

Media Talking Points

1 Treating the homeless as a population:

Many people come to homelessness for many different reasons and they are very different people. Our solutions to the problem need to be just as specific and varied.

2 The moral judgement that comes with poverty:

In this country, we feel that a person's poverty is a reflection of their character. Even the homeless feel this. One does not have to do with the other and in order to make progress, we have to separate the two.

3 The need for family and community:

We all are in need of unconditional help at some point in our lives. In the US, we depend on our families and personal networks for this. However, there are a lot of messed up or absent families in this country and if you don't have personal support when you fall down (get sick, lose your job, get hurt, etc), it is very easy to 'go' homeless.

4 Statistics

A police officer in Sacramento once told me that a shopping cart equaled one homeless person and a tent equaled two. This is how they counted the city homeless population. With any statistics, ask about the methodology. Ultimately, my concern is with the person in front of me.

5 The solution to homelessness has to embrace capitalism:

We are capitalists. We value The Deal. We give something and feel best when we get something in return. We view charity as a one way proposition. After a while, we burn out on it. Homeless people have value. They are, after all, people with life experience and skill. Once we set up business models to allow this population to recognize their value and provide it, we can start to make progress.

6 We create problems for ourselves by ignoring the problem:

Let's talk about dirty things. People have to eat, sleep, clean themselves, and use the bathroom. When people don't have spaces for this, they have to do it where they are. They have no choice. Because of this, we have 3rd world outbreaks in first world cities.

7 The Circle of Frustration:

From homeless person to store owner to police officer to community member to government official to church leader, let's unpack a frustration someone feels about homelessness and trace it through our community.

8 Homelessness cannot be ended.

Homelessness is a continuum and a process for many that has to do with depression and/or addiction and/or abuse and/or mental health. But, for many others, they just need community support and an opportunity to succeed economically. We can make a huge dent in the problem by treating people as individuals and giving them the tools to solve their own situation.