



Cast provides emergency and transitional shelter to survivors experiencing homelessness.

Addressing the Housing Crisis

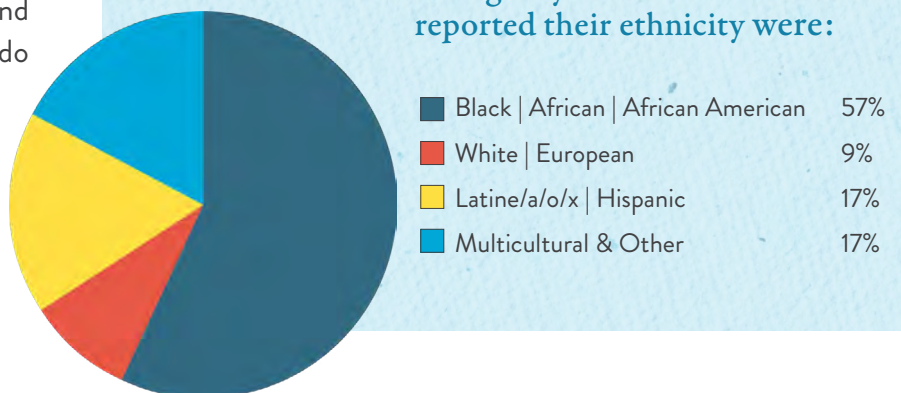
What makes someone vulnerable to homelessness also makes them vulnerable to human trafficking. They are both the result of systemic issues like poverty, marginalization and racism. In Los Angeles, members of the Black community disproportionately experience homelessness. Despite making up 9% of our county's population, they represent around a third of those experiencing homelessness and half of those who stayed at Cast's emergency shelter last year. Around 70,000 people in Los Angeles County do not have a safe place to live today.

For many survivors, a lack of safe housing was not only a cause of their trafficking experience but also a result of it. Many people are forced or tricked into

88% Survivors experiencing homelessness when they called our hotline

100% Survivors who had stable and safe housing when they graduated from Cast.

Survivors who stayed at Cast's emergency shelter and who reported their ethnicity were:



living with their trafficker or in a place they cannot easily leave. When they do leave, most have nowhere to go and are extremely vulnerable again, including from their trafficker knowing their whereabouts. Many who were trafficked when they arrived in the US do not know where they are or who to turn to, and do not speak the local language. Incredibly, former Cast clients have spotted other recently-escaped survivors in public because they recognize their state of confusion, distress and fear, and have connected them to Cast.

Human trafficking survivors have a right to housing and it's one of their top needs. But rents are at their highest ever. If survivors cannot afford housing, they cannot easily access services or get a job, and are extremely vulnerable to being trafficked again.

Even when survivors can afford rent, they face another hurdle: landlords may not rent to them because of bad credit or criminal records which may be a direct result of their trafficking experience. BIPOC communities are most likely to face this barrier.

For those who experienced trafficking long ago, homelessness is still a looming threat, especially in recent times. Half of the survivors we provided pandemic-related 'micro-grants' to had experienced homelessness in the last year.

Cast is the only provider of housing dedicated to human trafficking survivors in Los Angeles, catering to their unique needs as a result of their trauma. Most other shelters in LA are designed to serve survivors of domestic violence or women experiencing homelessness – and they are full most of the time.

What Cast is doing

Housing is the top need among callers to Cast's 24-hour hotline, uniquely run by our shelter staff who provide expert, empathic support. Callers who go on to our emergency shelter are met by the same people they spoke to. Over the last year, we took 2,210 hotline calls from survivors, professionals and members of the public. 88% of the survivors who called told us they were experiencing homelessness.

Cast provides a continuum of housing services based on survivors' needs and choices, from emergency to permanent housing. Survivors staying at Cast's emergency shelter, Hummingbird Haven,

are usually escaping their trafficking situation; the shelter offers a safe place to sleep, eat, and get counseling. After up to 90 days there, if survivors need more support, Cast's transitional shelter, Mariposa Haven, provides up to 2 years' housing, along with a host of supports that directly address survivors' vulnerabilities to homelessness including education, training and jobs.

Launched in 2020, Cast's Rapid Rehousing Program has been extremely successful in supporting survivors who are ready to move into a permanent home with rental assistance and dedicated case management.

“Cast’s housing programs ensure that survivors feel safe for the first time and that they are in control of their own lives. This is why affordable, safe, and permanent housing is essential for them to flourish and become members of their communities.”

Rebecca Amado Sprigg, Associate Director of Equitable Housing, Cast

It is unacceptable that when survivors of human trafficking bravely escape their situation, they often have nowhere safe to go and find themselves in greater danger than ever. When Larissa called Cast’s 24-hour hotline, she and her three children - the youngest, a baby - were sleeping in her car, hiding from the trafficker. Since Cast’s shelter (run from a hotel during the height of the pandemic) was full, our Emergency Response team called over 30 other shelters, but none could accept the family. So Cast provided services to Larissa and her children in her car for a week, until a room at Cast’s shelter became available. They stayed at the shelter for a month and Cast then supported Larissa to find safe housing.

Ending the housing crisis in Los Angeles will help end human trafficking. To get there, we need an increase in the minimum wage, increased affordable housing, and a strengthened social safety net that is racially equitable. **We need to treat homelessness like an urgent public health issue.**

A ‘forever’ Emergency Shelter



Shelter living room. Photo: Cast



Shetler therapy room. Photo: Cast

After running our emergency shelter from a hotel throughout the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Cast finally acquired a permanent shelter residence in partnership with the City of Los Angeles. The shelter provides up to 90 days’ housing and crisis support for up to 15 adult women and is the only one of its kind in Los Angeles.

Berlyn's path to a place of her own

"Growing up was hard and happy. Jobs in the Philippines were only enough for rent or bills but not enough to give to your family. So, I decided to go abroad and send money. My family paid the agency for a cleaning job at a hospital but then they said, 'No, there is nothing'; it's fraud. I ended up as a domestic helper.

Living with the family was like killing myself: no love, only working 24/7, waking up in the night to get something they asked for. **I thought to myself, 'this is not right, but I have to'.** I thought I would die there. The mother would tell me off for cooking wrong and one time she told me that she was sending me back to the Philippines."

Through an incredible turn of events, after eight years, Berlyn was able to contact another woman who had escaped from the same family four years earlier.

"She cried, I cried. I was so glad I met her. She called Cast; she said they had helped her for two years and that they could

help me. I went straight to their emergency shelter. It was so nice and quiet. You feel welcome and safe when you get there."

After a month, Berlyn moved to Cast's transitional shelter, where she stayed for two years while she studied English, took a medical billing course and worked with Cast's counselor. In 2020, she was ready to move into her own place.

"Cast helped with everything - they helped me find this apartment and provided 100% rent for six months, and furniture.

They asked me if I would feel secure being away from the shelter. I told them, 'I think I will be okay.' They already gave me a lot of help. **I wanted something to prove to myself that I can do it on my own.**

Cast helped me so much. It's the only place that treated me like a family, whenever I needed help or somebody to talk to. It's the place that helped me to be me again, to move on and to take care of myself, to love myself."



Berlyn at home with her dogs.
Photo: Cast/Michal Ojo

Cast

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SLAVERY & TRAFFICKING