

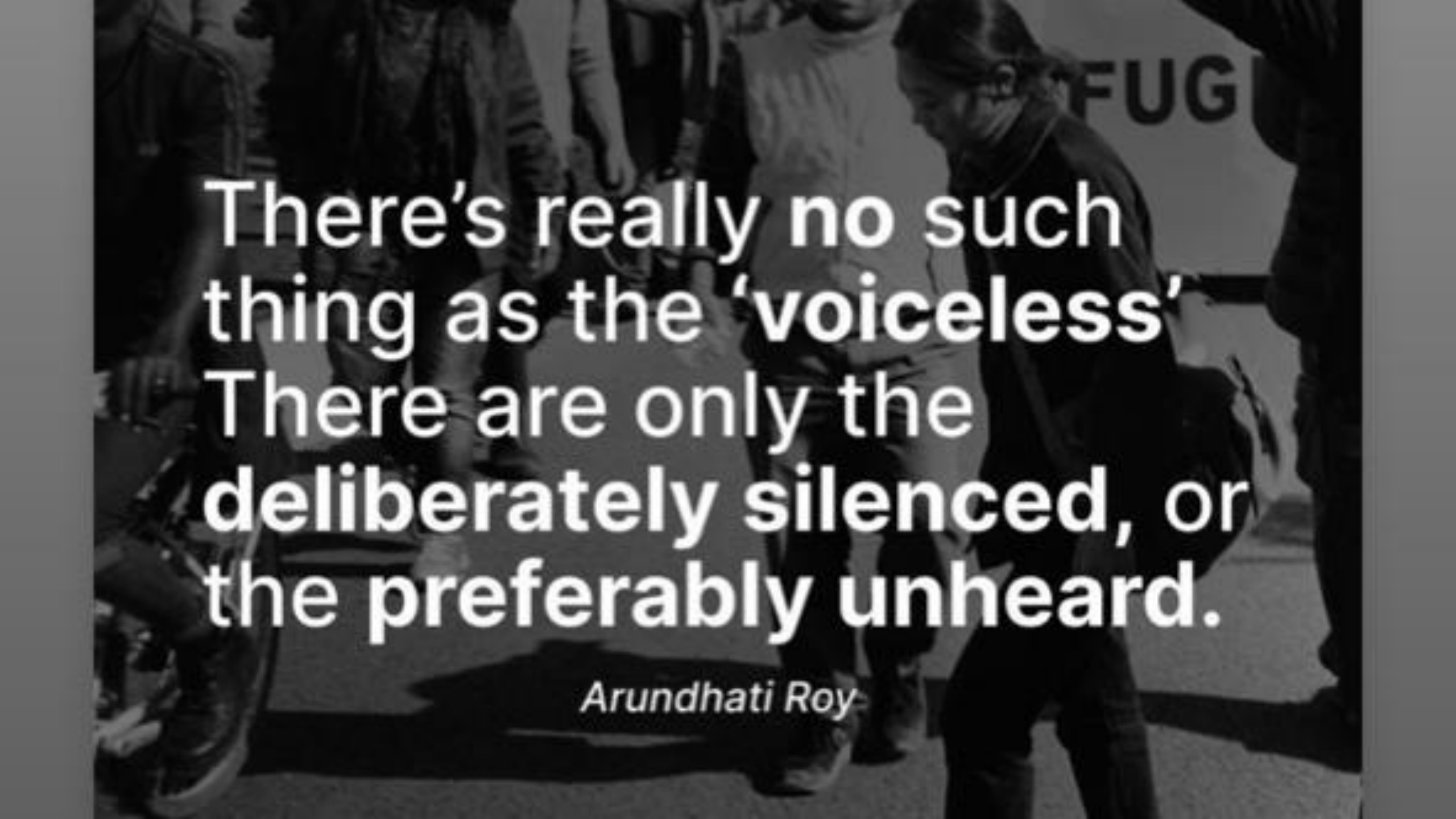
Feminist peer work in homelessness

Bianca Schatz and Julia Schratz | Sep. 29th 2026
lilawohnt | Innsbruck, Austria





- organization working with women* (with and without children) who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness
- founded in 1984 in Innsbruck (population approx. 130,000), Tyrol/Austria
- approx. 1,000 women* supported annually
- counseling centers in Innsbruck and Schwaz
- a wide range of housing options: housing-first, housing-led, shared housing
- specialized on working with mothers and children
- women's* domestic violence shelter
- just under 40 female* staff members

