

Homelessness: the effects of both sides essay

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We differentiate the human race through social groups of all kinds; from the poor, middle class to upper class, elderly, youths, disabled, and the least mentioned - the homeless.

Why is it that homeless people are considered outcasts and other social groups feel threatened by those on the street even when they look exactly like us? They are no different than how we were created; only their lifestyle and choices separate us from them. The problem arises not as the homeless individuals, but as the condition itself - homelessness is a diverse social issue that needs to be understood in its entirety. Homelessness is a real phenomenon in contemporary America that causes numerous negative effects on the homeless population and the community it affects. Throughout our lives we might have encountered or experienced some form of homelessness within the community. However, the most compelling issue rises in what actually constitutes as homelessness.

What qualifies as homelessness and when are they actually considered homeless? In the article, *Braving the Streets*, Glasses and Brinkman have a substantial belief that homeless is more than what the mainstream media and politics define. Homelessness needs to be understood as a condition of risk and not only the lack of shelter" (Brinkman, Gasser, Christian 292). They broadened their definition of homelessness as being "at risk of lack of shelter, whether a family actually [is] living on the street, or a group of street youths [who are] sharing [a] living space in decayed rental housing' (292).

We typically consider the homeless as just without homes and maybe even more lightly defined than the broad spectrum Glasses and Brinkman

discussed in their article. It is difficult to completely understand the full extent of homelessness and how it proves to be a much larger and complicated problem than we believe. As we come to understand homelessness as a complex issue, we can start to break down the components of homelessness and address it at face value. In contemporary America, homelessness is consistently being shown in rising numbers throughout the years.

According to statistics from the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the surprising numbers reflect the homeless population in the United States today: There are 633,782 people experiencing homelessness on any given night in the United States. Of that number, 239,403 are people in families, 394,379 are individuals. Sixteen percent of the homeless population are considered chronically homeless [meaning they have been homeless for over a year or have a disability]. [Lastly], about thirteen percent of homeless adults - 62,619 are veterans (Meddlesomeness. Org). These numbers are submitted every other January and fluctuate throughout the year.

Specifically, just in California alone there is more homeless population than in any other place in the United States. Within Los Angeles County, "there are more homeless people - estimated 73,000 on any given night - than any other metropolis in the country" (Garrison, Los Angeles Times). Even though these numbers constantly change, the same universal problem of homelessness still exists. The rise in homelessness has made this phenomenon a serious problem. An editor from Southeast, an online New York City informative blog, argues that the rise within New York City alone is rising in great numbers. "According to a report from Coalition from the <https://assignbuster.com/homelessness-the-effects-of-both-sides-essay/>

Homeless, the number of children sleeping in homeless shelters has increased by 22%, to 21, 034, in just one year. More children and adults are homeless now in New York City than at any time since the Great Depression,' he report states (Robbins, Southeast). The increase of homelessness shows distinct validity of the problem being significant to our society today.

Even in smaller cities, homelessness has been described has a rising force since our recent recession. "[Homing's] homeless population rose 75 percent from 201 1 to 2012 -? from 1, 038 to 1, 813 people, according to statistics compiled by the U. S. Department of Housing and urban Development. It is up 213 percent since 2010, when the state economy began to recover from the recession" (Stores, Trip. Com).

As these numbers continuously rise without recovery, he state of homelessness will continue to linger on and affect the homeless population and our communities. Homelessness is a significant problem in the united States because of the serious negative effects it produces for the homeless community. There are various dangers that distress the homeless population such as exposure to natural elements, psychological and mental damage of the mind, and physical dangers from themselves and the outside society.

Naturally, the homeless community are living on the streets, under bridges, garbage dumpsters, and any place they can find a place they call " shelter". Whether it is 1 00 degrees or 0 degrees, they find somewhere to fend for themselves and make due with the little they have. In an article from the Los Angels Times, Garrison conveys a touching and real story about a middle-aged woman who is homeless on the streets: " Nobody can know what it is

like until they've lived one night. One night out here," said a woman who lives with her dog beneath a bridge in the San Gabriel River watershed. The woman, who did not want her name or exact location printed, had set up camp between a concrete bridge support and a chain-link fence on a little ledge above a bike path. She and her husband had created sleeping quarters and a makeshift office, with a mug full of pens and a stack of library books on supernatural events that the woman said she liked to read because they give her comfort. But she warned that no one should romanticize her situation. Her little abode next to the riverbed might seem out of the way and even peaceful, especially when morning sun etches the landscape with gold.

