

# Using Podcasting to Advance Activist Practice and Critical Reflection in Response to the Housing Crisis

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*As a form of social scholarship, podcasting has become a way to share knowledge usually confined to academic settings within a broader social context. A Queensland University of Technology (QUT) social work program is using this platform to share education and raise awareness of critical and creative pedagogies and practices through a podcast titled 'critical conversations for social work' (CCSW) (Carruthers 2023, np.). This podcast is targeted towards students, educators, and practitioners and brings focus to important social concerns, critical analysis, critical reflection, and activist practices for the purpose of positioning social justice at the forefront of social work education and practice. Furthermore, the commentary within the podcast can facilitate what Henry Giroux refers to as educated hope. This paper highlights how this form of social scholarship can be useful to bring light to pervasive social concerns such as homelessness as showcased in episode 3 Part A and episode 3 Part B of the CCSW podcast. The paper demonstrates the value of podcasting as a form of social scholarship to advance ideas around activist practice and research informed critical reflection beyond academia when addressing personal, social and political concerns related to homelessness.*

**KEY WORDS:** Housing and homelessness, critical social work, critical and creative pedagogy, activist practice, critical reflection, podcasting.

## Introduction

Podcasting in social work and human services has become a way to share knowledge usually confined to academic settings within a broader social context. As a form of social scholarship, podcasting can enhance engagement and deepen learning as well as improve critical thinking and reflection skills (Moore 2022). It can also allow a deeper appreciation and understanding of theory by applying it to 'real-world' scenarios, through podcast production, based on interviews and storytelling within communities of practice (Moore 2022). Ferrer et al. (2020) suggest podcasting has the potential to move from a form of static broadcast to a site to engage in direct activism. It can achieve this in two ways. Firstly, it has the potential to create communities of practice where individuals and community organisations with limited resources can engage in knowledge mobilisation and capacity building (Ferrer et al. 2020). Secondly, the public nature of podcasting has the potential to support awareness within communities by extending the discussion of literature and practice beyond the academic to non-academic listeners, including those who have a lived experience of the concerns discussed (Singer 2019). In Australian Social Work, the use of podcasting has produced a number of contributions to the field, with discussion of reflective practice in the *Social Work Stories Podcast* with ambassadors Liz

Murphy and Dr. Mim Fox leading the way (in Murphy and Fox, 2018-present). And more recently the Australian Association of Social Workers' (AASW) contribution – *The Social Work People Podcast* with Senior Policy Advisor Angela Scarfe (Scarfe 2020-present).

The Critical Conversations for Social Work (CC4SW) (Carruthers 2023) podcast is a new addition to the social work podcast community. This podcast is a collaboration between students, educators and practitioners supported by project coordinator, former practitioner, and social work educator Dr Jean Carruthers. The CC4SW podcast draws on critical pedagogy and podcasting to share knowledge of critical and creative approaches for social work education and practice. The podcast has two intersecting parts within its structure. Firstly, interviews conducted by students with an educator or practitioner showcasing their understanding of critical and creative pedagogy as it applies to their practice context (the Part A episode). Following, a second episode (the Part B episode) features a conversation between Jean and a student, educator and/or social work practitioner. The Part B episodes are a response to and reflection on the Part A interviews, and seek to highlight key ideas, unpack discourses and language, and make concepts related to theory and practice accessible through the process of

critical reflection. In addition, the guests (social work and human service students, educators, and practitioners) in Part B discussions are able to speak to their reflexive interest in the topic and their knowledge of, and/or lived experience of this area of practice.

In this paper, authors Jean Carruthers and social work practitioner/researcher Hayley Thirkettle draw on the commentary of two podcast episodes (episode 3 Part A and episode 3 Part B) exploring social work practice and research in the context of housing and homelessness. Jean and Hayley critically reflect on the historical, social, and political analysis, the critical and creative pedagogies and social work practices discussed in the episodes. The paper seeks to demonstrate how the podcast platform provides alternative perspectives through sharing knowledge of social work education and practice as a form of social scholarship and opportunities to mobilise for social action toward emancipatory social change.

