



The Effect of the Holidays on Homelessness

By: Allison Armijo

While the holidays, Christmas especially, normally mean family time and baking cookies, the evenings are not always jolly for all. Some people, especially those in the homeless community, not only have to fare for themselves in the below-average temperatures, but also (most likely) spend the holiday away from loved ones or out of reach of those they appreciate. However, it is important to stay positive and thank those who do help the homeless communities this time of year. Although some are ashamed or even reluctant to receive the help and attention, it does help - even in the smallest of ways.

Gordon C. Nagayama Hall, author of article, "Homeless for the Holidays," explains how, "Each December during the holidays, [his] church shelters local homeless families. The families are fed, socialize with church members, and sleep in our church building." He continues with an important message on homelessness and how it is perceived, by explaining how, "In preparing [his] children to meet the homeless families, [he] emphasized that they were just like us but had some misfortunes." Hall's message about equality between all communities is important and essential. Without open-minds like his, the homeless community would suffer more and more each year from unfair prejudices and undeveloped opinions.

On the other hand, Darryl Lorenzo Wellington, contributor to the *Huffington Post*, takes a different approach to homelessness around the holidays. He sees the negative side of how it is difficult for the homeless to get through the holidays. Although they are welcomed at shelters and churches, Wellington's article argues that not all want the support provided. He explains how, "[the homeless] grumble that it's humiliating, disheartening, and invasive." This fresh perspective offers the same open-mind perspective that is used in Hall's message. If

people learn to take into account all of the feelings and emotions of those around them, especially those of the homeless population, the world would be a more forgiving and respectable place. Moreover, although Wellington chooses to focus on the negative perspective of the homeless during the holidays, he acknowledges the stereotype that many of that community battle every day. He writes how, “[the homeless are] frustrated because many of their problems could be ameliorated, if society focused on the reasons why homelessness exists rather than stereotypes that absolve us of a feeling of guilt or responsibility.”

Both Wellington and Hall make one powerful conclusion: the holidays mean more to the homeless than people think; they can be humiliating and disgraceful, but they can also be signs of evolution and consideration from those who look down on the homeless’ situation. This means that people who maybe volunteer during the holidays or even those who walk down the street will grow and learn to appreciate the plight of the homeless a little more each holiday season. After all, the holiday season is a time for merriment and appreciation - not humiliation and anger.

Resources

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/life-in-the-intersection/201611/homeless-the-holidays>

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/for-the-homelessness-getting-through-the-holidays_us_5a380192e4b02bd1c8c608fc