

emergency shelter intake form

lyrics/text by Gabriel Kahane

I. WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE ?

(Sung by Alicia Hall Moran)

What brings you here?

What happened?

Where did you sleep last night?

Have you ever had a lease in your name?

Have you ever had utilities in your name?

Have you ever had a name on the tip of your tongue?

Would prior landlord give you a bad reference?

A glowing reference?

Would prior landlord fail to mention

The wondrous smells

That would emit from your kitchen?

Have you ever owned a home?

Have you ever lost a home?

Please use the following space

To draw a picture

Of the look on a man's face

When he learns he has lost his home.

II. CHORUS OF INCONVENIENT STATISTICS

(Sung by the Chorus of Inconvenient Statistics, hereinafter CIS)

We are the chorus of inconvenient statistics,

Legislation, and relevant documents.

We do not wish to make any of you feel shitty.

(Excuse our language—

We haven't been properly socialized.)

But, we know that you, gentle listener,

Sitting veiled in the gauzy dark,

Did not come here this evening

To be lectured or to be shamed.

Nevertheless...

We believe that the lifeblood of art is—
How shall we put it?
Ambiguity—
Whereas to beat an audience
Over the head with ideological claptrap
Would suggest, ipso facto, that ambiguity
Had been sacrificed in favor of
Making a point.

And yet we believe that
In order to do justice
To this heady story,
This gnarled complex of ideas,

We must from time to time
Dispense with politesse
And share with you
The cold hard facts.

III. WHERE DID YOU STAY LAST NIGHT?

(Sung by the CIS)

Where did you stay last night?
Check one box only:

(Response sung by Alicia Hall Moran)

On the Street
Emergency Shelter
Transitional Housing
Psychiatric Facility
Hospital (*non-psychiatric*)
Hospital whose fluorescent light
And whose scent of death
Make you feel all kinds of nauseous,

And from which you flee
In a flowered gown
At 3am into the April dark...

Jail/Prison/Juvenile Facility
Domestic Violence Situation

Living with Relatives/Friends
Living with Relatives/Friends
Whose judgment of you is
Trying your patience.

Living with Relatives/Friends
Whose patience is being tried
By you and your family.

Living with Relatives/Friends
In a half-finished basement
Where you and your son and daughter
Share a bed
In which you lie awake;
Listen to footsteps upstairs,
The breath of your children,
And wonder what you did wrong...

Motel not paid for by Shelter Voucher
Motel not painted by Edward Hopper
Motel whose manager looks at you
Sideways with a mouthful of rotten teeth,
A look that you can't help but think
Has got something to do with
The color of your skin...

Foster Care/Group Home
Permanent Supportive Housing
Place Not Meant For Habitation
Car/Bus/Subway/An Embankment

A Bridge
A Forest
A Ridge
A Clocktower

In the moon, in the sun
In a room overrun
With disappointment, despondency,
And a broken flat screen tv screen
Watched by rats enthusiastically
You wonder what you did wrong...

IV. IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO "LIVING WITH FAMILY SLASH FR

(Sung by the CIS)

*If you answered "Yes" to
"Living with family slash friends,"
Please complete the following:*

(Response sung by Alicia Hall Moran, except as noted)

How do four people sleep in a room that's meant for two,
A game of Tetris that can't be won?
How do you explain the word "foreclosure"
To your son?

What happens when your son
Wets the bed that the three of you
Are sleeping in and you speak to him harshly,
And he cries?

And while you cannot pay for the car
That's in the shop, how will you get to work
And the boys to school?

Does your pride catch in your throat?
Do you tell lies so that people don't know?
When you receive the call from the school
In your office chair:
CIS: Please pick up your son.

Will you tell them the truth
That you had to choose:
Mortgage or Medical?

So if my boy is acting out,
Hit another boy in the mouth,
Our catalog of loss
Might have something to do with it.

Does your pride catch in your throat?
Do you tell lies so that people don't know?

V. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN EVICTED?

(Plain text sung by Alicia Hall Moran; *Italic text sung by the CIS*)

Have you ever been evicted?
How many times?
0 • 1 • 2-3 • 4-9 • More than 10

If yes, how did it feel to hold the pink paper
You are hereby notified
As you stood in the melting snow
that the county sheriff's office
Where men in coveralls tossed your belongings
has a court order
Your son's baseball trophies, your cookbooks,
requiring your immediate removal
Onto the pavement?
from the premises.