In episode 3 Part A, 'Beyond Discrimination and Stereotypes: Thinking Critically About Homelessness' (Warren and Castillo 2023) social worker, QUT educator and researcher Dr Shane Warren speaks with social work student Angela Castillo about the importance of critical social work pedagogy and practice for emancipatory change in the housing and homelessness sector. Shane speaks from 30 years of experience as a social worker with his interest in the homelessness sector beginning in a Queensland Government homelessness policy program role in 2008 and completing his PhD a decade later with a focus on homelessness in central Queensland mining communities in the Dysart, Moranbah and Mackay regions. As a follow on, in episode 3, Part B titled 'Is Housing Insecurity the New Normal?' (Carruthers and Mickle 2023) social worker, researcher and former QUT student Lauren Mickle and Jean critically reflect on the complexities of housing and homelessness based on Lauren's research on boarding houses in the Brisbane region in the late 1980s, and her article 'An Olympic feat: Securing boarding house tenancies in Brisbane' whilst completing her Masters Qualifying student placement (Mickle et al. 2022). In the episode, Lauren and Jean also revisit Shane and Angela's Part A homelessness episode and reflect further.

Through the podcast platform, conversations held with both Shane and Lauren concerning social work research and educational commentary about practice are transformed into social scholarship. Social scholarship is broadly defined as the use of social media to engage in and expand the scholarship of discovery, integration, teaching, and application to practice (Greenhow and Gleason 2014). In this instance, social scholarship, in

the form of podcasting, also functions to break down the binaries of traditional pedagogical forms such as those of 'participant/scholar, practice/research and inside[r]/outside[r]' (Greenhow and Gleason 2014: 399) and invites a broader audience to witness (and potentially become involved in) the process of knowledge co-construction (Singer 2019). The authors consider this process to be a form of critical and creative pedagogy that shines a light on areas of practice for analysis and action. The focus, in this instance, is housing and homelessness as demonstrated in the commentary below. This highlights the complexity, myths, neoliberal influences, processes of gentrification and displacement in the context of housing and homelessness, as well as the critical and creative possibilities for socially just and emancipatory practices in this space.

### **The complexities of homelessness**

Shane and Angela thoughtfully reflect on what homelessness looks like with reference to the complexities that exist within this sector of practice. From Shane's perspective:

Homelessness is a very complex area ... and it's really important not to think about it homogeneously. So, there are many different types of homeless people, sleeping rough is what everyone kind of thinks of, but it includes couch surfing; it includes people in severely overcrowded housing; it includes people in emergency shelters; it includes people in boarding houses (Warren and Castillo 2023, 24:39-25:02).

Organisations are required to respond to the myriad of ways that homelessness presents. This means resources need to reflect the complexity of the multiple representations, barriers, and the lack of attention to the uniqueness of peoples' experiences of homelessness and the instability this creates in the sector.

Lauren's research points to complexity through the impact of deinstitutionalisation on housing for people with disability and mental health vulnerabilities. She explains how, at the end of the 1980s, institutions that housed people living with a disability or mental health condition were in the process of being closed and their residents encouraged to live in the community. Lauren recognises this was 'overall a good thing [as it] took people out of institutions and out of the abusive situations that were happening in institutions' (Carruthers and Mickle 2023, 13:26-13:35). She notes, however, that 'there were no resources put into it. So, there was no plan of what to do with people once these places shut down' (Carruthers and Mickle 2023, 14:58-15:03). This had dire implications for 'families who weren't resourced or equipped to be

able to support loved ones ... with mental illness and severe physical disabilities' (Carruthers and Mickle 2023, 13:53-14:04).

