



PICTURE THE HOMELESS

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Good day, City Councilmembers Committee on Public Safety,

Thank you for having me here today, my name is Ousmane Drmae, and I am here to talk to you about the good and the bad. I live on the streets and I am also a member of Picture the Homeless who some of you know. Picture the Homeless is allowing me to tell you my story and my beliefs be heard by you today. You should know that as far as I'm concerned I think that it is a good thing that you are trying to change the laws for open containers public urination and being in the park after closing. To move these offenses to civil penalties is a little bit better. All of these things I know something about, and because I was not arrested or given a ticket for all of them some of my friends were. A summons over jail time is a little bit better and what we have been asking for a long time.

I have been in the shelter program RWA (Ready Willing and Able). I was doing good and at first everything was ok. When I relapsed they called themselves showing me tough love. They took my bed and was trying to force me to restart the program from zero again going to a 28 day program, and after that stay about 2 weeks indoors. I was not ready so I asked them to transfer me and they did not want to do it so I never got housing.

Then they would call the cops to remove me from the building every night to the streets. I did not know nowhere to go, and I sleep outdoors. I have been on the streets a long time, I ended up getting frost bite that cost me 8 of my toes, and almost 2 years in the hospital and a lot of pain that I have to live with for the rest of my life. I don't tell everybody this I blame all of them the people in the program that kicked me out, the people on the street who called the police because they think I'm a crazy homeless man and I blame the police for not caring that I relapsed and got kicked out on the streets.

No, I don't wanna go back to the shelter and I don't want to get locked up cause they think I'm crazy and smoke K2, or because I'm tall and black. I drink give me a ticket, sometimes they do and sometimes they tell me I got to move cause they don't want to see me around no more. They know who we are on Park Ave. around 125th. St., and they know that we not breaking the law. But they keep moving us and when we ask why they give us tickets or take us to the hospital. We are street homeless but they still write on the summons that we live at 600 East 125th. Street. anyway. Picture the Homeless looked that address up for me and that's the Manhattan Psychiatric center, I'm not crazy and I don't live there I live on the streets, and if you let the police officers be the judge you might have to pay over a thousand dollars to lock me up or take me to the hospital cause he wants me to talk back to him. So I'm talking to you don't arrest me, don't give me a ticket.

So let me say that I feel that some people are gonna be arrested because of their race, gender, their beliefs and origin... I have been targeted because I am street homeless, my skin color and my location 125th. Street and Park Ave. I don't want to sleep in no shelter, I don't want to sleep in the streets somebody should give me some housing. Thank you for listening to me today.

Ousmane Drmae