On a scale of 1 to 5,
How would you rate your
Failure to vacate will be cause for
Humiliation
the sheriff to remove your belongings.
when you asked the men,
If an eviction is
choking on your pride,
necessary, risk of damages or loss
if you could use the bathroom
of property shall be borne by you
in what had been
the defendant
until that morning
after delivery
your home?
by the sheriff
to the place of safe-keeping.

Have you ever been evicted
After calling the police
To report the blue black bruises,
To report the blue black bruises
On face, neck, chest, arms?
(check all body parts that apply)

"Public nuisance," the landlord claimed,
While you applied concealer
Outside the courtroom.

Or perhaps you didn't call—
Your bruises burnish, fester, and increase?

Or did the company move to Michigan?
Did envelopes with plastic windows
Pile up on the table til you found yourself

Balanced on steel girders?
A bridge over the Delaware
Fistfuls of pills,
Red, yellow, pink
Then a little voice,
"Either God or my grandmother,"
You would later recall,
Told you not to jump.

What was the last thought
That coursed through your mind
As you lay down on the sidewalk
And waited to be found?

VI. CERTAINLY WE CAN ALL AGREE

(Sung by Holcombe Waller)

Certainly we can all agree
That we are in the midst of a housing crisis
For which the most effective solution
Is to build new homes at more affordable prices.

The only nagging question that remains—
The one that most nearly pertains—
Is where these units should to be erected
So that we might keep protected
Our sun-drenched, gut-renovated, acre-and-a-half
Victorian domains,
And so we've written these refrains:

(Add Gabriel Kahane on sparse acoustic guitar accompaniment)

To have shelter is a right we all hold dear
As long as it isn't built too near
To our bespoke craftsman homes with their raised beds
Full of heirloom asparagus and ancient grain for our breads.

Baby, this doesn't have to be hard—
Put 'em anywhere at all,
But not in my backyard.

We've always loved the unwashed masses,
The hardscrabble working classes,
So long as we can't see or hear them
'Cause the truth is that we fear them.

Baby, this doesn't have to be hard—
Put 'em anywhere at all,
But not in my backyard.

Not in my backyard!
We don't wanna have to have our windows barred.
Anywhere else is fine within the urban growth boundary line,
Put 'em anywhere at all,
But not in my backyard.

Never mind the fact
That we live on plundered land.
Those Natives whom we killed and conquered
Surely understand
That when Andrew Jackson held out
His cold and bloody hand
They were consigning themselves
To live in squalid poverty
On inadequate tracts bereft
Of modern niceties
Like running water or electricity
But that ain't no concern for you or me!

We believe in social justice at any price
As long as it don't mean we have to make a sacrifice.
Mixed income housing's nice in theory
But in practice makes us leery, still this,
This doesn't have to be hard—
Build it anywhere at all,
Just not in my backyard.

Not in my backyard!
You can understand why we gotta stay on guard.
It's a sacred old tradition
Of denying folks permission
To gain entry into our community—
That is if they don't look like you or me
And have an income north of a million two or three.
This doesn't have to be hard—
Put 'em anywhere at all
But not in my backyard.

VII. HAVE YOU RECEIVED ANY INCOME IN THE PAST THIRTY D

(Sung by Alicia Hall Moran)

Have you received any income in the past thirty days?

If yes, please describe:

(Sung by the CIS)

Home Health Aid

Mortgage Broker

Legal Advisor

Conceptual Artist

Bike Mechanic

Brand Consultant

Construction Worker

Lemonade Stand Operator

Clerk at Kroger's

Clerk at Walmart/Clerk at Fred Meyer

Oscar Meyer Weiner Mascot

Adjunct Faculty

Gas Station Attendant

Security Guard

Human Security Blanket

Singer in a Band

Violinist In An Orchestra

Oboist In An Orchestra

Head Usher

Visual Artist

Sandwich Artist

Con Artist

Escape Artist

(Sung by Alicia Hall Moran)

If you have received Non-Cash Benefits

In the past thirty days

And have still gone to bed hungry,

You may not have been able to distinguish

Between the emptiness in your stomach

And your sense of resignation.

VIII. DO YOUR CO-WORKERS KNOW THAT YOU HAVE LOST YO

(Sung by Alicia Hall Moran)

Do your co-workers know that you have lost your home?
Do they know you have sweated through sheets
In every bed you've slept in for the last six weeks?
Do your co-workers know?

