

Conversations about the Homeless

1) Hi, before we begin can you share with me your name, age & a short description of what you're currently doing?

RESPONSE: Hello Ben, my name is Jin Teng, full name Tan Jin Teng. I am 63 this year, and I am now retired. Use to work at OCBC as a risk manager.

2) So, as a (what they're currently doing), have you ever came across someone who was homeless?

- if yes, can you share the encounter?

- if no, do you think there are homeless people in Singapore?

RESPONSE: No. Singapore don't have a lot of homeless people anymore. Last time use to have a lot, Changi, Bedok area. But I think now the number of people who are homeless is not a lot lah but should be still have.

3) What do you think being homeless means?

RESPONSE: Don't have a roof over one's head.

4) Can you share what you think these people do daily?

RESPONSE: Looking for a way to earn money for their next meal or visiting their friends.

5) What do you mean by friends?

RESPONSE: I'm sure everyone has friends, even the homeless or beggars on the streets. I think they will meet up to have coffee or tea and chit chat.

6) And what about their night routine?

RESPONSE: Finding a good place to sleep and settle for the night.

7) When was the last time you:

- had a shower?

- had a meal?

- washed your clothes?

RESPONSE: Wah! Shower and wash clothes... a few hours ago if I'm not wrong.

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8) Imagine yourself without a home, where in Singapore would you go to fulfil these basic needs?

- food & water
- sanitation
- shelter, safety & security

RESPONSE: I will try to find a homeless shelter in Singapore.

9) Why do you think these individuals/groups end up as they are now?

RESPONSE: I think some of them maybe have lost their jobs or have addictions, drinking, gambling. I think as a retiree, not having a job means no money coming in and I have to depend on my children or the government for my CPF. So, having no job is probably why they are sleeping on the streets.

10) Do you think there's a way out of their predicament?

RESPONSE: Depending on their credentials, they might be able to get out of it.

11) What do you mean by credentials?

RESPONSE: Got O Level, A Level? PSLE have a not? I think studies is very important to get a job. In the past, you need at least O Level before companies want to hire you, but now if you have O levels only, companies will ask you go back, and study finish first.

12) So being homeless is of course without shelter, but that doesn't exclude them from having their belongings – personal items and at times even family members. How would you advice someone in such a situation?

RESPONSE: The first step is to seek help from family members. If for whatever reason, divorce or unhappy, not able to talk, then maybe direct them towards a specialist.

13) Here are some examples of campaigns and activations done overseas. Do you think they will be effective in a place like Singapore?

RESPONSE: The posters on the floor and the photographs wouldn't be effective to me, at least for me. The bench is interesting. If I were to sit on a bench like this, I will be curious to open up and see how it looks like. Might even lie in it to see how it works. I think this will give me a very real experience of what a homeless person would experience.

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14) Is homelessness a policy problem or community problem?

RESPONSE: A mixture. It's a policy problem i.e. are measures to help them get back on their feet good enough? It's also a community problem as the predicament of such people are not widely known and I don't think there are many services that cater to their needs.

15) Let's put aside political intervention. Who in society do you think can drive the greatest impact upon this community?

RESPONSE: Those who are able to provide a helping hand without sacrificing their own lives. Last time my work area there have a lot, hahaha, the businessmen and women.

16) In your own capacity now as a (what they're currently doing), how do you think you can reach out to the homeless?

RESPONSE: I would find a social service or non-profit organization which specializes in helping the homeless.

17) Which would you be more interested/open to participating:

- an outreach activation
- an immersive experience (role-playing/experiential)
- none of the above?

RESPONSE: An outreach activation, as I will get to interact with the homeless in person. I don't think anyone will want to experience what they have to experience. Hear already don't want.

- INTERVIEW END -