Underlying the shifts in housing and homelessness strategy was a desire to simplify what is an incredibly complicated and demanding area of practice which reflects current concerns in the sector and has perpetuated a system where individuals at the greatest risk due to their homelessness status are often the least likely to receive community housing. There is the requirement for individuals to be 'housing ready' (Micah Projects 2016: 10). This is influenced by discrimination toward people who are marginal in society, such as people with disability and mental health vulnerabilities. Consequently, the community-based housing sector does offer some approaches that respond to this complexity, such as housing first initiatives, where housing needs are addressed without preconditions before coordinating other services and supports (Micah Projects 2016; O'Campo et al. 2022). Shane points out that 'the pressures that social workers and social welfare agencies are under' are not often realised and applauds the work these organisations do with recognition of the expectations that governments and communities have of those organisations and 'just the incredible work that they do' (Warren and Castillo 2023). However, we have a long way to go in addressing the enormity of the current housing crisis and the influence of social forces such as neoliberalism.

### **The impact of neoliberalism on housing and homelessness**

Shane explains his inception into the homelessness sector coincided with the implementation of the national white paper on homelessness (FaHCSIA, 2008) released by Kevin Rudd. A big injection of funding from the government occurred as a result, which allowed a whole lot of new contemporary approaches to ending homelessness. Shane reflects on this as 'a really exciting time to be a part of', a time of 'hope and optimism' and 'a wonderful opportunity' when looking back on it (Warren and Castillo 2023, 4:04-4:40).

However, Shane's historical account and his recognition of the influence of neoliberalism, which Morley et al. (2017: 26) describe as 'the discourse that provides justification for global capitalism, reduces everything to commodities, subjecting them to market calculations that maximise exploitation and profit', speaks to the eroding of social justice values within the sector. As a result, this 'honeymoon period' was short lived and as Shane explains, even with the implementation of the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (FaHCSIA, 2008) 'there hasn't been any increase in

federal funding into homelessness in over a decade. That is embarrassing and shameful to Australia' (Warren and Castillo 2023, 26:41-26:50). This lack of investment in the homelessness sector is credited to neoliberalism determining what is prioritised (or not) in government spending. Shane attests that under a neoliberal government there is a 'classic hostility to the welfare system' (Warren and Castillo 2023, 25:48-25:50). Shane further states:

[T]he idea is that governments should have a very minimal role in relation to the provision of social welfare. It's a very minimalist sort of system, and people need to be responsible for their own lives, and there shouldn't be any sort of greater investment in social welfare (Warren and Castillo 2023, 25:57-26:15).

Shane extends this notion of neoliberalism to the ways it supports a managerial (business like) approach to welfare concerns through the kinds of initiatives that are implemented (Ferguson and Lavalette 2006). This includes:

Initiatives that are more about generating profit ... as opposed to achieving social justice goals. It also reflects in the way governments fund organisations. It's reflected in the sorts of rhetoric that you see in government policy. I think governments increasingly are output and outcome funded and...try to reduce this really complex area down to some really arbitrary measures around numbers of clients that a service sees or hours of service delivery, which is not particularly useful or meaningful (Warren and Castillo 2023, 25:57-26:15).

In this sense, managerialism and business ethics are seen to override social work or social justice ethics.

In agreement with these sentiments, Lauren's research suggests that during the 1980s, responses to housing need were primarily localised, community-based responses. She discusses how things have changed over time due to the intrusion of managerialism on local community negotiation:

[T]hese [housing] workers would take a slab of beer up [to landlords]. One [landlord] that she [the housing worker] talked about in particular was an old Greek fellow that used to sit outside, and he would just chew raw garlic and smoke cigarettes all the time. She'd take a six pack of beer and be like, can you take this guy without

a bond? That was all kind of an agreement and a handshake. But then it's managerialism now. There is no way that those kinds of arrangements could ever survive (Carruthers and Mickle 2023, 18:54-19:20).

The rhetoric Lauren engages suggests that the informal and somewhat emancipatory practices used to respond to homelessness began to change during the Bjelke-Petersen government era. The Bjelke-Petersen era broadly covers the period when Joh Bjelke-Petersen was premier and the leader of the National Party who held majority government in Queensland (1968-1987) (Queensland Parliament 2023). His government was subsequently found by the Fitzgerald Inquiry to have been involved in widespread corruption which included circumventing legal processes and tendering for developments in exchange for bribes (Fitzgerald 2012). This government was widely viewed to have held a radically pro-development agenda and a strong neoliberal stance (Whitton 1993). The shifts that occurred in this period have led to the practices outlined by Lauren becoming obsolete and social work practice in the sector becoming significantly constrained by the demands for services to meet neoliberal outcomes and quality measures in order to obtain funding (Dobrovic et al. 2022). This focus fundamentally changes the supports offered, often favouring one size fits all approaches and self-responsibility with limited resources to address the disadvantage that contributes to housing instability or to adopt localised or community-based responses (Dobrovic et al. 2022; Stonehouse et al. 2015). Lauren directly attributes this to the failing of neoliberalism:

