Homelessness

Many people have experienced homelessness; over twelve million adults experience homelessness at least once in their life in America (Gottfried). They have suffered through not having a home and begging on the streets for money. Being stuck without a home is very hard while battling the cold, addictions, and even disease. Homelessness has been plaguing America, but steps can be taken to start fixing this problem.

Homelessness has been a problem for a long time. It has been with America since colonists made America. The only thing that has changed about homelessness is the number of people who are homeless. Over 578,424 had no homes in 2014 alone (Quandt). When counting the homeless, many homeless get recounted or missed (Stearman), which is why it is hard it get an exact number. Counting the homelessness is near impossible (Gottfried). Migrant workers in substandard barracks are not counted even though they technically could be counted as homeless because of their lack of a home. There are two types of numbers of homelessness: scientific numbers and persuasive numbers. The difference between these numbers are that one is overly exaggerated to bring more attention to the homeless, like how Snyder put the homeless numbers in the millions to attract more attention and gain supporters to help homeless(Criswell). Scientific is numbers made by counting the actual population. This has not worked out well in the past The U.S. census bureau tried to pinpoint the number but there counting was flawed because they didn’t count all the homeless. The counters either try to count all that were out one day or all that they could find in a week (Stearman). One term is used for the most severe type of homelessness. While homeless can live in temporary homes and homeless centers, the ‘roofless’ sleep out on the street (Stearman).The numbers of people below poverty or are about to become homelessness are high, In1995 more than 37 million where below poverty (Criswell). These people are at risk to become homeless.

There are many reasons why homelessness is bad for America. First off, it is bad for the homeless themselves. Some homeless are children, and being homeless means they will not have a good education to get jobs in the future (Stearman). Being homeless increases the chance of kids doing illegal activities(Stearman). Most homeless cannot eat regularly, and since it gets cold outside they sometimes catch colds (Stearman). Since most of them are not qualified to get health care it is hard to go to the hospital, get glasses, or go to the dentist (Stearman). When the family strains or gets stressed it usually causes break ups (Stearman).stress can cause other coping mechanisms and when homeless start drinking it becomes social. They often drink in groups, which causes people to get scared and that leads up to the cops coming to arrest them and put them in jail (Stearman). Putting Homeless people in jail costs a lot of tax dollars. Total, each person left chronically homeless costs 31,000 dollars per year in fees for emergency room visits, jail time, and putting them in homeless shelters. This means that we are paying a lot of taxes because of the homeless. In Texas it is illegal to be homeless in a public place (Criswell), by criminalizing the homeless for being homeless; this means that tax payers are spending even more money for sending the homeless to jail even though they aren’t doing anything bad. Many people are afraid that the value of their property will go down because homeless camp near them (Criswell). In 1995 in San Francisco alone more than 27,000 homeless were arrested (Criswell).

A major reason for people becoming homeless is financial bias in the housing economy. Many advocates for a solution to homelessness say that local housing incentives are encouraging middle income houses and luxury houses (Gottfried), but the homeless can’t afford the cost of middle and luxury housing. There are not enough low rent apartments for the homeless population(Gottfried). In 2012 new apartments were unaffordable to anyone making fewer than 43,000 in America(Quandt). Welfare dependency has been passed on through generations(Gottfried), welfare is a service given to people who have little to no income (welfare). Since many people depend on welfare that means cuts to welfare could drive more people into homelessness (Criswell). The majority of kids who become homeless in wealthier countries like America are thrown out of housing by abusive parents (Stearman). Half the kids interviewed in a homeless center were thrown out (Stearman). When people are below the poverty level they have a higher chance of becoming homeless. A big problem also is when companies downsize and start sending jobs overseas; the loss of jobs can push a person to be alcoholic, have breakups with husband or wife, and addiction which contributes to homelessness (Gottfried). The housing market plays a really big role in people becoming homeless. When the housing market is bad and there aren’t enough houses rent becomes higher (Stearman). Men are more likely to become homeless because of alcoholism and other addictions (Stearman). Veterans can become homeless because of trauma caused by war (Stearman). Domestic violence can also cause women to have nowhere to go which puts them on the street. When families separate there is also a high chance of the women and children to become homeless(Stearman). Homeless have a higher chance of becoming mentally ill, which makes it harder to get out of being homelessness. The most common mental illness is depression (Stearman). Not all homeless people get mental illnesses because of homelessness; some people become homeless because of mental illnesses (Stearman).

There have been plans made to stop homelessness, except most of the plans have a downside. A good idea to solve homelessness is building more houses(Stearman). This is a good long term solution, yet would take a long time to build all the houses or apartments (Stearman). Another thing about this solution is that it would be hard to get all the resources, land, and permission needed to build these houses. Jobs are also good things for a homeless person to have. They lead to unstable of a life to actually get a job (Stearman). The homeless also move around too much to fill out the proper paper work to get a job, even when they do most jobs have hours that a homeless person would have a hard time doing(Stearman). Some homeless aren't in the position to take work either; this may be because of an addiction or a pre-existing disability (Stearman).Early intervention programs which help poor people on the brink of becoming homeless would help, too(Gottfried). Greg Klochenn has been making houses for the homeless. The interesting part about his houses ,though, are there size (Quandt). Greg has been making tiny houses out of illegally dumped material(Quandt). It helps the homeless a lot; June says without a tiny home he wouldn't be able to leave his belongings to go to work. Traditional housing compared to his tiny houses also puts many restrictions on what the homeless can and cannot do in their home(Quandt). A 52 year old homeless woman who has been in a shelter said, "I have to be told what time to go to bed, what I can watch on T.V., when I can eat, and what time to go to the bathroom. Are you kidding me? I'd rather feel normal.” the only problem is that the houses are being taken away because the city does not want the tiny homes on the streets (Quandt). Abandoned lots could be used for some port-a-potties, a place to shower, and a place for the homeless to live (Quandt). There is a tiny house village in Eugene, OR; the village has twenty nine houses for the homeless (Quandt).

A great plan that is helping homeless is called Housing First (Quandt). It originated in 1992 in NYC (Quandt). Housing First is a plan to give the homeless housing first and then once their life becomes less hectic give them help (Quandt). One plan had the homeless pass a test to get to stay in permanent housing; anyone in the permanent housing had to stay sober and sane to stay in the house (Carrier). unfortunately it was hard for the homeless to stay sober and sane without being able to settle down and get help to overcome their addictions (Carrier). Many in this plan failed because they would have a mental episode and be kicked out (Carrier). In Utah they are using a better idea to help homeless people (Carrier).Instead of requiring them to pass test they are giving them free permanent housing with no strings attached where they can do whatever they want like having a mental episode without getting kicked out of the apartment (Carrier). They are finding and building free homes in Utah to get more homeless of the streets (Carrier). After five years eighty-eighty percent of the homeless they put in the apartments were still there (Carrier). It is also good money-wise because it cost less to care for them when they are in an apartment then when they were on the streets (Carrier). It is hard to convince the state to give free houses to addicts though (Carrier). The state would also have to find ways to plan the houses, build the houses, and manage the houses (Carrier). By the end of 2014 more than 840 people had apartments all over the United States because of Housing First (Carrier). This was also helped by an effort called 100,000 homes (Carrier). If we could convince billionaires to give or get money from taxes or charity and get money from grants and philanthropy then we could get enough money to make permanent houses for the majority of the homeless (Carrier). This plan has helped Utah by decreasing their homeless population by seventy-two percent (Carrier).

Homelessness is a hard problem to fix. There are many people who are without a home in the United States. Homelessness will take a long time to solve, but no one should be left without a home. Many homeless are suffering and we need to fix this problem.

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