

11/22/12

Homelessness

Since Hawaii is considered to be paradise, many people don't realize that there are some problems here. One of the main problems I have noticed after living here is homelessness. Approximately 4,171 people, on Oahu alone, are homeless according to a census taken in January 2010. That is a 15% increase from the previous year. The current number of homeless is estimated at around 6,000. These people live in tent cities on the beaches, or on the street. There are programs set up to help them, but it's just not enough. There are concerns about the homeless scaring away tourists because of their appearance, and that would be catastrophic to Hawaii's economy. Some people also take advantage of the "free rent and electricity," that homelessness provides, but it is not a good idea, or solution to economic hardship.

I believe trying to solve homelessness is strongly connected to the life and community endeavors of Clarence T. C. Ching. The Clarence T. C. Ching Foundation's Mission Statement includes four goals, one of which being "To assist in the care of the needy, the destitute, the sick and the aged," In my opinion, homeless people are needy, and therefore we should try our best to help them. Another of the goals is to "Provide scholarship aid and assistance,... to those who demonstrate the capacity and desire to improve themselves or develop their capabilities, in the expectation that such persons will ultimately,... contribute to creating a better society" By helping the homeless, we are ultimately allowing them to contribute to improve society, which was another one of Clarence T. C. Ching's endeavors.

I think the best way to solve the homeless problem in Hawaii involves two steps. First, I believe we should implement a program that would provide homeless people plane tickets back

to family on the mainland. Many people, an estimated 30% of the homeless population, are from the mainland, and didn't realize how expensive the cost of living here is. Since they are out of money, they are stuck on the islands. This program would provide them with free plane tickets back to where they came from, as long as they have friends or family at the destination to take them in.

The second step to solving the homeless problem is to create more affordable housing. The average one-bedroom apartment in Waikiki is \$1,200 per month. That is too much money for some people, and that's why they end up on the streets. If we build simple, but nice housing that is affordable, many people would be able to live there instead of the streets and beaches. By building the homes in less populated and tourist attracting areas, we would be able to drastically lower the cost of construction and rent. I believe that if these steps are put into place, we can solve the problem of homelessness in Hawaii, and change many people's lives for the better, which is what I believe was Clarence T. C. Ching's mission.