A black and white photograph of a crowd of people, possibly refugees, with a sign that says "FUGI" in the background. The image is dark and grainy, with the text overlaid in white.

There's really no such
thing as the 'voiceless'
There are only the
**deliberately silenced, or
the preferably unheard.**

Arundhati Roy

What value does lived experience hold, and how can we successfully involve women* with the experience of homelessness?

What framework conditions need to be established?

What best and next practices can give us orientation?

(How) can we make it feminist?

- Peer Training Program based on the “Certificate Course: Peers in Homeless Assistance” offered by neunerhaus Vienna
- funded through the Tyrol State Equality Program
- total cost of approximately 30,000 Euros
- October 2023 through May 2024
- 7 modules, internship, final exam
- 2 trainers*: one of whom is a peer worker*
- 1 social worker as the overall program coordinator*
- 5 graduates*







Expert* through
lived experience

Peer Work in Homelessness

- How I got into Peer Work
- Practical experience
- Challenges and barriers
- What I hope for in the Future

Because I've lived it
myself

rebellisch sein
können mutig
sein können
angekommen
sein können
wichtig sein kö
nnen feminist
isch sein 

How I got into Peer Work



- My own experience of Homelessness
- Peer training program
- An opportunity for people with lived experience
- From lived experience to experiential knowledge
- A new chapter begins

„Professional knowledge and experiential knowledge are not in competition. They look at the same reality from different perspectives and together can create a more complete picture“

Practical Experience



Workshops

- Learning-cafe
- Women's*group
- Women's domestic violence shelter
- Practical skills empowerment



Public Relations

- Panel discussion on „Stop Violence Against Women*“
- Presentations for the Youth Red Cross at several schools on child poverty
- Interview about Peer Work
- Interview about my personal story
- Newspaper articles
- TV report on Peer Work featuring Social Workers and residents of lilawohnt
- MCI research project – Interview on homelessness
- Speech on „Affordable Housing“
- Online presentation on Peer Work in Cologne

Podcast: „The Key to a good Life. Pathways out of Poverty and Homelessness“



- Women* with lived experience speak for themselves
- One-on-One conversation on equal terms
- Making lived realities visible
- Empowerment and a sense of „I’m not alone: We have the right to tell our stories“.

City of Innsbruck Participation Processes: „Homeless Bill of Rights“

- Participation in the City of Innsbruck process
- Bringing in the lived experience perspective
- Making barriers and lived realities visible
- „Not about us, but with us“

Network Meeting „Becoming Visible Together“



- Establishing „Becoming Visible“ in Tyrol
- Connecting People with Lived Experience of Poverty and Social Exclusion
- Making Our own issues and concerns Visible
- Thinking together: What do we want to change?
- People with Lived Experience Actively shape the Process





Challenges and barriers

- Peer Work does not replace social work – What exactly is my Role?
- Fear and uncertainty within the team
- Closeness and professional distance in Peer Work

What I hope for my future as a Peer



- To work with „my own“ clients*
- More Peers with lived experience in the field of homelessness
- Peer Work as an established profession

lilawohnt



sein können

lilawohnt



**INNS'
BRUCK**

 Bundesministerium
Frauen, Wissenschaft
und Forschung

 Bundesministerium
Justiz

 Bundeskanzleramt

LICHT INS DUNKEL



Thoolen
Foundation
Vaduz



 Bundesministerium
Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit
Pflege und Konsumentenschutz

© Alena Klinger

www.lilawohnt.at