

Homelessness in Hawaii

In 2018, a news report said that every 46 in 10,000 Hawaii residents were homeless. That's the highest rate in the nation! If this problem is not addressed, many homeless people could die. Not having a home makes living difficult because being homeless makes you more vulnerable to abuse. There were 600 reported attacks against homeless people. They were abused with weapons such as baseball bats, chains, and other weapons. Homelessness can also cause families to be torn apart. In 50 years if no changes are made, you will see homeless people everywhere. With just one stroke of bad luck anyone can end up on the side of the street. Imagine going to Hawaii on vacation, looking down, and seeing tons of homeless people staring at you. Imagine driving out of the airport and seeing homeless people to your left and right. They might be sleeping everywhere and our community would probably stink! Hawaii would lose its main source of economy because all the tourists will be leaving our paradise and our state will go broke with the loss of revenue that these tourists contribute to Hawaii! My first solution is to have a trade fair for these homeless who want to work. My second solution is to take care of our younger workers. My last solution is "Homefirst". This is a solution that Finland used to help with their homeless problem. With these solutions, we would solve Hawaii's homeless problem and not become one of the places with the highest homeless percentage!

One solution is to have a trade fair for the homeless people. We already know that this solution would work because in 2004, a group of homeless advocates rented a convention hall and somehow persuaded almost every social service provider in the city to set up a table and they opened up what was basically a trade fair. It provided everything for them, such as clothing, free phone calls, shoes, health care, and much more. They also had music, free food, and even a

parking lot for shopping carts that they could use as they went from table to table! It was so successful that San Francisco now does the event six times a year. Since this idea has already been tested out and proven to be successful, I believe that Hawaii should attempt to have the same idea here. We just need to remember that not all the homeless are lazy and enjoy not having anything to do. Some truly are down on their luck and they just need the opportunity to get back on their feet.

Another solution I had was to take better care of young workers such as the teenagers who just come out of juvenile detention centers or foster care. The percent of young adults becoming homeless is alarmingly high. Day labour can be hard to get since most young people lack the required work clothing. For example, one clothing you need is steel-toed boots. During homeless awareness week, one group put out a call for steel-toed boots. Within a few days “Scott Paper” and “Lafarge Cement” donated a large supply of steel-toed boots. Of the first three people to receive steel-toed shoes, two of them are now off the streets. A company called “Blade Runners” provides construction trades by training and putting young workers on paid internships to get experience in a particular trade.

They're many reasons why somebody can become homeless. They may have lost their job, loss or break-up of their family, substance abuse, or mental health problems. A lot of places understand that these problems need to be sorted out and the people need some help first before their lives can be turned around. But would it be better for them to be able to have a home FIRST, then they will have the desire to get the help? This second way has been proven to work. In Finland homeless people were provided with a house to help them get their problems situated. It was successful because they had a much easier time focusing on getting better without having

to worry about where their next meal was coming from and where they would be able to have shelter and a safe place to stay. The homeless person was provided with permanent housing on a normal lease. The tenants were given around the clock support. This is a simple yet effective solution which took many people off the streets.

I know that this topic is not an easy one to fix. Yet we need to go through life having compassion to help those who live in our community. This is what Clarence T.C. Ching did for Honolulu by all his contributions to society which he is well-known for. And he showed this same trait when he shared his good fortune with his own siblings and his in-laws. To tackle homelessness in Hawaii, we can learn from San Francisco, the companies who provided steel-toed boots so the homeless could get jobs, and Finland. They showed a different approach of caring to take care of the problem. Perhaps we can learn from Clarence T.C. Ching and these other three examples to solve the problem of homelessness with a different approach. Who knows, perhaps in 50 years Hawaii may be able to wipe out homelessness for good!