

ArtSpace Artists' Statement 6/1/22

As clients of HomeFront New Jersey, we hope our exhibit will engage and educate visitors by inviting them into homelessness and the lives of human beings working to liberate themselves from it.

HomeFront was founded in 1991 by Connie Mercer to provide homeless families with the resources they need to become independent. In the thirty years since then HomeFront has developed facilities, programs, and services that house families with dignity and give them tools that empower them to rebuild their lives.

Visitors walk into the tornado of homelessness. A funnel cloud appears on the wall, and words about homelessness provided by HomeFront clients hang from pieces of coarse cloth. Eviction notices, want ads, and hospital bills hang on the walls. A fan evokes the upheaval that causes people to become homeless.

The chaos dissipates as visitors make their way through soft but uncomfortable hanging red cloth, conveying movement through systems that both help and hinder the person attempting to escape homelessness. Applications for jobs, loans, and low-income housing hang on the cloth and walls.

Visitors then move into clarity, with comfort and rest in sight. This brightly lit area contains a comfortable chair draped with a colorful quilt next to a small table holding food. On one wall is a collaborative quilt made of house-shaped canvas pieces painted by homeless clients. Another wall holds client art. A monitor features clients telling their stories.

We hope this exhibit will help visitors question the assumption that the homeless and those living in poverty are incompetent and less than human. We also hope to encourage visitors to engage compassionately with their neighbors in need and to examine the American belief that we provide "liberty and justice for all."