IX. ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR A SECTION 8 VOUCHER

(Sung by the CIS)

Are you eligible for a Section 8 or Housing Choice Voucher?
Have you applied for a Section 8 or Housing Choice Voucher?
Are you on a waiting list for a Section 8 or Housing Choice Voucher?
Were you given an estimate of how long you would be waiting?
If yes, were you told that the wait would be:
3–6 months • 7–12 months • 1–2 years • 3–5 years
The duration of a presidency
A generation

If more than ten years,
Please check box labeled *eternity*

Please make a list of the activities
You intend to pursue
While on the waiting list.
Be descriptive.
Be creative.
You may choose to include illustrations.

Are you aware that despite having qualified for this voucher,
Intended to help low income, very low income,
Extremely low income families to acquire housing,
That you and your family have only a one in five chance
Of receiving it?

If by, contrast, you were a homeowner,
You would be eligible for the mortgage interest deduction,
Which after being capped at \$750,000
Per annum (to facilitate corporate tax cuts)
Will still result in federal loss
Of \$50 billion dollars,
(give or take)
90 percent of which will benefit families
With household incomes greater than \$100,000 or more per annum.

In plain English, this means
That the federal government

Subsidizes housing for the middle and upper classes
At a higher rate than it does for the poor.

How does this make you feel?

X. HAS YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH CAUSED YOU TO LOSE YOUR

(Sung by Alicia Hall Moran)

Does your body ache
Like a bright light that's also black,
But no doctor,
For fear of bills
You know that you can't pay?

Do you worry your lip:
Rent or electricity,
Gasoline or groceries,
What to sell?

Blood plasma
Your body
Check all that apply

Sell the plasma,
Eat the cookies,
Drink the juice,
Stumble to the car.

Rest your head
On the steering wheel
And listen to the tape you made
In 2004

Regain composure
Drive to Walmart
Cash the forty dollar check
You received for opening a vein.

Does your body ache
Like a bright light that's also black?

XI. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SUBPRIME MORTGAGE LOAN CRI

(Sung by Gabriel Kahane)

Um, we're super sorry to interrupt
And we mean no disrespect,
But we felt that this might be
An opportune moment to interject
A brief history of the financial crisis
Expressed through mortgages, subprime.
But in order to do so
We must revisit an earlier time

Of Absolut vodka, perms, and wedge salad,
Michael Milken indicted for junk bonds, invalid,
Revolutions in the Eastern bloc,
The first tremors in a worldwide shock,
That would leave the old guard looking pallid.

But the suits on Wall Street
They couldn't be bothered,
They were too busy toasting
The new bond they'd fathered.

An industry-wide sensation:
The Collateralized Debt Obligation!
Say you've got yourself a pile of different loans:
Aircraft-lease and credit card, vacations homes—
Diversified assets you can slice and dice
Then repackage and re-sell for a reasonable price.

A means to redistribute the collective risk
Into a stew of debt or better yet, securitized bisque!
It made markets more efficient, at least that's how it seemed:
The free market built as Milton Friedman had dreamed!

Can you hear the bull market roar?
That's the sound of the rich buying debt from the poor!
And when they've bought it all, my friend,
They've gotta make more,
And that's where subprime mortgages come in!

Some years pass or to be exact a decade and a few,
We go from George Bush One to Bubba on to George Bush Two.
Wall Street got addicted to that CDO bet—
That's the bet that says that folks will never default on their debt.

They needed lots of loans to feed their debt machine
That turns our IOUs and You Owe Me's right back into green
So in the boom of new construction in the early to mid-aughts
With McMansions in production on these grand suburban lots

A plot was hatched behind the scenes
By fatcats in the backs of limousines:
They'd offer toxic lines of credit
To those too poor to get it
By more or less any other means.

(Sung by the CIS)

*Can you hear the bull market roar?
That's the sound of the rich buying debt from the poor!
And when they've bought it all, my friend,
They've gotta make more,
And that's where subprime mortgages come in!*

(Sung by Gabriel Kahane)

The lenders knew the fine print of these loans contained
A mine field full of rate hikes that were never explained,
So folks who made subsistence wages, they got loans for half a mil—
Told to lie about their incomes on the forms they had to fill.

The lenders thought that housing prices couldn't help but rise
So when folks couldn't make a payment, they'd instead re-amortize,
Then these loans were bought by Wall Street, cut in pieces, packed, and sold,
They were seemingly innocuous, the truth, though never told,

Was that these new financial instruments, all rated triple-A
Were in fact big piles of garbage that would putrefy some day,
And when these unsuspecting folks who'd bought these grand and lavish homes,
They found the housing market stalled, began to default on their loans.

