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10 Things We Can Do to Perpetuate Homelessness

By Joel John Roberts
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To many people, the world today is upside down. Look at the problem of homelessness, for example. We are the richest and most powerful nation in the world, and yet there are still thousands and thousands of people who sleep on our streets each night.

It doesn't make sense; it is an upside-down reality. But maybe we need to look at homelessness with an upside-down perspective, with an absurd logic that just might illuminate the immensity of this crisis and move us into positive action.

Maybe the utterly absurd conclusion is this: We really want homelessness to exist in the United States.

Maybe homelessness is good for our economy, since doing nothing saves us money. (We avoid paying increased taxes to feed, house and provide the homeless with job training.)

Perhaps it boosts our self-image. (We need to feel positive about our own lives, so it's good to have people worse off than us.)

Homelessness helps our environment since the homeless are great recyclers. (Perhaps homelessness gives us a great reason to clean out the old clothes from our closets.)

It is a good object lesson for our children. (If they don't do their homework or find a job, we threaten that they'll end up like "them!") And what else would we do with our spare change?

Sure, this "logic" sounds ludicrous, but so is the existence of homelessness in affluent America. If there really is an absurdist conspiracy to keep people homeless on our streets, then here are the "Top 10 Ways to Increase Homelessness in Our Community":

10. Keep thinking that the homeless are just lazy and shouldn't be helped.

9. Assume foster kids magically become responsible, self-sufficient adults at age 18.

8. Provide public food programs, but ignore the real reasons people are hungry.

7. Make it hard for the homeless to access services by spreading out services all over the county.

6. Encourage NIMBYism.

5. Let law enforcement deal with it. Outlaw homelessness and throw the homeless in jail.

4. Sweep the homeless into other communities.

3. Eliminate the welfare system.

2. Keep minimum wages at a minimum.

And finally...the No. 1 way to increase homelessness in our community:

Reduce the housing stock and eliminate affordable housing.

Sadly, although this Top 10 list might seem outlandish, some in our community encourage such steps. The reality is, if we just do the opposite, we could end homelessness.

It just makes sense that if we take the right steps to end homelessness in our nation, our community and our country become stronger.