind of staring at us, and trying not to be judgmental with them, could almost feel the judgements being passed from the car to us through their stares. I thought about it for a while and thought, what if we experienced that constantly on a daily basis? How would that affect us in the long run? Would it continue to wear on our own self-worth, or not?

I've asked about how or if they have felt discriminated against just because they are homeless. I've had mixed answers to that. Some people said "yeah" and some said "no, not really". It seemed to depend on how they live their lives on the street. For example one person kept to himself as much as he could and wore clean clothes. He said that people don't even realize that he is homeless. He had a tent "down by the river" somewhere but

always keeps himself clean and tries to take care of himself as much as he can with all of the help that is offered. He said that he doesn't feel discrimination towards him but he says that he sees it to others and hears about it pretty often.

Another man I talked with says that he tends to feel discriminated against because he is homeless. He says it's just the way people who aren't homeless, tend to treat the homeless population. He says that people would yell at them out of their cars to "get a job" and other things. He said that people would honk their horns driving by in the middle of the night just to bother them and wake them up. Just constant things like that is what he experiences. He says it happens around a weekly basis but hears and witnesses it on a daily basis.

A lot of the stories I got from them about why they are in this situation has been because of one thing happening after another and it got too much to handle. Incremental events after another that led to where they couldn't stay above water. One persons backpack was stolen which had all of his personal records in it and he had no way to get any of it back and it just led to no employment, which means he can get a place to live and so it was too hard to get back to where he was and so now what does he do? While talking to one person, he said that he spent 10 years in prison, just got out in February this year and now trying to get back on his feet. He said himself that went to prison for a little bit, but when he got out he went right back to his old ways and got in trouble again and he admits it was he himself that put him there but he is now faced with the challenge of being able to be employable because of his record but is trying and he is appreciative of the shelter he has now because he is working with them to try and get his life back on track. Another man I talked with said that "we have to look at ourselves, and change what and who we see in the mirror before anything else can change". I couldn't agree with him more. I have always felt that if we want a change (no matter what it is), we need to look at ourselves and ask the hard questions. Am I doing what it takes to start the change I am searching for? How can I be a "better" or "different" person and alter my choices to reach my goals? What does it take and am I willing to do what it takes? Only by bettering ourselves or making sure we are doing what is right, can we expect the rest of the world to change.

When it comes to the homeless population, the big question is, what can/do we do? Are we doing everything we can? I know that it's not an easy answer for this question. The bare minimum I think that people who are not experiencing or never have experienced homelessness can do is 1) Not judge. We don't know their story. 2) Treat them as a human being (because that's what they are). Some people think of them a menace, nuisance, or even start to dehumanize them. Be polite and courteous as you should anyone. 3) Help in any way you can. Just by donating one blanket to a shelter can make a substantial difference that you may never know. If we all make a small difference towards a better society, we can actually make a real difference for the future.

By WOU Student #3

It was a good experience and a reminder of my previous life. As I mentioned during last class, having support to come out of the streets is a must. A couple of the people that I talked to mentioned that even though there are many programs that offer support, some of the programs are not well designed to help the people who actually want to change their lives.

An individual gave me an example, he had been trying to get housing assistance, he claims that as he was waiting for his appointment there was a couple that were sharing that they had a “system” that they had used three times, they would get pregnant to have easier access to housing and once they had housing they would proceed with an abortion. Another individual commented on how the city had spent millions of dollars in the new SPD building, money that could have been used to have a building divided in three areas to shelter, families, women, and men.

Two individuals commented on the “Do you live in Salem?” question, one said, I consider LIVING having a place to live, a job, and family or friends, the other person just said, I just to live in Salem, now I only STAY in Salem.

I connected one of the conversations with the articles that we read in preparation for Lynelle’s visit last week. One person who was well dressed and clean commented that he used to be Regional Manager for a farm supply chain (I will not mention the name out of privacy), he claims that he received a DUII during non-work hours but he was driving his company vehicle, he got fired, wife became mad, divorced him, sold his house, lived out of his retirement money, and is now staying at a shelter. He also commented that he was proud that two of his children had careers already and that another child was finishing medical school at Stanford, this might be an indicator that even sheltered people who have relatives might not be able to get support from them. He also expressed that he had not been a victim of discrimination but that during his corporate life years he saw a lot of discrimination embedded in business practices, he gave examples of how the company will train interviewers to screen out candidates that were not well dressed, had piercing, tattoos, body types, etc, because they wanted to have the “best” people representing the company. He felt that that was incorrect but that he had to follow the rules of top executives.

I also noticed that unsheltered people are hesitant to report biased crimes to the SPD, one of them had witnessed another person calling the police and not doing anything. As Jacade mentioned, most of them were craving someone to talk to, they want to feel that there is someone who cares about them.

It is difficult to be unsheltered, sometimes you just want to get noticed and unfortunately even with my previous history I neglect to be aware of their needs, and I know that that happens to other organizations or people who want to help them.

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As you consider the possible paths for increasing safety and livability for all people in Salem, please keep the current imbalance in mind as part of the context for these hard topics.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lynelle Wilcox

Rachael Gangelhoff

From: Lynelle Wilcox <lynellex@comcast.net>
Sent: Monday, September 22, 2025 4:06 PM
To: CityRecorder
Cc: Julie Hoy; Vanessa Nordyke; Paul Tigan; Linda Nishioka; Shane Matthews; Deanna Gwyn; Dr. Irvin M Brown; Mai Vang; Micki Varney; Gretchen Bennett; Trevor Womack
Subject: Public Comment City Council meeting 092225 Agenda item 1.4.a

September 22, 2025

Mayor Hoy and City Councilors,

My name is Lynelle Wilcox. I live on Norway Street in Ward 1.