But the woman, who is 34 but is missing teeth and looks much older, said she lives with pressing fear that police will force her to move or that gang members will menace her. And it's recently cold at night (Garrison, Los Angeles Times). Homelessness is a heartbreaking tragedy for those who struggle daily and have to be constantly on the move to find shelter and food. They consistently catch the flu, colds, other diseases, and are prone to serious illnesses without relief with medication that other society members are able to receive. The exposure to extreme temperatures and other natural elements creates hazardous living conditions for the homeless population. Though we are provided health care and support for our mental and physical problems, the homeless community are left with little to no source of refuge for medical attention. Psychological damages are problematic within the homeless community - it creates threatening issues for those who could hurt themselves and others around them. Through a study on comparing

strategies and patterns of victimizing of homeless people, Whitlock and Simons argue that “ the psychological consequences of continual vulnerability to physical harm, exhaustion, poor nutrition, and the stress of living in public places serve to create psychological distress or exacerbate existing- psychological problems” to the homeless community (Whitlock and Simons 135).

Although psychological issues and mental illnesses are a smaller percentage of the homeless population, they are shown to be even more “ at risk for arrest for violent crimes” than those who do not have mental illnesses (Fischer, 252). The research Fischer presents suggest “ that people with mental illnesses have a modestly higher rate of committing violent crimes than the general population” (252). Many who suffer from mental illnesses are unable to psychologically function and incoherent to present a plausible reason to be dangerous. The dangers of psychological behaviors can lead to severe angers to themselves and especially people around them. Facing a lack of support, the homeless population risks dangerous physical harm from the outside community and from themselves.

They are not only hazardous by being incoherent and act upon their psychological dysfunctions to the outside community; they are their own byproduct of self-destruction. According to the research composed by Fischer, “ several studies using mentally ill samples suggest that homelessness is significantly associated with violent crime [and] found that among [the] mentally ill offenders, those individuals who had been homeless at the time of their arrest were more keel to have committed previous violent crimes” (Fischer, 252). Although this study only discusses the means <https://assignbuster.com/homelessness-the-effects-of-both-sides-essay/>

of dangers due to psychological and mental diagnosis, there are normal homeless people who constantly face abuse and physical dangers. Returning upon the story of the middle-aged woman from the Los Angeles Times, she told Garrison where she used to live in Hollywood “ an encampment.

.. She protected with a system of battery-operated baby monitors that served as mobile burglar alarms but she left a year ago because she came to believe it was too dangerous” (Garrison, Los Angeles Times). The homeless population face similar anxiety and angst when it comes to protecting themselves and their families. They are susceptible to the same, if not more dangers from bullies, robbers, rapists, and other criminals due to their exposed environment and lack of resources. As previously discussed, homelessness affects the homeless population and furthermore the broader community.

It has been presented as a rising issue since the sass when mainstream media decided to uncover this phenomenon to the world. How does homelessness affect our communities? The answers are simple - it affects all of us in more ways than we have been able to comprehend. There are practical, economical, psychological, and moral effects that contribute to our lives and standard of living among the homeless population. In the Los Angeles Times, Maroons composed an article of a court ruling that dropped charges for the homeless man sleeping in a public area. However, community leaders and residents are afraid that “ weakening anti-camping laws” will encourage homelessness to increase even more since the sass (Maroons, Los Angeles Times). Maroons argued that other cities have passed

similar anti-camping laws since Santa Ana's 1992 ordinance ND thus created a less hazardous public environment for the community.

" Berkeley in December [1 999] became the latest city to prohibit lying down on sidewalks, prompted by merchants' complaints about homeless people harassing shoppers" (Maroons, Los Angels Times). Passing these laws, the community has regained order and pushed the homeless people from public view. When the homeless are seen across cities and pan handling off freeways, it creates an unpleasant indication that our society has fallen apart. Being able to see homelessness daily enables us to constantly feel threatened y the homeless community and are more anxious about our safety.

It may not be they are actually dangerous, however the perception of danger and lack of safety is an issue. If we have no means of providing shelter and care for the homeless, they have no place to turn and face street homelessness. In addition to the economical effects homelessness has caused within the community, our psychological and moral values are also at stake. Many times our community struggles in empathy and emotions of guilt on the homeless community. Whether we have contributed to the burden of homelessness or not, we all value our society and the places we call home. According to the Los Angels Times, " West Hollywood..

. Sets aside more than \$500, 000 in a \$35- million budget to fund a privately run shelter and counseling center and other private programs for the homeless" (Event, Los Angels Times). Those communities that reach out to the homeless show their moral goals are to provide aid for the homeless and

end homelessness. For some, the desires to provide service and support those less fortunate are a priority and a reason to support the homeless. Perhaps it is our own guilt of living the individualistic lifestyle and thus creates a psychological burden for our community.

Our morals and values are affected each day as we see homelessness on the news and streets of our community. It is a social and economical problem that needs to be addressed. In our society today, we are faced with many social issues; homelessness being the number one phenomenon we encounter and deal with On a daily basis.