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Homelessness in the US

In the United States, there is a serious problem with homelessness. In fact, the number of homeless people has been growing faster than ever. According to stanford.edu, about "600 thousand homeless people in the US, and 200 thousand people who lack adequate shelter and homelessness in the US is increasing by approximately 7 percent per year." This number is big considering being on the streets is terrible for a person. Homeless people have many psychological and physical problems as they struggle with the elements. They are also problematic because they are more likely to commit crime and leave litter everywhere they roam. They are a burden to the environment around them because most people are uncomfortable around them and they rely on other people to help them survive. Homelessness varies in severity in different countries. In some countries, homelessness is very pronounced, while in others it is very low. Countries like the United States are filled with homelessnes, while Japan and Denmark have the lowest amount of homeless per population. The question is, what can the United States do to prevent homelessness? An analysis of the various laws and systems in the United States, Japan and Denmark is critical to finding a better solution to this crisis. Implementing some of the laws and practices in Denmark and Japan into the United States would help ease the homeless population.

The United States has a large homeless population despite being one of the strongest economies in the world. A huge reason for the huge homeless population is because housing is

extremely expensive. In fact the average median house in the United States costs \$460 thousand, and the typical rental house costs two thousand dollars a month" (NYTimes). Since people can not afford a half million dollar house, they will have to live on rent, which is more expensive in the long run, and in the end they will own nothing. It would take about twenty-one years to be able to buy a new house if all they do is rent. This makes it very difficult for someone to get out of homelessness. The only way to buy a house today is to have a good job and save up for many years. There are two laws that make the housing market so expensive: "Too many regulations and the need to build on more and more land" (nyrentownsell.com). Some Regulations are a good thing, while some regulations are completely useless. In fact, California has about twenty-four thousand restrictions on residential construction. Having so many regulations is detrimental to the creation of new homes. Just one mistake and the builders have to pay a fine and do some remedial work. Today buying new land and new building materials is more expensive than ever. In the past, materials were cheaper because they were made in the United States, but now most materials are imported, causing them to be more expensive. Since the supply of land is limited, the more people buy it, the less supply there is, which drives up prices. Another big reason why prices are so expensive is the increase in poverty. The federal minimum wage in the United States is "\$7.25 per hour, and some states have adopted a minimum wage between \$10 and \$15" (Farrugia, JD). Fifteen dollars an hour is not a living wage. A person can work forty hours a week, which is six hundred dollars. A month has four weeks, so one can earn 2400 dollars in a month. twenty-four hundred dollars a month is not enough to pay an average rent of two thousand dollars. This does not even include taxes, food, transportation costs, and bills. The high cost of housing and low wages in America are the reason millions of people are homeless.

Denmark has a homeless problem, like the rest of the world. Yet, the country has great plans and laws in place to help people have meaningful lives and homes. It is so successful that "nine out of ten people who have sought help have been able to get and keep housing. There are about ten to fifteen thousand homeless people in a six million-person area." (Martinsen, Britta). This number is very low, at 0.25 percent of the population. One reason there are so few homeless people in this country is because of the implementation of a plan called Housing First. "Its goals are fourfold: homeless people should not live on the streets. They should be able to leave within three to four months. They should be released from jail and hospitals if they have housing, and there should be alternatives to homeless shelters." (Thelwell, Kim). Programs that help homeless people get home are the most effective solution. One of the biggest factors homeless people struggle with is being able to find a good paying job that allows them to afford everything they need. The Danish government takes in homeless people and teaches them how to care for themselves and be independent, even hiring doctors and psychiatrists. However Denmark is not perfect, as there are still many problems. The mentality of many homeless people in the country prevents them from getting better as "they do not have the social skills to get help. They are often unaware of the help available, such as for the mentally ill, and some choose to remain homeless to maintain their drug abuse." (Nicole Kirkwood). Since some homeless people just want to keep doing what they are doing, no program can help these people. The best thing to do is to remind these people that there is always help out there.

Japan, like Denmark, has one of the smallest homeless populations in the world. According to nippon.com, there are about "125.7 million people living in Japan, and only four thousand people are homeless." In fact the percentage of homeless people in Japan is 0.0005 percent, and there are 31 thousand people for every one homeless person. What is the reason for

this... even though Japan is a small island, it can't house 125 million people without problems. What about World War II, as many countries are still struggling today like Germany and Russia. Homelessness is low in Japan for many reasons, including culture, mental health, drug addiction, and laws. Traditionally, Japanese culture prohibits homeless people; "homelessness is seen as invisible, and begging is not allowed." Homeless people are often very ashamed and shield themselves from the public" (Alexander, Lynsey). Because of the culture, the homeless have an urge to get themselves out. Homelessness in Japan is very difficult to endure because they have to live off shelters. Japan's drug and mental health is very good. Japan has world-class mental health facilities, and 1.6% of the population has tried drugs at some point in their lives" (Borgenmagazine). The main problem of homelessness in the US is mentally ill people and drug users, as they are usually unable to work. In Japan, if someone has problems with their life, they can easily go to a psychiatric facility. Besides homelessness, there are many other problems in Japan, such as the overwork culture and the suicide problem.

Ultimately, the problem of homelessness in the United States is widespread throughout the world. Many countries around the world have homelessness issues like those in the United States. Such as expensive housing, rents, land, and building materials, as well as very low wages and widespread mental health problems and drug use. Many countries like the US, Germany and China could follow the example of Denmark and Japan, as the number of homeless in these countries is low. Establishing rehabilitation programs with professional help would be one solution for the homeless. The majority of them need to find a way out of poverty. To reduce drug use and improve mental health, the US should also provide better mental health facilities, as many homeless people need these services. Some homeless have become too comfortable in

poverty, they should turn to those who can help them. Begging should be shameful as it encourages the homeless to become comfortable.

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