

Every night, nearly 553,000 people sleep on the streets in the United States.

Let's talk about humanity. In 1946, President Harry Truman nominated Eleanor Roosevelt to be the country's first U.S. representative to the UN, calling her the new "First Lady of the World." By December 10, 1948, Eleanor Roosevelt had seen the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) to its completion.

She encouraged us to consider human rights in action where we live and work. In one of her last speeches at the UN, Roosevelt famously probed:

Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home — so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works.

How is this relevant to NAHRO members? You may have recently heard buzz around NAHRO conferences of people discussing whether our country should adopt housing as a right. Just as any other topic of discussion, we tend to take sides. Proponents for the right for housing point to the policies of "access" or the "right to shelter" in the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. On the other hand, opponents believe that governments would be legally obligated to provide "free" housing and blow the well-worn dog whistle of the destructive economic impacts of overbroad public handouts that reinforce an atmosphere of rewarding the unemployed and encouraging citizens to live on the "public dole."

This is a necessary discussion to have. It forces us to generate solutions to address and help those living on our streets. But, for this conversation to be successful we need the appropriate context. We need not focus on any legal rights to housing and creating a government obligation. Rather, we should think about humanity and put ourselves in the shoes of those living outside.

To solve homelessness, each one of us is obligated to do something. Working in an industry that focuses on housing puts you in an ideal position to engage in conversation with anyone at your disposal, including friends, neighbors, family, clubs you belong to, and any other opportunity where this conversation may be started. Through constructive dialogue, we can close the ideological gap and, together, come up with ideas that support those outside with respect and dignity and help them through their journey to self-sustainment.

In writing this article, I picked up some synonyms for the word humanity – compassion, brotherly love, fellow feeling, humaneness, kindness, kind-heartedness, consideration, understanding, sympathy, tolerance, goodness, good-heartedness, gentleness, leniency, mercy, mercifulness, pity, tenderness, benevolence, charity, generosity, magnanimity. Take your pick!