



Reckoning with Homelessness (The Anthropology of Contemporary Issues)

By Kim Hopper

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"It must be some kind of experiment or something, to see how long people can live without food, without shelter, without security." Homeless woman in Grand Central Station

Kim Hopper has dedicated his career to trying to address the problem of homelessness in the United States. In this powerful book, he draws upon his dual strengths as anthropologist and advocate to provide a deeper understanding of the roots of homelessness. He also investigates the complex attitudes brought to bear on the issue since his pioneering fieldwork with Ellen Baxter twenty years ago helped put homelessness on the public agenda.

Beginning with his own introduction to the problem in New York, Hopper uses ethnography, literature, history, and activism to place homelessness into historical context and to trace the process by which homelessness came to be recognized as an issue. He tells the largely neglected story of homelessness among African Americans and vividly portrays various sites of public homelessness, such as airports. His accounts of life on the streets make for powerful reading.

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

"Part ethnography, part memoir; part chronicle, part social analysis; and—reversing the author's own characterization—decidedly more poetry than plumbing, *Reckoning with Homelessness* weaves scholarship, fieldwork, and advocacy into an elegant accounting and a plain good read. Hopper offers a rare and valuable behind-the-scenes look at the intellectual career of an applied anthropologist. The book is a must not only for students of homelessness but also for those with a broader interest in how anthropology happens."—Norma Ware, Harvard Medical School

"Kim Hopper takes us on several intertwined journeys that stimulate new ways of thinking about homelessness, social policy, advocacy, and anthropology. His book offers recent history, challenging analyses of why we have homelessness and prospects for its elimination, and reflections on the accomplishments and challenges of advocacy. In addition, his book reveals an anthropologist at work, adapting and adopting methods, insight, and self to the undersides of the often ugly but surprisingly resilient urban world of the streets."--Martha R. Burt, Urban Institute, Washington DC

"In its poetic sensibility, passion, and political purpose, Kim Hopper's tale of homelessness in the United States rivals George Orwell's classic account of unemployment in pre-war Britain. Based on more than 20 years' research and advocacy for those who learn to survive on almost nothing, this is an ethnography told with humility and eloquence."--Shirley Lindenbaum, CUNY Graduate Center

"There are many simple, straightforward accounts of contemporary American homelessness. All of them are wrong. In this book, Kim Hopper gives us as complete and nuanced an understanding as we are likely ever to find in print. Hopper situates American homelessness, particularly in the culturally archetypal streets and shelters of New York City, in all the essential dimensions: historical, cultural, socioeconomic, political, human. Sacrificing neither clarity nor compassion, Hopper has produced a gracefully humane rendering of homelessness in the richest city and country on earth, as a new millennium takes shape."---Gary Blasi, UCLA School of Law

Review

"A frequently cited authority on the subject . . . Hopper is well versed in public policy efforts and has distinctive views about their efficacy?or lack thereof. His impassioned arguments for reimagined efforts to address the plight of the homeless cannot be ignored."?*Library Journal*

"Hopper continues to push the envelope in the study of homelessness and, by extension, in the field of anthropology and on all fronts of the endeavor: theory, method, and politics. His work contains instances of brilliance as he offers his rich insight on the whole enterprise of poverty, homelessness, and contemporary citizenship. . . . Hopper challenges himself, his discipline, our collective social world, and each one of us to go beyond our moral witnessing to engaged advocacy and political action. Summing Up: Highly Recommended."?*Choice*

"For more than twenty years, Kim Hopper has probed the scope and causes of homelessness. He possesses the fine touch of an ethnographer. . . . He has a novelist's knack of evoking lives of gritty substance. But he also has a scientist's desire to know . . . and provides us an unusually rich thick description of the phenomenon."?America

"*Reckoning with Homelessness* . . . has to be among the best-written, most elegantly expressed works of urban anthropology ever. . . . Hopper's ethnographic ramble through the makeshift haunts of the world's richest city is inevitably ironic, bitterly painful, unfailingly informative."?Social Service Review

"Part ethnography, part memoir; part chronicle, part social analysis; and?reversing the author's own characterization?decidedly more poetry than plumbing, *Reckoning with Homelessness* weaves scholarship, fieldwork, and advocacy into an elegant accounting and a plain good read. Kim Hopper offers a rare and valuable behind-the-scenes look at the intellectual career of an applied anthropologist. The book is a must not only for students of homelessness but also for those with a broader interest in how anthropology happens."?Norma Ware, Harvard Medical School

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About the Author

Kim Hopper is Research Scientist at the Nathan S. Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research and Lecturer at the Columbia University Schools of Public Health and Law. He is a cofounder of both the New York and the National Coalitions for the Homeless. He is the coauthor of *Sociology In Medicine*, Third Edition, and coeditor of the upcoming *Recovery from Schizophrenia: An International Perspective*.

Users Review

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