



Participate in the
August 4 DVD Release of the Soloist

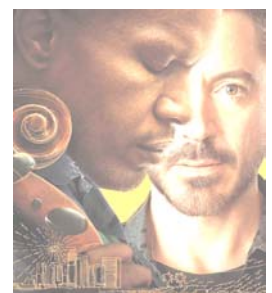
Join the social action campaign to **challenge false serotypes** about people who have a mental illness and live on the street. Participate in the August 4 DVD release of the movie *the Soloist*—the story of Nathaniel Ayers, a gifted Juilliard-trained string player whose mental illness led him to become homeless. His story illustrates strength in community connections and relationships. It is not acceptable, regardless of a person's mental health, for anyone to experience homelessness—with proper supports, housing stability can be achieved. We can all take action to solve homelessness and de-stigmatize mental illness.

Below are several activities you and your organization can take part in during the week of August 4:

- Host a viewing party at your organization, church, school, etc.**
Visit the National Alliance to End Homelessness' "Watch Party Tool Kit"
(www.endhomelessness.org/section/policy/advocacy)

At the viewing party, you can:

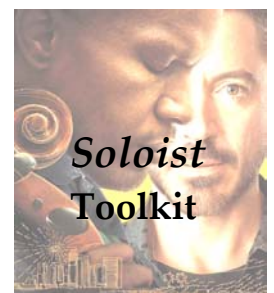
- **Facilitate a discussion group.**
The Toolkit includes movie discussion questions.
 - **Launch a letter writing campaign.**
The Alliance's *Take Action* webpage has step by step directions and a sample letter.
(www.endhomelessness.org/section/policy/advocacy)
- Work with local media on a story about solutions to homelessness.**
Visit the Media Handbook on the Alliance website.
(<http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/news/press>)
- Launch a "myth busters" campaign.**
Develop a "myth & fact" sheet and work with multiple organizations to disseminate it through newsletters, websites, blogs, and community meetings.
- Kick-off a local fund raiser or clothing drive.**
Write up the stories of people who have achieved stable housing and hand out facts about homelessness to everyone who drops things off.



The Soloist

Discussion Questions

- 1. What do you think lead to Nathaniel Ayers' breakdown? What symptoms did he exhibit?**
For more information about the role of mental health in the homelessness population, check out our [blog](#).
- 2. When we first meet Nathaniel Ayers as a homeless person, where is he living? What is he doing? Why does he choose to live there?**
For more information about the chronically homeless, check out our [policy focus pages](#).
- 3. What is Steve Lopez's initial response to Nathaniel's situation? What would yours be if you meet an affable homeless person you wanted to help?**
Lots of people try to navigate the homeless system on behalf of friends and family. Find your housing program or service provider to find out how you can help.
- 4. At first, Nathaniel balks at the idea of living at the Lamp – why?**
The debate over housing vs. shelter vs. services – especially for those experiencing mental illness – is ongoing. Find out more other solutions to homelessness on our [website](#).
- 5. What was your reaction to the depiction of Skid Row in Los Angeles?**
These areas where homeless people congregate has been the topic of much discussion among local leaders and in the media. Find out if your community has such an area and what you can do about it.
- 6. If you were Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, how would you handle Skid Row?**
- 7. What do you think of the reaction of the citizens reading Steve Lopez's column? What would your reaction be?**
What's the state of homelessness in your city? Do you know? How do you find out?
- 8. What do you think the role of the media is in bringing attention to homelessness and other social problems?**
Newspapers have long been our source of news, but as the industry changes and digital and consumer-generated news becomes more prominent, newspapers are feeling the push. What responsibilities does the news have in informing the citizenry? Does that change as the news industry changes?
- 9. Steve digs into Nathaniel's past to find out that he is a gifted former Julliard students, had family and friends, and a full life. Is that how you see the homeless? How do we "humanize" homelessness?**
Homeless people are often painted with one brush – if not ignored all together. In the face of rising homelessness rates, what can we do to ensure that we don't lose sight of the humanity behind homelessness?
- 10. What do YOU think is the solution to homelessness in the United States?**



Homelessness

Frequently Asked Questions

11. How many people are homeless?

Short answer: it's hard to tell

Long answer: On any given night there are 675,000 homeless people in the country and over the course of a year, between 2.5 – 3.5 million people experience homelessness.

For more information about the numbers, check out our [Homelessness Research Institute](#) page on the website.

12. How many people are homeless where I live?

Depends on where you live! But homelessness is not just an urban problem – the latest counts show us that homelessness is on the rise in both rural and suburban areas.

For the latest counts by state, check out our [2009 Counts Media Map](#).

13. Why are people homeless?

Again, it depends who you are – different people are homeless for different reasons. Some people become homeless people of medical problems, some people become homeless because of a disruption in the family.

But we've found that a lack of affordable housing has continued to play a significant role on why people become and *stay* homeless.

For a breakdown of all the different ways people become homeless, check out [Why are people homeless?](#) on our [blog](#).

14. What about mental illness?

People who are homeless and have a mental illness generally experience what we call "[chronic homelessness](#)", which basically means that they tend to be homeless for a long time.

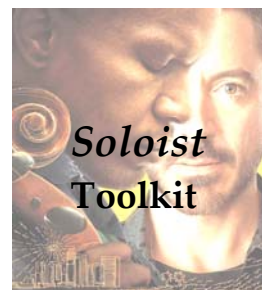
Mental illness usually prevents people from accessing the services they need to work through their mental illness and achieve self-sufficiency. Other people who experience chronic homelessness also have other disabilities – both physical and mental.

What people have found is that [permanent supportive housing](#) – that's stable housing coupled with services including therapy, counseling and the like – is an efficient, effective, and cost-saving way to solve chronic homelessness.

Find out more about [permanent supportive housing](#) on our website.

15. What can I do?

This watch party was a good start – but you can always find ways to support good policy and good practices in your community. For more, visit our "[What You Can Do](#)" page.



The Soloist What YOU Can Do!

While the story of a gifted cello player and a Los Angeles Times columnist isn't common, it does shed light on the millions of people who experience homelessness every year. Do your part – check out these things that YOU can do.

16. Stay up-to-date!

Sign up for our Advocacy Newsletter, our Research Newsletter, our General Newsletter or any of the other publications that get sent out regularly. Sign up on our [website](#)!



17. Read the news.

Between the stimulus money to the recent release of annual homeless numbers by the [Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) (HUD), it's an exciting time to be talking about homelessness. Make sure you don't miss a beat – check out our [Daily Clips](#).



18. Read the blog!

We've recently started a blog! On it, you can get weekly news roundups, breakdowns on terms, upcoming legislation, and features of our staff and departments. We're doing a LOT to end homelessness – and we want to share it with you!

19. or...start your own!

It's fast, easy and free – what more could you want! Start your own blog and connect with people in your area, in your state, and across the country who are doing things to make progressive changes in homelessness and elsewhere.

20. Tweet with us!

We didn't stop at the blog – we tweet now too! Follow us at [@naehomelessness](#) and tell us what you think – trust me, we're listening.



21. Find out about YOUR area



[change.org](#)

How many homeless people live in your area? Where are the local shelters and service providers? Can you lend a hand? I bet no one will turn you down. HUD provides good resources on how to find out what's happening around you – check out their [website](#). AND, for data about homelessness in your community, check out our [2009 Counts Media Map](#).

22. Make some changes

We're on [change.org](#) – along with thousands of like-minded individuals who want to make sure they make a difference. Become a supporter and find lots of other people and organizations who want to make changes together!

