

ONE MAN SPARKS A MOVEMENT



by BRAELYN DIAMOND

As she lay her head against the bricked building, she kept her belongings close and held herself closer.

The strain in her eyes. The dirt on her clothes.

She looked desolate. She looked stressed. She was homeless.

As I watched her sit beside the building, I thought about the circumstances surrounding her homelessness. I thought about the last time someone asked her how her day was. The last time she didn't have to wonder where she'd lay her head that night. The last time she felt safe.

As I stood there watching her stare off into what appeared, some distant world, I thought back to an article I'd recently read on a tiny house movement.

Stemming from a one man mission to simply help a woman who had been sleeping on the streets of his hometown in Los Angeles, Elvis Summers did just that. Costing less than 500 dollars, Summers was able to build the woman, who had been homeless for ten years, a tiny house. His mission sparked the attention of many and in less than a month he was able to raise 60,000 to continue his mission.

A similar movement was done in Atlanta.

That got me to thinking, if Atlanta and Los Angeles can do it, so can South Carolina. Are our lives really too busy to stop and help someone in need?

It's easy to say that a homeless person is homeless because of circumstances that they can control. Yet, studies show that the average American is one paycheck away from homelessness. One paycheck. So, as easy as it to assume and label, these accusations are often inaccurate. Homelessness is a result of a number of circumstances some of which require a person to decide between buying food, shelter, or catering to other basic needs.

A study conducted by the National Coalition for the Homeless discovered that homeless people are not homeless simply because they choose not to get or keep a job. Homelessness is largely a result of foreclosure, mental illness, lack of affordable health care, domestic violence and so many other uncontrollable issues. In 2013, there was an estimated 57,849 homeless veterans, 40% of which were unsheltered. That's 57,849 homeless human beings who risked their lives serving our country.

I'm not saying that we can shelter every single homeless person there is. I'm saying that the sheltering of at least one homeless person is a step in the right direction.

One step that will provide someone with shelter at night. One step that will give someone hope and encouragement. One step that will allow someone to integrate themselves back into society. One step to continue this movement. Let's make that step, South Carolina.