

What Do We Do About The Homeless In America?



By Frosty Wooldridge

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Part 1: The problem, why it grows, who has ideas on solving it?

“The real invisibles of this world are not the fabricated beings of the human mind like angels and demons, but the homeless of the dirty streets!” – **Mehmet Murat ildan**

For the record, America suffers from a documented 540,000 homeless people. They languish in the streets of our big cities, in the woods, in U-Haul storage lockers, in tents, in abandoned trailers, in vacant warehouses and in just about every state in the Union. They are white, black, brown, veterans, men, women and children. They are alcoholics, drug addicts and run-away teens from abusive households. They comprise high school and college graduates, dropouts and illegal immigrants.

A mind-numbing 66,000 reside in Los Angeles. Another 35,000 wander all over San Francisco. About 10,000 call Seattle their home as they live along expressways and under overpasses. Denver houses 10,000 of them. Chicago can't count all its homeless, but it's into the thousands. New York City remains a horrible example of big city callousness toward its homeless citizens.

In 2019, I bicycled through San Francisco and Los Angeles to

see them up close and ugly on my touring bicycle. You can't quite grasp the enormity of this national tragedy until you see it up close, smell it, feel the pain in their faces, and watch their hopelessness drag on year after year, while such Congressional Critters like Nancy Pelosi and Maxine Waters party-down at the White House or participate in wine-tasting parties in Washington DC.

One of my readers from Los Angeles asked me what I would do to solve the homeless situation in America. She lives among them in her own residential neighborhood. She's compassionate, but frustrated. She asked me:

Frosty, I'm asking in all seriousness: if you were appointed governor of CA and you had a cooperative House and Senate, how would you begin to solve LA's homeless problem? I'm focusing on LA because that's what I'm familiar with. There have been homeless people in my neighborhood since I came here in 1986—that's through three Republican administrations and three or four Dem ones. That's with one GOP mayor; the rest were Dems. The problem has grown worse with each passing year. I started out incredibly sympathetic to the homeless, but **I have compassion fatigue. I just want them gone.** I don't include in that the people who are suddenly homeless for sheer bad luck or economic misfortune and who respond to efforts to get them on their feet. And I have a lot of sympathy for those who are so mentally ill that they need to be on meds in a nice clean hospital somewhere. I mean the meth tweakers and the ones who make life hell for their working class neighbors, for small shopkeepers, and for kids who can't walk two blocks to school because they have to step over people passed out on the sidewalk.

I feel it is totally hopeless. A few weeks ago, I encountered a woman lying on the street, bleeding from some kind of head injury. She was nicely dressed and had a purse. Her pulse was weak, and I knew, even without medical training, she had something seriously wrong with her. It took me 20 minutes on

the phone to 911 to persuade them to send paramedics. The only reason they came was that I insisted she was well dressed and had a purse—and was therefore not homeless. If they thought she was homeless, they would not have come at all unless she was dead. This is what we are dealing with. There is no room in LA to house 70,000 homeless people—even if there were, these people need rehab before they can be placed in normal housing. They would trash anywhere they moved into and sell the appliances for drug money. There are very few mental health beds. LA County Jail is full to the brim. They're not going to release murder suspects to make room for homeless druggies. The Ninth Circuit ruled that people can't be arrested or jailed for living on the sidewalk, and SCOTUS refused to hear the appeal. Which means we are stuck with it.

I am not normally a hard-hearted person. But I am sick of the homeless, at the same time realizing that they are the least of my brothers etc. and I am not supposed to feel this way. The whole thing seems utterly hopeless to me. So, if you were in charge and had cooperative lawmakers, how would you begin to solve this? I've asked other people, but nobody seems to know! J.S.

Bob J. said, "Homelessness IS a hopeless situation. The homeless have no political clout. Therefore, they get nothing from our pitiful politicians at all levels. There is no benefit to the politician to lift more than his or her pinky finger to make an effort on their behalf. And, the majority of us don't care to make the homeless situation an issue that we will cast our vote for.

"I'm reminded of the following...We choose all we have therefore we get everything we wanted when we made the choice. We've chosen to have the homeless because we chose those we put in office with the power to do something. That really don't need to do anything to be re-elected.

"The homeless situation is only the visible symptom of the

weak effort made to prevent someone becoming homeless. There are other, hidden, symptoms of our effort to deal with the consequences of drug addiction, physical abuse in the home, mental and physical handicaps, failure to educate and low intelligence.

“The resources devoted to dealing with those causes while individuals do have a home to live in are woefully short of what is needed. How do we come up billions to forgive college loans but can't spend that same amount on increased social service staffing? Benefit to the politicians.

“Start asking you politicians what they plan to do about the homeless. And vote the bums out!”

Okay, that's the groundwork for this national tragedy report. I sent out requests for solutions on FB, Twitter, personal letters to friends. Many brought some pretty workable ideas to the table. If you have your own, please share them with me...and I'll present them in Parts 2 and 3.

We are all in this national tragedy together. We must solve it together. Certainly not at the Washington DC level, because those people are about as useless as barnacles on a ship's stern.

“All of us, poor & rich alike, have been conditioned by our upbringings. Impoverished men & women may become lulled into a state of “learned helplessness” without hope to change their lives. Likewise, the wealthy can walk in a state of “learned blindness” ignoring the desperation of the local & global poor.” – **John Green**

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