

A 90-Day Plan to End Homelessness & Build A Stronger America

EVICTING CHILDREN DURING COVID-19

What would the words: "i am being evicted" sound like, coming from a 3yr old? This little girl sitting under the letter "i" in the word "Covid-19" tells America: i am being evicted during the Covid-19 pandemic - where there is a housing shortage, where the cost of renting has skyrocketed, where many emergency shelters are closed, and those that remain open are accepting less than 60% of their capacity - due to social distancing rules.

Her parents' entire household items will go into storage. She will get to keep a few smaller and less bulky toys. Her parents will struggle to pay hotel fees to temporarily house. Little Anna will eat microwaved foods and receive very little fruits and vegetables. Little Anna's developing body will be bankrupt of needed nourishment for brain development and strong bones.

The family's struggle to find housing after an eviction, prolong little Anna's stay in a hotel and sometimes she finds her sleeping space on her favorite blanket carefully laid behind the passenger seat of her parents' minivan - next to her 5yr old brother: Oracio. When temperatures drop to 30° degrees, little Anna's parents double up on her and little Oracio's clothing, putting on their winter hats, and adding an extra thick blanket covering both children - from neck down.

Under state "Child Welfare" guidelines, is this type of sleeping accommodation acceptable? Should Little Anna suddenly become ill, one unfortunate trip to the ER may reveal her living conditions. And if the ER doctor deems little Anna's living conditions as "not safe" - little Anna and her brother may be separated from their parents.

The state's Child Protective Services (CPS) would likely charge Little Anna's parents with child endangerment and would pay a Foster Parent to temporarily provide care to little Anna and her brother: Oracio. Little Anna's parents may be criminalized for being homeless, but Judge Kilman of their county's Magistrate Court who evicted little Anna and her parents - reaps no consequence for not making the attempt to connect little Anna's parents to housing resources and allowing additional time for processing of her parents' application for Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) - so the family, so little Anna and little Oracio could remain housed.

Does society not understand, the task of keeping children safe and sheltered is everyone's responsibility? Little children are our most vulnerable living beings - aside from the elderly, people with disabilities, and some of our loving pet animals. We fail our children, when we potentially hurt our own future leaders, future medical professionals, future scientists, future businessmen and businesswomen, future teachers, future military personnel, future pastors and missionaries, future civil rights leaders, future U.S. Presidents and Vice-Presidents, and our future neighbor.

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When we show apathy to children and allow it to be “the norm” for a Magistrate Court Judge to evict minor children -like Little Anna, like Oracio- from our communities and it does not make the news, then we, as a society, face a crisis more deadly than the COVID-19 pandemic. It is called: Hate.

I, Sister Dina, envision government leadership who would treat each person as a unique GOD-Loved Creation that is on scene to offer significant contributions to their family, their community, their country, and perhaps - the world.

When we as a nation nurture and develop our human assets, when we create and give access for opportunities to thrive: we create stronger households; we create more financially sustaining communities; and we create an America that is stronger and bold enough to withstand any crisis, any natural disaster, and win against any attack to our national security. It all starts with seeing the worth and potential in each and every human being and investing the time, talent, and resources to little ANNAs and little ORACIOs. A just society would have a coalition of "Child Advocates" protesting in front of every courthouse where little vulnerable children are being evicted. No child in the United States of America should ever have to utter the heart-breaking words: "i am being evicted."

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