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Honors History 12

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Comparing and Contrasting Homelessness in Seattle

The community's reaction to homelessness now versus when Edward Moore was in Seattle is drastically different from each other. Moore was noticed almost immediately by the citizens, and many people thought about how to help him, while that kind of attention to any homeless person today is unheard of. The contrast between Moore's experience and homeless people who live in Seattle is vastly different.

The attention that Edward Moore received in Seattle is vastly different from the attention that homeless people in Seattle receive in today's society. Moore is considered the first documented homeless person in Seattle. He arrived in the mid-1800's, and at the time Seattle had a much smaller population, so Moore's presence was noticed quickly after he arrived. The people took an interest in Moore and his well-being, brainstorming ways to help him. "After the crude amputation of Moore's frozen toes, Doc Marynard and his wife, Catherine, took him into their home to care for this stranger, and insane besides. The Marynards, along with David Maurer, cared for Moore for four months." (Ensign 15) At the time, homelessness was not near as much of a problem as it is in today's age. Moore became a public figure, and many people tried to help him as he survived homeless in Seattle. The personal care that Moore received from the community in the early days of Seattle showed how the bonds and community were much stronger.

Homeless people in Seattle face a more complex and harsh reality than Edward Moore did. The growing population and rising cost of housing make living comfortably in Seattle very difficult. The public's response to homelessness has also shifted dramatically; while some people still show compassion by donating or volunteering, many people choose to do nothing, dismayed by the sheer number of homeless people in Seattle. Encampments have become a common thing, spread all over Seattle. The general public has seen this as an issue but doesn't do anything to help the homeless. Instead, they report or complain about these encampments, which leads the authorities and the government to take action. This has led to laws being created that criminalize many of the things that homeless people do in order to survive. "Criminalization policies are ineffective and make homelessness harder to exit. Criminalization also makes it harder for individuals to access resources that would help them get back on their feet, and it can lead to additional jail time." (Tars 3) As a result, many homeless people are pushed farther into debt, making it harder for them to ground themselves.

In conclusion, Seattle's community response to homelessness today is vastly different from the days when Edward Moore arrived in Seattle. Moore was immediately noticed by citizens and was shown personal care and interest in his well-being. While, as of today, homeless people in Seattle are rarely noticed and given personal attention. While Moore's experience is vastly different because of the number of people living in Seattle at the time and how the community responded, it shows the dramatic change in community views and the response to those in need.

Citations:

- Ensign, Josephine. Skid Road. 14 Feb. 2023.
- Tars, Eric. 6-43 National Low Income Housing Coalition.