

DSM Mutual Aid Statement on Criminalization of Homelessness 2 - August 28 2024

The City of Des Moines plans to further criminalize homelessness. The details of this can be read about elsewhere. This statement lays out our perspective on the issue as an organization.

DMMA stands with the homeless community against this proposal and any enforcement once adopted. These attacks by the city are assaults on the basic, fundamental, and natural ability of human beings to survive: to scavenge for what they need, to get a decent rest, to move freely.

We will resist the city's criminalization with every means we possess. A separate statement to be released after the new ordinance is passed will describe this response in more detail.

We will not be mobilizing people to attend city council meetings as an organization as a part of our response. The council, and the imperatives of capital which drive it, will not be swayed by public pressure. We believe the council is not an effective political body, except when it comes to worsening the conditions of life for ordinary people. This incapacity on the part of the council is not the result of "simple hatred" of homeless and other working people. It is instead a function of their role within the capitalist order.

Capitalism needs homelessness because denial of housing is the most fundamental threat issued at workers to ensure that they work. The first and most basic expense workers are trying to cover by working for money is rent, it is the cost which consumes the majority of working class paychecks, and the threat of eviction is an effective lash to keep workers in line. It is because capital must threaten workers with sleeping in a tent that homelessness can never be solved within capitalism. Given all the stipulations, conditions, and impermanence of existing "solutions" to homelessness - shelters, charities, and that classic, fleeting good will - these solutions cannot be called 'ineffective'. It is not the intention of government and nonprofit interventions to be effective at solving homelessness. Rather, it is their intention to convince us that they are "trying" so that you and I don't try something new and better.

Our role as an organization is to help those in need, but it is also to lead by example politically. We do not condone entertaining charlatans like those in city councils, nor we do not support giving them attention to further cement the false impression that they are useful for solving any problem. We hope to make the way for revolutionary change - and the road to revolution does not run through city council chambers. It takes a long march over rougher terrain, one which begins with the direct intervention of ordinary people in the lives of our homeless neighbors - which is exactly what our mutual aid programs are designed to do. Through our programs and political education, we will build the power necessary to put the city council and the capitalist order it represents where it belongs - into the dustbin of history.

All power to the people!