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Assignment # 2

"Service and Commitment to the Community"

Living in the largest city in the United States and one of the world's major centers of commerce and finance, we are exposed to several facets of the community on a daily basis. Increasing cost of living, rising oil prices, poverty and violence are some of the most pressing issues we face in our community. Currently, there is a lot of focus on finding a way to lower the cost of electricity, reducing the carbon footprint and the depletion of the ozone layer yet we often overlook the matters of the people in our community. Although there are many advocates who are focused on making changes for the betterment of people, there is always more that can be done.

Several major corporations are headquartered in New York City, including 44 of the FORTUNE 500 companies and a large number of foreign corporations. Although New York is known for its wealth, the irony is that the city is also hosts to millions of homeless people. This disparity is very near and dear to my heart and with this title of Miss Nigeria in America I will ensure that strides and movements are made to fight for the homeless.'



In 2008, the Miss Nigeria in America Organization adopted a new mission statement, "Service and Commitment to the Community." As a representative of this organization, I will be an ambassador in my community, ensuring that I adopt the prominent issues that we face, as my own. The resources that New York City encompasses are abundant; Therefore, WE as a community are more than capable of creating initiatives and working collaboratively to better the lives of the less fortunate in our community. Every human being residing in our city has a purpose and is essential in fostering a thriving community therefore we must see to it that measures are taken to help the homeless.

Often times, instead of helping the homeless we criminalize them. The criminalization of homelessness takes many forms, including legislation that makes it illegal to sleep, sit, or store personal belongings in public spaces in cities where people are forced to live in public spaces; sweeps of city areas where homeless persons are living to drive them out of the area, frequently resulting in the destruction of those persons' personal property, including important personal documents and medication; and laws that punish people for begging or to move poor or homeless persons out of a city or downtown area.



Now that we have shed light on this issue, there are several programs we can establish and I can spearhead to alleviate this epidemic. Instead of criminalizing homelessness, city governments, business groups, and law enforcement officials should work with homeless people, providers, and advocates for solutions to prevent and end homelessness. Firstly, businesses can play a positive role in helping to address the issue of homelessness. Being the city of commerce and the financial center of the world, instead of advocating for criminalization measures, business groups can put resources to solutions to homelessness, such as creating centers where homeless people can congregate during the day, eat meals and clean-up. These centers should be staffed with counselors as well as educational resources that homeless people can utilize to better themselves and find a way out of their situation.

The federal government can also play a role in encouraging cities to pursue more constructive and efficient approaches to homelessness. Federal funding for homeless and poverty programs should be provided by local governments with the intent not to punish homeless persons for conduct related to their status. While the federal government supports cities, cities should dedicate more resources to more affordable housing, shelters, and homeless services. One



effective way to provide a solution is to dedicate more resources to outreach programs such as the homeless center mentioned above. Cities can also address street homelessness by creating areas for homeless people to reside and setting up programs to help homeless individuals apply for federal benefits to which they are entitled but may not be receiving, such as food stamps, earned income tax credit, and supplemental security income benefits.

When cities, businesses, and federal governments work with homeless persons and advocate toward solutions to homelessness, instead of punishing those who are homeless or poor, everyone can benefit. I have outlined various programs on different levels that collaboratively we can implement to create change in our community and I plan to personally take these on as a project until the ultimate goal is reached: finding solutions to improve the lives of the homeless. Providing service to our communities and being committed to the advancement of people allows for a healthy place to live.