January 28, 2023

I was out distributing hand warmers (18 hour) to people living on the street as we were are going to have temperatures in the high twenties and when you add in the wind chill the temps will be down in the low twenties. Many times the windchill factors have been overlooked in the past when the governments were trying to decide what to do.

I met a person named Lajaya (SP?) and we had a conversation that highlights how individual homelessness can be. I’ve been asked things like, “how can we stop homelessness”, or what causes people to be homeless. I cannot give them a well-constructed, packaged, wrapped up answer. Even from the ten thousand foot level there is not one cause: there are many causes. We cannot look at homelessness only as a systemic problem. The system certainly causes homelessness in some cases, but not all cases. Is it economics … I would have to say yes, but not for everyone of the homeless. Is it the failure to treat people with mental health issues, yes …but not all of the homeless. What about addiction? That’s a good one to blame the problem on, I would say yes … but not all homelessness is caused by addiction. Maybe crime, there is a great deal of guilt surrounding crime, maybe we should blame it on crime, yes but not all.

People are messy, ask a psychologist. Many different factors go into us and the results from the same factors are different with different people.

LaJaya’s husband is in jail. Within 24 hours of his incarceration she lost her home, her car, and was on the street. This happened in late September, and she has been on the streets since October. She has multiple vehicles including an RV. I asked her how many people were in the various vehicles: her answer “14”. I asked how many had propane to keep warm. She told me how many had propane and how many relied on hand sanitizer to burn to stay warm. I gave her handwarmers as appropriate and she said that she would distribute them as all of the people on the street were relatives. I asked why the relatives were homeless and she started listing off the reasons in each case and everyone I heard was different. No common thread.

She said that she just got to this location. I asked her where she had been. Her answer is devastating and should shake us all. Since October she had been forced to move seven (7) times. Two by the City of Fife and five times by the City of Tacoma. She named each of them. I was so shocked I couldn’t write fast enough. Each forced move registers 203 on a Psychological Stress Scale and it is cumulative. Her score in four months is 1421 which puts her well above the probability for having major medical problems within two years. Ninety percent is the score for one move. She has 7 ninety percent scores for having a major medical problem within 2 years.

It seems the City Council is using the “Tacoma Method” that was last used by the Tacoma City Council in 1885 to expel the Chinese from Tacoma. The City Council of 1885 passed and used an ordinance requiring 500 cubic feet of air space per person. This was used to stop the practice of sleeping rooms where a person could rent a room just to sleep. The sleeping rooms were used by many Chinese workers and the Ordinance forced them to move on.

The current Tacoma City Council passed an Ordinance banning camping in a ten-block radius around City Sanctioned Homeless Encampments. Many Homeless people are camping on the street and this Ordinance makes it illegal in these areas. This is being used to lower the available space and force people to move on.

In both cases the Mayor and City Council at the behest of the Community passed ordinances to force people to move.

On October 3, 1885 the “Ouster Committee” was elected which became known as the Tacoma 15. These fifteen people delivered the message to the Chinese Community that they must move on. All Chinese people had to leave their homes, businesses, etc. and get out of Tacoma. When they rounded up 200 members of the Chinese community, they forced them to walk 8 miles to the train station, buy their own tickets and board the train bound for Portland. November 4, 1885 the Tacoma Daily Ledger headline read, “Gone! Two Hundred Chinese Leave the City – How the People’s Request was Enforced.” On November 7, 1885 the mayor, the fire chief and 25 others who were involved with the expulsion were indicted on felony conspiracy charges.

Today we don’t need an “Ouster Committee” to deliver the message. We have the HEAL Team that is well placed to deliver the message to “Move On” or “Leave” to our Homeless Community. Using the Camping Ban Ordinance and forcing people to move using “Sweeps” the effect becomes the same. Wherever you are, no matter what you call it: a sleeping room that is required to have 500 cubic feet of air space or a tent that is within ten blocks of a City Sanctioned Encampment, the message is the same. Move on! You can’t stay here! The people of Tacoma don’t want you here! You are a Public Nuisance”! The Tacoma elected officials will continue to damage the Homeless. Will we see a headline in the TNT, “Gone! Two Thousand Homeless Leave the City – How the People’s Request was Enforced.” The “Tacoma Method” is being enforced on the streets of Tacoma.

The legal definition of a conspiracy is when two or more people work together to plan and perform an illegal act. Sweeps have been ruled illegal and the City of Tacoma continues forcing Homeless People to move using sweeps. Will we have another group from Tacoma indicted on conspiracy charges after all the damage is done?