

Homelessness

“Write about a social problem you feel passionate about.” I felt overwhelmed when I first heard what my essay topic was. I care about too many social problems, from racism, gender inequality, and homophobia to homelessness. Our society is just too far from perfect. But even though there are so many problems, there is one that I feel is important for people to talk about, because it's often forgotten in the social inequality discussion. That's why I chose to write about homelessness.

But what even is homelessness? According to the Oxford English Dictionary homelessness is a state of having no home. Even though that sounds like a pretty straightforward definition, once you start to research more about homelessness, you'll find out that it's not actually so simple to define. It's so hard to define that even social workers and other people whose careers are built around helping the homeless can't all agree on the definition. For example, some professionals believe that homelessness equals living on the streets without any shelter, while others believe that being homeless means having no stable place to live in, so even people who sleep at a different charity shelter every night are homeless according to the second group. It's almost impossible to help the homeless if we don't actually have a clear definition of who is and who is not part of this social group. Therefore when solving the homelessness issue, we should first start by properly defining what it is.

One of the major struggles people without homes face is inaccessible healthcare. The majority of the Czech homeless population is not registered with a health insurance company, so their access to healthcare is limited to charity. While it's amazing that there are ways for the sick homeless to get some form of care, charity healthcare is often limited in what it can provide. Practitioners are almost always general doctors, who do not have any medical specialization, therefore they can provide only very narrow care. The lack of specialists combined with the lack of financial funding for charity-provided healthcare leaves

the homeless population with healthcare that's incomparable to the standards that the general population has access to. And that's just one of the many struggles the homeless have to face in their day-to-day lives.

Most of us have thought at one point in our lives: "Well, why don't they just find a job?" I have, and I'm almost certain you or at least some you know have as well. And I don't blame you. It would be a great solution. A homeless person finds a job, gets paid, and is able to afford a place to live. That only works in theory. There are dozens of obstacles homeless people face when trying to find a job, such as not having an address. If you don't have an address you don't have any way of opening a bank account and if you don't have a bank account, you probably won't find a job because your employer won't be able to pay you. Because of this, it's almost impossible to just find a job if you're homeless.

I cannot provide a solution to the homelessness problem. In fact, I don't think a clear solution even exists, to be honest. But if all of us start talking about the problem, I'm sure that more and more ideas for help will come up and the homeless population will have a better life. And who knows, maybe one day we will be able to solve this huge problem once and for all. It all starts with a discussion.