

Don't Underestimate the Resilience and Resourcefulness of the Homeless

You can say (people do say) many things about homeless people. But a fact that is underappreciated is just how resilient and resourceful they often are.

There's a woman who lives on an overpass near Atlantic Station. For some time, I assumed the poor woman needed help or aid of some kind, so I brought her things on a couple of occasions. And often when driving home or driving to the grocery store, I'd see her camped out next to the solitary tree on that overpass.

She has lived on that bridge for at least over a year now. She's acquired a tent, goes around the area scavenging with a shopper's cart, and otherwise can be seen sitting in a chair watching the traffic. Rather than being in an emergency state, she (almost) seems to be OK with it.

It does seem to me that of her available options, this is what she considers the best. Without what I've learned about her own resilience and resourcefulness, I might assume I need to "*help*" her find a shelter or something. I'm sure she's already made her decision to go it alone.

There's a lesson in here.

Be compassionate to a difficult challenge. But never patronize by assuming that homeless people are helpless and in need (or want) of full rescue. Leave some room (if merited) for admiration: some of the world's homeless people are also some of the world's hardest and most resourceful.