You see the boom turned to a bubble, and by fall '07, well
The bubble turned to rubble, and it pains me much to tell
You that the CDOs we mentioned, that hedge funds all had stashed
As seemingly good money, now one by one they crashed.

(Sung by the CIS)

*Can you hear the bull market roar?
That's the sound of the rich buying debt from the poor!
And when they've bought it all, my friend,
They've gotta make more,
And that's where subprime mortgages come in!*

(Sung by Gabriel Kahane)

For their role in fiscal meltdown, and for judgment lacked
You'd think you'd see the guys at Deutsche Bank and Goldman sacked,

But instead they walked with millions, golden parachutes and more,
Sure, the building was on fire but they danced right through the door

Because although more than nine million families' homes were lost
If Wall Street made a profit, baby, it was worth the cost
Cause in America, my friend, you know, we love the dollar the most,
So what if folks are sleeping on the street from coast to coast?

Equality's a concept for Norwegians, Finns, and Danes,
Whereas we prefer our shirts and skins, our zero sum financial games,
So in with Milton Friedman out with old John Maynard Keynes.

(Sung by the CIS)

*Can you hear the bull market roar?
That's the sound of the rich buying debt from the poor!
And when they've bought it all, my friend,
They've gotta make more,*

(Sung by Gabriel Kahane)

So baby that's where subprime mortgages
And predatory payday lenders
Certain kinds of credit cards
And a host of other strategies
To empty out the bank accounts
Of those who're facing stagnant wages
Limited opportunity for gainful employment

(Sung by the CIS)

Yes that's where subprime mortgage loans come in!

XII. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN DENIED A LOAN OR A LEASE?

(Plain text sung by Alicia Hall Moran; Italic text sung by the CIS)

Natural or artificially established barriers

Have you ever been denied a lease?

will prove effective

Have you ever been denied a loan?

in protecting a neighborhood

In Birmingham in 1886

in protecting a neighborhood

In Chicago in 1933

and the locations within it

Milwaukee 1964

from adverse influence, namely
Queens 1978
the infiltration of business and industrial uses
Baltimore in 2007
lower-class occupancy,
In Philadelphia
and inharmonious racial groups.
In 2016
and inharmonious racial groups.

Have you and your parents
Your grandparents, too
Been corralled into districts
Whose borders somebody drew

In bright blood red greasepaint
On maps tacked to walls
In unadorned offices
In unadorned halls?

Bleeding Albina

The greasepaint to signify
That there shall not be
Any investment
By state or by industry

Ensuring decline
The seeds of decay
Of a once thriving neighborhood
Til some impossible Sunday

When some nice young couple
Plant a flag with their towheaded son,
Varnish the floors,
Re-do the doors,
Reinvestment's begun.
Bleeding Albina.

If somehow you managed
To take out a loan
And in spite of obstruction
You went and purchased a home

In a calm and suburban neighborhood
Where your presence was deemed no good

What were the tactics
Used to encourage you to leave?

Rock hurled through ground floor window
In the space provided below
Rock hurled through second story window
Please draw a straight line, if possible,

Crucifix driven into lawn and set ablaze
A straight line from your current hardship
Dead animal set on line to moulder, putrefy
And lack of assets
Bomb threats, idle threats
To the system discrimination
Casual tyranny
Waged from generation to generation
Dynamite strewn under porch and ignited
By government and private citizens alike
Prank phone calls
You may use
In the middle of the night
This red grease pencil.
In the middle of the night

XIII. THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS FORM

(Plain text sung en mass by community chorus; *Italic text sung by the CIS*)

Thank you.
Thank you for your patience.
Thank you for trekking from office to office.
Thank you, thank you for enduring the long lines,
The clutches of crying children,
Thank you
The downturned mouth of your caseworker,
Thank you
The bad fluorescent lighting.
Thank you
Sleeping in chairs,
Middle of summer,
Way too much air-conditioning,
Thank you for completing this form.

Thank you.
Thank you for enduring

Under the breath comments of family members,

Thank you

Nights under scratchy blankets,

On worn out sofas

Thank you

The inexperienced social worker,

Breakfast and lunch at the senior center,

Showers at the gym,

Long hours at your job,

In less than ideal circumstances,

Thank you for completing this form.

For enduring this and more

We are pleased to inform you

That tonight we can offer

In a concrete church basement

(Sung by the community chorus & the CIS)

In the room to the right as you enter the door

An emergency shelter bed.

(Sung by Alicia Hall Moran)

You will need to be gone

By six thirty am.