

Healing Poverty

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Basic Situation

- Must accept & understand problems to fix them
- When bad things happen, it's easy to make a law
- It's hard to heal the underlying problem
- Dishonest governments criminalize poverty and exacerbate underlying causes
- Pattern protects the establishment, hurts minorities and poor people
- Government usually protects wealth

Housing Costs

- Housing is scarce by design
- Zoning requires big expensive houses on big lots
- Inflates housing market prices
- Pushes poor people into homelessness
- We should change zoning laws to require building more affordable housing
- Build mixed-use neighborhoods with pleasant places you can comfortably walk to

Criminalized Homelessness

- Illegal to sleep in Sioux Falls parks overnight
- Supreme Court said that's okay.
See *Grants Pass v. Johnson* (2024)
- Sometimes illegal to sleep in your car
- Hostile architecture prevents sleeping
- Image from Wikipedia



Homelessness Slide 2

- Hostile architecture should be abolished
- Our culture should heal the causes of homelessness, not attack homeless people
- Sioux Falls should build shelters designed for the begging alcoholics who wander city streets
- Build a city park for campers
- Extreme income inequality must be moderated

Debtor's Prison

- Courts order fines as punishment
- If you can't pay, you can get arrested and fined more, buried in court debt
- Mississippi has debtor's prisons, "restitution centers"
- Blacks disproportionately jailed
- See "Why Are We Still Sending People to Jail for Being Poor? It's Time to Truly Abolish Debtors' Prisons" on https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/economic-issues-in-criminal-justice/why-are-we-still-sending-people-to-jail-for-being-poor/

Arraignment Hearing

- Initial court hearing (arraignment) often requires physical presence (not telepresence)
- Huge problem if you're poor and the hearing is far away
- If you're rich, your lawyer goes
- Can't get a public defender until after this hearing
- Failure to appear results in a bench warrant, make a mistake when driving, and you're busted!

Losing Your Car

- If you're arrested while driving ...
- Your car gets towed, impounded
- You lose your car and property if you can't pay fee
- Big problem if you're poor, alone, and in jail
- Quite a racket in places (i.e. Aurora, Illinois)
- One month of impound costs \$2225
- Impound \$500 / tow \$175 / daily storage \$50 /
administration \$50 [https://www.aurora-il.org/1572/Towed-](https://www.aurora-il.org/1572/Towed-and-Impounded-Vehicles)
and-Impounded-Vehicles

Supreme Court Ruling

- In some situations, it is unconstitutional to jail people just because they can't pay a fine
- "we are confronted with an impermissible discrimination that rests on ability to pay"
- See Williams v. Illinois (1970)
- While the ruling is narrow, the system does not respect the underlying principle

Courts

- Rich and powerful are frequently not charged
- They have expensive lawyers who get cases dropped
- If you're not quite poor, you can't afford a lawyer but won't get a public defender
- Poor people get public defenders
- In some areas, overworked public defenders just say take the deal
- Multiple jeopardy encourages forced plea bargaining

Drug Prohibition

- Cannabis was criminalized in 1937 to hurt blacks and stifle industrial competition from hemp
- Not designed to reduce addiction
- Nixon increased prohibition to attack civil rights and antiwar movements
- Heavily biased against poor and black communities
- USA recently had world's highest incarceration rate
- Treatment – not jail – promotes healing

Biased Enforcement

- Police target areas with poor people crimes such as petty theft, vandalism, drugs
- More patrols, more jail time, more divided families, more court costs, more poverty
- Governments protect rich people crimes
- SD trusts hide wealth from taxes, protect money laundering
- CEOs are protected when corporations commit pollution, wage theft, create housing bubbles, ...

Other Issues

- Sometimes panhandling, loitering, publicly sharing food are illegal
- Cash bail puts innocent people in jail
- Arrest can lead to losing your job, apartment, children, property, driver's license, ...
- Innocent people suffer when wrongly arrested
- See "How the United States Punishes People for Being Poor" <https://www.vera.org/news/how-the-united-states-punishes-people-for-being-poor>

Money Really Helps

- Sometimes a rich person will adopt a troubled area
- Subsidize schools, child care, education
- Encourage investment
- Crime goes down, property value goes up
- Dangerous neighborhoods turn into nice places

Recommendations

- Stop glorifying material wealth
- Practice the compassion of Jesus Christ
- Replace jails with addiction treatment centers
- Promote social and economic justice and fairness
- Build far more affordable housing
- Reduce extreme income inequality
- Close tax havens

Enjoy Nature