I've been attending City Council meetings and listening sessions related to safety and livability in Salem. Thank you for your focus, time, and work on this topic.

I think that tonight's presentation on Salem's annual Belonging/Discrimination survey will add some valuable context relevant to the safety and livability discussions.

Survey process: Homeless or not, people living in poverty often don't have the time and/or reliable technology to do surveys like this. Homeless or not, people living in poverty may be overwhelmed in trauma, survival mode, or may be working one or more jobs and balancing kids and family and homework, without the means and time to participate in online surveys. The ability to do online surveys from the comfort of home reflects a luxury that many people don't have.

For the last few years, I've participated in the Belonging survey process by taking the survey to the streets, with WOU students and on my own, or with other advocates, to offer people experiencing homelessness the chance to do the survey in paper format.

Discrimination experiences: Taking the survey to the streets has been a humbling experience. Many of the stories people share reflect discrimination and targeted violence that is appalling. Just doing the surveys with people was an "opportunity" to see some of the cruelty that happens – people drive by, yell insults at people who are homeless, revv their engines, making it hard to hear each other talk; making it hard to even think. This is what many individuals experience every day.

Many homeless individuals are turned away from stores even when they are dressed cleanly and have money to spend. Many drivers yell "Get a job!" as some of the people I'm speaking with are coming from, or heading to, their job. The assumptions we make about people experiencing homelessness are often wildly inaccurate.

We have sheltered adults and teens who specifically commit violence against people experiencing homelessness. Last year one TEENAGER beat a 64 year old homeless man to DEATH. Just last

month, a business owner casually admitted that he dumps vomit, feces, and food onto homeless people on his property. (How is that not a bias crime?)

In July 2025, two young adults were arrested for throwing eggs at people experiencing homelessness. How is any of this a safe and livable environment for people experiencing homelessness?

Some women and men shared that they first began doing meth when they were homeless, because meth enables them to stay awake at night in order to stay safe. It's safer to sleep during the daytime.

Men sleeping on sidewalks have shared that they sometimes woke up because some men are peeing on them as they sleep. The bars let out, and THIS is their fun? Homeless women AND men are in danger every day and night of their lives.

National data: National data reflects that homeless people are more likely to be the victims of violence than perpetrators of violence against a stranger. See this national report: https://nationalhomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2024-Hate-Crimes-Report_for-web.pdf

This report is hard to read; hard to swallow the realities of the level and types of cruelties that are done to people specifically because they are homeless. It tears my soul, and yet I think it's a responsibility to sometimes budget some time to learn what people are experiencing.

Safety/Livability imbalance: Businesses are mostly experiencing livability crimes – feces, broken windows, camping, fires, trash, petty theft - crimes that reflect people having nowhere to have basic human needs met. Nowhere to sleep, go to the bathroom, eat, or live.

Business owners should not have the workload of cleaning those things up, and they should not have the risk of higher repair and insurance costs. They should not have situations that make staff and/or customers afraid to patronize their businesses. The proposed safety and livability recommendations may reduce livability crimes and scary situations AND education can help reduce some fears.

And every human being should have the means and access to having basic human needs met. The duality matters and is interconnected – when basic human needs are met, livability crimes decrease.

People experiencing homelessness are experiencing actual ongoing violence. BOTH sets of experiences matter, but the scale is out of balance. And the imbalance seems to be growing. I'm sure you've each heard that Brian Kilmeade of Fox News said to just kill homeless and mental ill people with involuntary lethal injection:

https://x.com/SpencerHakimian/status/196671494720888512?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcam_p%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1966871593948483781%7Ctwgr%5E70f588e46979d3052f123e87085daab8f98c6423%7Ctwcon%5Es3 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.independent.co.uk%2Fnews%2Fworld%2Famericas%2Fus-politics%2Fbrian-kilmeade-fox-news-host-kill-homeless-b2826035.html

Somehow, Brian Kilmeade still has his job. That says more about our current culture than I wanted to know, yet we NEED to know that. Brian Kilmeade's words reflect how other people are also thinking and feeling. The other-ing of people experiencing homelessness is growing.

Gratitude: I'm grateful that we HAVE an annual Belonging/Discrimination survey, and I'm grateful that Salem's City Council approved and implemented the Human Rights Commission's recommendation in 2022 to make housing status a protected class. Thank you for that.

Common ground: I'm grateful that the proposed recommendations of the Homeless Service Team Expansion, Community Policing Officers, Salem Outreach and Livability Services Team Expansion, and a Co-Response Model Pilot Program each enable more safety and livability for people experiencing homelessness, for businesses, and for the general public **as long as each is done in ways that build trust and relationships.** I'm grateful that Police Chief Womack and Fire Chief Gerboth both have strong values of building trust and relationships.

Safety and Livability for all: As you consider the possible paths for increasing safety and livability for all people in Salem, please keep the current imbalance in mind as part of the context for these hard topics.

Safety and livability for ALL people, including people experiencing homelessness, is more necessary than ever. Homelessness is a national crisis at this point, and more people are having trouble making ends meet, as rents and other prices rise beyond what people can afford. As a result, businesses and individuals will all see and bear some ripples of homelessness. We have the sad yet crucial opportunity and responsibility to sort facts from myths, and to live up to our values and not down to our fears.

Safety and livability for all aligns with the Declaration of Independence words that "*All men are created equal and are endowed with certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*" Safety and livability for all aligns with our city's values of community belonging and inclusion.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lynelle Wilcox