Becoming Homeless: A Human Experience

World Premiere: Tribeca Film Festival Virtual Arcade 2017

Press Contact

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SYNOPSIS

The Fundamental Attribution Error, as coined by Stanford Psychologists, describes how we blame others when bad things happen to them, but blame the external situations when bad things happen to us. There is a misconception that losing one’s home is due to who you are and the choices you make. *Becoming Homeless: A Human Experience* seeks to counter this irrational tendency.

In this immersive virtual reality experience from Stanford University’s Virtual Human Interaction Lab, spend days in the life of someone who can no longer afford a home. Interact with your environment to attempt to save your home and to protect yourself and your belongings as you walk in another’s shoes and face the adversity of living with diminishing resources.

THE MAKERS

The **Virtual Human Interaction Lab (VHIL)** at Stanford University, founded in 2003 by Jeremy Bailenson, is a leader in virtual reality (VR) research. Bailenson and his team study the psychology of VR, in particular how virtual experiences lead to changes in perceptions of self and others. The lab builds and studies systems that allow people to meet in virtual space, and explores the changes in the nature of social interaction. Most recent research focuses on how VR can transform education, environmental conservation, empathy, and health.

http://vhil.stanford.edu

**Jeremy Bailenson** is founding director of Stanford University’s Virtual Human Interaction Lab, Thomas More Storke Professor in the Department of Communication, a Senior Fellow at the Woods Institute for the Environment, Faculty Director of Stanford’s Digital Learning Forum, and a Faculty Leader at Stanford’s Center for Longevity. He earned a B.A. cum laude from the University of Michigan in 1994 and a Ph.D. in cognitive psychology from Northwestern University in 1999. He spent four years at the University of California, Santa Barbara as a Post-Doctoral Fellow and then an Assistant Research Professor.

**Elise Ogle** is the project manager at VHIL. She graduated from Stanford with her Master's and Bachelor's degrees in Communication in June 2015. Her VHIL research of past and present focuses on using VR to change feelings of empathy for others, as well as using VR to design immersive, educational narratives. Her lab work involves managing projects and developers, 3D modeling, and designing VR simulations.

**Tobin Asher** earned his Bachelor’s degree in Communication from Stanford in June 2016. His initial interest in VR was immersive journalism as way of making people feel closer to seemingly distant topics. Tobin helps create VR interactives, program virtual worlds, edit video, and compose scores for various VR experiences. As lab manager, he also facilitates VHIL’s research projects, coordinates lab logistics, and maintains the lab’s software and hardware.
CREATOR’S STATEMENT

Our experience allows people to expand their worldview and to better imagine what it is like to live without a home. In our everyday lives it can sometimes be easier to avoid or ignore an issue that may not seem to directly affect us. However, we hope that people will be able to see the hardship of the homeless in a different way and open themselves to the idea that we are all responsible for helping our fellow humans. Moreover, we use active decision making, such that the choices one makes in this interactive simulation affect the experience the user has.

CREDITS

Developed at the Virtual Human Interaction Lab at Stanford University

Creators - Jeremy Bailenson, Elise Ogle, and Tobin Asher

Producer - Jeremy Bailenson

Writers - Elise Ogle and Tobin Asher

3D Artist - Elise Ogle

Sound Design - Tobin Asher

Directors - Elise Ogle and Tobin Asher