You can see how that is a failing of neoliberalism because it doesn't give space for complexity, and it isn't able to extend past baseline profit ... motives. And it doesn't value anything other than profit (Carruthers and Mickle 2023, 15:48-16:08).

Ultimately, the current system is one where the market determines the housing options available for individuals, and simultaneously, constrains social work responses and resources to address homelessness.

Shane provides examples of how things have changed with the injection of neoliberalism into the housing and homelessness sector. Some of the government initiatives include John Howard's implementation of goods and services tax (GST), Scott Morrison's homebuilder scheme, the cashless debit card which was trialled in the Turnbull era and carried through by Tony Abbott (Morgan 2020; Khadem 2022; Lowrey 2022). These are schemes that have bolstered the privilege of people who are already comfortably housed and demonised those

who are housing insecure. Shane's critiques of Howard's implementation of GST and the implications this has for the most marginalised people in Australia was clearly evident in the following statement:

[T]here were the debates about GST .... GST eventually came in under John Howard and what we've seen is this regressive form of tax on people. But then we've seen income taxes and corporate taxes decrease. And if you look at the evidence around that, it's really striking that middle class and businesses, the amount of tax breaks and tax concessions and tax write-offs, and what ...Lois Bryson would refer to as fiscal welfare, that has really increased over the last 30 or 40 years. It's really at the heart of a lot of the structural inequality (Warren and Castillo 2023, 12:45-13:34).

Bringing this critique into current times, whereby housing schemes are focussed on the deregulation of the welfare state and in contrast punitive fiscal measures for the poor, Shane expresses a critical view of the cashless debit card and increasing benefits to the middle and upper class with reference to the government's home builder scheme:

"I'm also very critical of the federal government ... rolling out the cashless debit card and increasing the number of locations now. Now that is a punitive measure that will further stigmatise the most marginal people in our society. I think we all have a role to play in rejecting it" (Warren and Castillo 2023, 27:53-28:12).

[Furthermore], I'm very critical of the government's home builder scheme. I think billions of dollars of taxpayer money going towards private home ownership and people making very expensive home renovations that only favours the very wealthy end of our society. That's another example of something that I find just atrocious (Warren and Castillo 2023, 13:40-14:01)... [W]hile we have decisions like that being made, it means there's less money being spent on affordable ...and quality childcare. There's less money being spent on housing and less money going into education systems. This is all the product of really strong neoliberalist policy settings (Warren and Castillo 2023, 14:32-14:52).

In these times, neoliberalism has created multiple challenges to social justice including 'a whole range of social and economic inequality, having really big impacts for the most marginalised in our community' (Warren and Castillo 2023, 12:21-12:40). These measures could

not have been anticipated just a few decades ago. Shane brings to light the enormity of the challenges the homelessness sector is facing as a result:

[We have had] a federal government that's completely absent and has not committed one dollar to affordable housing (Warren and Castillo 2023, 19:23-19:29) ... We've had eight years of conservative government. Australia's population has grown. We've been through a pandemic. We've had all sorts of other issues around poverty, violence, and other inequality, but there's been no substantial increase in funding for homelessness services either. I just think that is absolutely appalling (Warren and Castillo 2023, 19:41-20:00).

Shane explains that he has put effort into following and critiquing the trends and processes. By sharing information through this podcast, to expose and resist the pervasiveness of neoliberalism in the welfare sector, Shane is using critical pedagogy as a form of activist practice to contribute to emancipatory social change. Lauren is also contributing to this change by sharing knowledge of gentrification and displacement.

