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Homelessness has been in existence for centuries, from the 1600's in the colonies, to 1854 in Seattle. It has also been a serious problem, but the methods of responding to and dealing with it have been disputed many times. Although both historical and modern responses to homelessness involve eviction from public spaces with no regard for the homeless, they differ in the distribution of blame and responsibility, with historical responses deeming the individual responsible for their situation, while modern responses address homelessness as a systemic issue, intersecting with many other societal and economic problems today.

Historical and modern responses to the issue of homelessness are similar in the aspect of eviction. After Seattle's first homeless person, Edward Moore, was discovered and temporarily taken care of, the residents and commissioners of King County agreed to send him back to Boston after an auction to be sold to the highest bidder because "It appears that either no one in Seattle wanted to care for Moore or that the bids were too high, and the King County commissioners rejected them" (Ensign 29). The responses of the residents of King County to Moore's situation was an unfortunate outcome because despite his poor mental health and no support, he was still sent away. This was also after he could have potentially been sold in an auction, which is dehumanizing in its own right, even though his care costs were \$1,659. This is a clear display of the dehumanizing evictions of the homeless historically, and this still happens in the modern world as well. As the homelessness crisis continues to grow and the amount of homeless people rises, "Too often, homeless residents experience forced evictions or "sweeps" of the encampments, usually with little notice and no provision of alternative housing, frequently resulting in the destruction of important documents, medicines, and what little shelter the residents have" (Tars 6-44). Even today, homeless people are evicted for simply existing and left to suffer alone. These evictions are seen as just a way to remove the problem from one place; however, they are actually just a temporary

situation that does not help in the long term. Overall, evictions are a response to the historical and modern experiences of homelessness.

Historical responses to homelessness were different to modern responses because they blamed homeless people for their own situation. In the United States during the 1800's and 1900's, there were Poor Laws that dictated what should happen to paupers, and under these laws, they faced the denial of many civil and social rights. Typically, for these paupers, "Poverty was considered to be an individual and not a societal or economic system failure. The Poor Laws supported the view of poverty as a crime, especially for the undeserving poor...deemed as able to perform some type of work" (Ensign 18). Historically, the poor and homeless were oppressed, and many commonly thought that they should be responsible for themselves as if it were in their control. Most of society did not realize that there could be many factors for homelessness, for example, mental illness, because these topics were undiscussed and misunderstood. Around this time, debates would occur on whether the paupers "brought on their own plights through immoral acts such as intemperance, and whether it was the duty of the state to care for such people" (Ensign 23). Alcoholism was a common reason that could lead to poverty and homelessness, which contributed to the stigma around poverty and homelessness because the intemperance was always blamed on the individual. Therefore, people thought that it was not their responsibility to help, as well as the government. Overall, homeless individuals were unjustly blamed for their condition by society and the government.

Modern responses to homelessness differ from historical responses because they address homelessness as a systemic issue relating to social and economic factors. There are many factors that cause someone to become homeless, and "The growing affordable housing gap and shrinking social safety net have left millions of people homeless or at-risk, and most American cities have fewer emergency shelter beds than people who need shelter" (Tars 6-44). The most direct causes of homelessness are lack of access to affordable housing and limited social security, and the article addressing that shows that the main causes of homelessness are systemic issues. Therefore, these are situations in which the homeless individual has no control over, and this furthers the need for laws to help those in need. Homelessness is

also experienced differently based on race, with “Black people and people of color experience homelessness across the country at disproportionately high rates...Black and Latinx people are 9.7 times and 5.8 times, respectively, more likely to be cited under laws that criminalize homelessness when compared to white individuals” (Tars 6-45). Homelessness is a societal problem in that Black and Latino individuals are targeted more, since there is also an overrepresentation of these race groups in the homeless population. This shows that homelessness is not only a socio-economic issue, it is a race issue, and there is a clear intersection of both.

Historically, and in modern society, the responses to the homeless were forced evictions due to societal burden; however, historical responses deem the homeless individual at fault, while modern responses admit that homelessness is a socio-economic problem. The homeless are constantly oppressed and forcefully evicted; they are blamed for their own “failures”, and it is increasingly difficult to get help. However, to combat this issue, we need more laws focusing on the protection of the homeless and affordable housing, but addressing it as a systemic issue is a good start to fixing the problem.