



GIMME SHELTER

USING THEIR ARTISTIC TALENTS, TWO LA WOMEN HELP FOSTER AWARENESS AND INITIATE ADVOCACY

It's easy to be immune to them — clutching their cardboard signs on an interstate off-ramp, their paper cups of change rattling for your attention outside Starbucks — it's much easier to avert one's eyes and hurry past, going on with the day, relying on projected disregard so as not to become overwhelmed by them. For the nearly 25,000 people who are homeless in the city of Los Angeles, there has to be another option. Doing something positive to help them can manifest itself in many different ways. Two Los Angeles women have actualized this other option — proving that helping the homeless is applicable and necessary for all of us.



Rachel Fleischer has always felt a connection to the homeless. She remembers when she was just a child, riding in the car with her mom and driving past a homeless family. Seeing the suffering haunted her so much she asked her mom to drive back home to make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the vagrant family. This first altruistic act foreshadowed her post-college work.

Following the completion of her film studies degree at USC, Fleischer embarked on a rather ambitious project. With no money and little help, she took to the streets with a simple, albeit slightly dangerous, objective: to interview homeless people. Working full-time, Fleischer began dedicating most of her free time to the project. When the weekend rolled around, she'd hop in her car, equipped only with a camera and an idea, and drive all over Los Angeles searching for people

willing to talk. "It was important for me to profile homelessness all over Los Angeles," says Fleischer, "not just in skid row, where people commonly think of homelessness."

The filmmaker didn't know what form the final project would take, but knew she wanted to shed light on a world so often coiled in the shadows of a city. After editing more than 185 minutes of footage into a 74-minute feature film, Fleischer completed her narrative-driven documentary in the fall of 2009.

Without A Home exposes a spectrum of reasons why and how people end up homeless, focusing on a handful of those who are unique in their struggles and stories. "I definitely think that drug abuse/addiction, mental illness, unemployment are reasons that people are without homes, but I wouldn't say that those are the only