### **The process of gentrification and displacement**

Neoliberalism has also shown itself to respond to social, political, and demographic changes in ways that further limit people's housing choices, such as through the process of gentrification and displacement. Gentrification occurs as the migration of higher income households to a lower income area creates an increase in competition for housing, resulting in social demographic shifts that favour those on higher incomes (Spinney et al. 2011). This process also transforms predominantly vacant or low-income inner-city neighbourhoods from their previous forms of 'economic, recreational, and residential use' (Collins et al. 2019: 200) favouring the interests of newly introduced middle and higher income earners.

Lauren speaks specifically of the ways that interest in inner city living led to those in the West End area, without economic privilege, being pushed to the margins of the city:

[it] generally started from when cities were first developed. The industrial centre is the centre of the city, and so it's [initially zoned as] poorer neighbourhoods. People [living in these poorer neighbourhoods] need[ed] to be within walking distance to facilities and services and their workplaces...All of the wealthy people or people that have become wealthy through working would move out to the suburbs, and the suburbs would

be created and ... people would sprawl out and then people would want to move back into the city for the trendy city lifestyle. [So] they would buy up the old workers' cottages and renovate (Carruthers and Mickle 2023, 5:17-5:52).

This process led to the displacement of lower income residents, and a process Morris (2019: 2) terms *communicide*, 'the destruction of a place-based community' due to either the wilful or unintentional impacts of government policy. In Lauren's words, 'a lot of people who hadn't been integrated into society all of a sudden just left' (Carruthers and Mickle 2023, 14:48-14:57).

In the instance of the West End community in the late 1980s (as is the case in many communities), the profit motives of developers were met with the support of a pro-development government with substantial links to the building and construction industries, in effect, accelerating the impacts of gentrification. Lauren concludes, 'There was a lot of justification for ignoring the social justice issues and there was a lot of agenda in terms of the development' for the benefit of profit (Carruthers and Mickle 2023, 10:00-10:08).

Through Lauren's reflexive response to her research, she specifically explores what gentrification meant for the lives of the men who lived in the West End boarding houses with reference to the ways neoliberalism links to patriarchal assumptions of men's position in society as providers:

I was quite surprised that the kind of, I don't know if pity is the right word, maybe compassion, that I felt for these largely ... male groups of people that have been failed by the patriarchy. They are the losers of that system because they weren't able to pull themselves up by the bootstraps. They weren't able to make themselves successful by the means of what it means to be a masculine man in society and instead have found themselves with the scraps and scrapping with each other and being treated like they're unwelcome in a community that they may have grown up in their entire lives (Carruthers and Mickle 2023, 23:48-24:25).

Having worked for a program that supported people with mental health concerns to transition into the community on release from prison, I (Hayley) observed the barriers people with complex needs had to accessing housing programs. One example used to address this need was the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) which provided generous subsidies for rentals in the private market, however the scheme left landlords and rental

agents to determine applicant's suitability for properties. The mostly younger men I worked with were from populations that frequently had ABIs (Acquired Brain Injuries) and significant trauma histories. These service users were seen as undesirable tenants to rental agents and had a low level of acceptance for rentals despite their high levels of housing need representing further displacement due to the stigma of mental health. The personal stories within the commentary highlight the structural and discursive barriers faced by people who are marginalised in the housing context which begs the question: how could homelessness possibly be seen as a choice?

### **Debunking the myth of homelessness as a choice**

Hegemony is a process whereby the dominant views of those in power are used to organise, persuade, and maintain the consent of the majority and, therefore, become the social norm for the whole of society (Garrett 2018: 108). This idea of hegemony is most successful when the dominant order (e.g. neoliberalism) appears as 'common sense' to the majority and therefore goes unquestioned in everyday life (Garrett 2018: 108). Such ideas are continually perpetuated through uncritical assumptions made by the general public, but also practitioners who unwittingly (or not) individualise the issue of homelessness to a failing of the person (who is at risk or currently homeless) assuming this to be a choice, or something that they could potentially solve if they only 'tried harder'. This hegemonic assumption that homelessness is a choice is most harmful due to the ways it is perpetuated through political rhetoric, through media and, as such, reinforces public opinion. When asked how Shane's practice has influenced him when working within the context of homelessness his response highlights the importance of bypassing these unhelpful assumptions about people who are experiencing homelessness and the importance of moving beyond discourses that demonise the poor:

