

MEDIA

Annie Kaune

After reading The Soloist and doing research for the essay response, I was struck by how big a role the media has played in public response to the homelessness issue.

After each article that Steve Lopez wrote, the public responded with offers of assistance and by prodding the mayor of Los Angeles into action. Similarly, the same public response has been received by articles that the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* has very recently published about a homeless teen. In a cover story in this Sunday's paper, Staff Writer Jessica Mayrer did a follow up piece about Nikki Yothers, a homeless teen who had been sleeping in her car in the Bozeman High parking lot. Due to a previous article that Mayrer had written, the public response and support was so overwhelming that Yothers is now in an apartment and doing much better. And all of this support came from the general public – which came at a good time since the Federal funding for the teen housing program had been cut recently.

Unfortunately, public attention dies down soon after the articles are written. I believe that a media task force should be formed by volunteers within local (and national) news outlets who pledge to keep continuous reporting on the issue of homelessness in Bozeman and in America.

Some ways in which this Media Task Force for the Homeless could be formed:

- Circulate a petition that the community could sign to express interest in the idea.
- Present the petition to various local news organizations including television, newspapers, and radio stations.
- Solicit volunteers from each news organization who might be willing to become members of the Media Task Force for the Homeless.

Keeping the stories in the spotlight, and keeping the public informed might be the single most effective tool in battling the homelessness issue.

Keaton Corbitt

My question of research is “why does Hollywood feel that they need to portray the homeless as mean, dangerous, drunk, drug addicted people?”. What I mean by this is say for instance in the movie Big Daddy, the bum is crazy, begs for money, and bothers people. I believe, and I think others may as well think that the reason for this is that it ‘Sells’. If this is the case, do we think this is wrong? Should they be able to cause false images for every homeless person just for the sake of getting more money? I hope to get a conversation started on this topic, then to let people's feelings possibly take over resulting in a small debate. So far my research has shown that Hollywood doesn't portray homeless accurately. Other sources say that some of them are well kept, clean people just having hard times. Others are less well kept but just as well off in their intensions. If you think of your own personal image of a homeless person I would bet that it resembles what Hollywood has shown you. Do you think this is fair to the homeless? Should you be judging them when you haven't even met them? It is true that some of the homeless people of America may in fact be this way, but a majority of them aren't. Other questions to think about are, do we like the Hollywood image more than the real one? And would the actual image sell as well as the fake one?

Shayla Shaw

Lazy. Pathetic. Bum. Degenerate. All of these words are associated with the image of a homeless person on the sidewalks or out on the highways. It is the classic media depiction of homelessness. As our country and others who share this globe are exposed to homelessness the words that enter our minds should not be those mentioned above, instead the words should be poverty, despair, and hopelessness. Each night about 750,000

people in the US alone go to bed homeless (www.Crossroadsri.org). Do you honestly think that 750,000 people are lazy, pathetic, and degenerate enough to want to live on the streets? I think that 750,000 people are living in despair while being hopeless and suffering from poverty in the United States.

As if the world was not difficult enough, the economy is not growing in the right direction either. As each day goes by, a large number of United States money is spent and sadly we have little to show for it. One thing that has been steady throughout the years is the number of people without homes. With our less than great economy we can be sure that the number of homeless people will grow to staggering numbers in the next few years. But is it really because these people are lacking the ambition to succeed on life? Of course not, it is because the world is more difficult to live in nowadays. And with the media giving us false understanding of the issue of homelessness, the average United States citizen is not fully equipped with the correct information on the subject. If we do not have the correct information then how is it that American's are able to label these homeless people? Misinformation in the media concerning the topic of homelessness directs America down a path of false assumptions and accusations of the average homeless man, woman, and/or child that wanders the streets of America today.

Danielle Patton

Media's depiction of mental illness varies depending on the situation. If a homeless man is homeless because of his mental illness then it is his fault and not talked about by the media, if any one else has a mental illness, media quickly presents it as a severe problem that needs to be handled quickly. Have you ever stopped to think that maybe media is a contributing factor to mental illness? All of the graphic images now shown on the news, put into video games, and other types of media can have effects on young children.

In the article *The Future Children* it says that more and more evidence is growing about the fear that media puts into young children has long lasting and severe effects. It can cause things such as anxiety, depression, and post traumatic stress. There have been many instances reported about children suffering from post traumatic syndrome from watching the news! (*The Future Children*, 2008). Media is a child's best friend these days. They are constantly watching television and playing video games instead of going out and playing outside and interacting with children their age, which in the article mentions that learning social skills is a very important step in cognitive development (*The Future Children*, 2008).

In our society today we have failed at communicating properly with one another. It is sad that in our society today the deciding factor on whether we talk to a human being or not is based on what disorder they suffer from. In the *New Zealand Journal of Psychology* it discusses a study that was conducted. The study was about interaction among people. People that were involved in this experiment that did not suffer from a disorder were more willing to interact with people that did suffer from disorders in this particular order; if one had a physical illness such as skin cancer, a mood illness such as depression and lastly people were not so willing to speak with somebody that suffers from a physiological disorder such as paranoid schizophrenia (*New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 2007).

There are some questions that arose during my research that I would like to further explore. Such as why do people act the way they do towards people that have been diagnosed with a mental illness? Why does media try to hide mental illness among the homeless and not address it as a severe problem? What little things can be done to just overall improve the media's depiction on the homeless that suffer from mental illness, or what can be done to improve media's cause of mental illness?

Phil Taylor

At the town hall meeting, I would like to explore even further the impact, positive and negative, that the entertainment media can have on the issue of homelessness. In my essay, I mentioned movie adaptation of The Soloist and films like The Pursuit of Happyness which portray the homeless in a more realistic sense. I believe that we can take advantage of television and the cinema to inform and inspire the public to take a part in helping with the issue.

Exploring the consequences of this strategy is something I also want to do to inform myself on all sides of the argument. I want to look into how the media can be abused to take advantage of a person or the situation that they're in. What would've happened if Steve had only cared his reputation at the Times and didn't care for Nathaniel's feelings?

I would also like to look a bit into the difference between the entertainment media, such as movies and TV programs, and the news media, like the internet or TV news shows. Since one is obligated to fabricate stories and the other is obligated to tell the whole truth, there are stark differences in how the public would expect them to cover the issue of homelessness.