In my observations, I've seen a lot of judgmental practice, people being labelled as drug addicts, or they can't manage their money, or they waste their money or they're gambling. A lot of it is the discourses around demonising the poor. I think as social workers, it's really important for us to be sort of rejecting those discourses. Especially when people present to services seeking housing assistance or other sorts of support that we really do listen, and we're present and recognise that if these people have been sleeping rough for so long ...or had no stable accommodation, being victims of violence, got no money, that has a major impact on people's lives (Warren and Castillo 2023, 18:00-18:48).

Further, debunking the myth that homelessness is a choice Shane draws on the story of a young man he interviewed for his PhD, he states:

In terms of my own research, I've interviewed rough sleepers. [T]his was in Mackay. I interviewed a young man [who] had become homeless at 15, and he was couch surfing at that time. The couch surfing went on for about 18 months, then he began sleeping on the street, and then he was in and out of shelters [and] living back on the street. He was about twenty-one or so when I interviewed him and his advice to me was, I've slept on the riverbanks, I've been bashed so many times from all sorts of people, the little possessions I have get stolen every two to three days .... I'm constantly using what little money I have to replenish things that get stolen (Warren and Castillo 2023, 20:59-21:47) ... This young man's advice back to me in light of all of those things was what person actually makes a choice to do that? (Warren and Castillo 2023, 22:02-22:09).

For this reason, a counter-hegemonic approach is required. This involves contesting taken for granted assumptions and public discourses that stereotype and vilify people experiencing homelessness, while also organising politically around values like social justice, economic cooperation, and revolutionary democracy (Morley et al. 2017). Practitioners need to work individually with service users and act collectively to 'challenge inequalitarian social relations' (Rogowski 2015: 62). Shane's suggestion to combat these structural and discursive barriers begins with reconstituting 'a much bigger investment in social welfare' (Warren and Castillo 2023, 26:17-26:19) and recognising the critical and creative work that housing agencies can do collectively.

### **Critical and creative practice toward emancipatory change**

Shane speaks passionately about the role social work plays in raising community awareness, providing adequate education, and addressing significant social concerns in the context of homelessness through advocacy and activism. In his own words he states, 'I think our opportunity to influence and advocate and also engage in activism is just so crucial to social work' (Warren and Castillo 2023, 5:10-5:18). He sees his current role as a lecturer as an opportunity to share knowledge and experience and really support students to become agents for social change.

Shane's passion for critical and anti-oppressive practices to expose the structural inequalities and dehumanising

stereotypes prevalent within the homelessness space is evident in the pedagogy he prioritises in his practice:

In terms of ... pedagogies informing my practice frameworks and approaches, they're very much based in the critical social work traditions and specifically, anti-oppressive practices are extremely important to me. And thinking critically about the power that social workers have and especially within their agency and organisational systems and contexts (Warren and Castillo 2023, 5:50-6:15).

He continues by recognising how important these practices are 'in terms of our foundations as critical social workers and conceptualisations around power' (Warren and Castillo 2023, 6:52-7:00), especially our own 'positional power' when working alongside people who are experiencing marginalisation.

The conversation moves more explicitly to critical pedagogy in the context of social work education. Shane postulates that Paulo Freire, the father of critical pedagogy, and his early work critiquing the banking model of education (Freire 2000: 71) is just as relevant to the advances in critical social work education today:

I ... got back into Paulo Freire's work in recent times around deconstructing and critiquing the banking concept of education. And I'm very passionate about that idea in the context of social work education ... I really think social work education is at its best when we are undertaking that learning as part of communities. Breaking down some of those oppressive structures that occur within especially higher education systems that prevent people from being able to do that. So, the idea of thinking critically about social work education where we are now in the 2020s (Warren and Castillo 2023, 10:05-10:55).

What is clearly apparent in Shane's explication of social work pedagogy and practice is the intentional positioning as an agent for social change and not an administrator of social control (Morley et al. 2020). This is evident in the following statement:

I believe that social work is fundamentally about social change. [I]f we are about imposing from that top-down sort of authority structure, you know, it is about social control, and I think we really need to resist and reject any constructions of social work practice that is about social control (Warren and Castillo 2023, 8:14-8:32).

Expanding on this notion of social work as a critical endeavour, Shane argues that it is 'fundamentally a political activity' to ensure the government's accountability in matters of social, economic, and political disadvantage and advocating for resources to be distributed equitably within society:

[W]e've got a value base [in social work] that's very strongly committed to social justice and environmental justice. And it does mean that we are critiquing the way resources are allocated and distributed within society and that we're locating those personal issues that people are experiencing broadly within some of those structural contexts. Whether that's the economy, whether it's the way agencies or service systems are structured or resourced. The famous feminist saying from the 1970s holds true. The personal is political (Warren and Castillo, 2023 15:21-16:00).

This concept of the personal as political, coined by early feminist thinkers, suggests that all personal problems are politically situated (Hanish 1969). According to Rogan and Budgeon (2018: 6), this adage still holds prominence in social work fifty years later. Shane also draws on the words of a respected colleague from the United States, Dr Michael McAfee (see McAfee et al. 2021), to foster a sense of hope for the future:

[S]ome of the biggest wins in terms of social change happen at times where there's been the most hostile governments towards social welfare... [H]e [meaning McAfee] pointed to a few examples of how the homelessness sector in the United States had been able to really advance their case during some really oppressive republican regimes that were really hostile to social welfare spending. [H]e finished this story by saying he'll dance with whoever's in power (Warren and Castillo 2023, 30:41-31:12).

Shane expands on this by bringing into focus what students and practitioners might consider in the ways they can contribute to change in their own emerging or current practice.

[I]t means every day we're taking our values and our code of conduct [as] social workers seriously. We're using that opportunity to influence people, and that's influencing people in the meetings that we attend; the perspectives we bring to those meetings and the critical questions [we ask]. [Questions like] why is it that we've got this plan the way it is? Why has this policy been silent on early intervention? Where is the spending on

women experiencing violence here? Those are critical questions. We can be using our capacity to ask those critical questions here and whether it's writing letters, or whatever it is because there are many many different ways that we can be using our influence every day towards the pursuit of these goals and objectives (Warren and Castillo 2023, 30:38-32:01).

These words seek to inspire students and practitioners to never give up in the pursuit of emancipatory social change and to encourage all of us to question the relevance of conservative policies and practices and to 'dance with power'. Shane's sentiments reflect Henry Giroux's concept of educated hope which 'contests the assumption that existing social structures cannot be challenged' and enables a vision for 'alternative ways of living and organising society' (Morley and Ablett, 2020: 208).

This paper has provided an insight into the ways that podcasting, as a form of social scholarship and activist practice, can be useful for sharing critical knowledge for the purpose of creating greater awareness and possibilities for change in the context of social work. Through this commentary space was created to discuss serious concerns central to the housing crisis, recognising the structural and discursive influences such as neoliberalism, hegemonic discourse and gentrification that have contributed to extreme inequality, displacement and stigma towards people who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. This is complex terrain, and it is clear through Shane and Lauren's thoughtful and provocative explanations that there is much to be done. However, there is hope. While these discussions revealed a complex social problem in need of urgent and immediate response, the narratives also offered opportunities for change whereby students, educators, and practitioners can challenge their own taken-for-granted assumptions, checking their own power and privilege, commit to asking critical questions and challenging dominant ways of thinking about, and doing, social work and taking emancipatory action. In addition, recognition was given to the crucial role that organisations and practitioners play to combat the housing crisis, and how critical and creative pedagogies and practices might be useful to support alternative responses and lead to much needed change. This commentary has demonstrated that podcasting has the potential to provide new forms of educated hope, whereby we are educating students, educators, and practitioners to 'learn how to take risks, engage in thoughtful dialogue, and taking on the crucial issue of what it means to be [a] socially responsible' practitioner (Peters 2012: 7).

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