Homelessness leads to sleepless nights in Spain

 What would life be like if you slept every night on the streets and went days without eating? According to a state-level, independent, non-plural, non-profit organization known as the RAIS Foundation there are an estimated 35,000 people who are without homes in Spain. According the the El Mundo since 2016 there are 400 plus people who sleep on the streets of Valencia every night. The increase in homelessness was led by a financial crisis that hit in 2008 leaving people without jobs and more people on the streets. The RAIS Foundation and many other programs as well focus on the basic needs of people who are experiencing homelessness. These programs focus on giving shelter, food, protection and security to those who need it the most. While all of these things are needed there is a piece that is missing. The educational piece to foundations like RAIS to encourage those who are experiencing homelessness to gain the strength to re-enter the work force. Educational programs in this context is the implementation of educational classes that focus on things like making a résumé, working with technology, finances, learning about health and relearning social and work skills. My goal here isn’t to take away from foundations and their goals but to implement education programs that will enrich them and help them all achieve their mottos of “no person is living on the street”.

The RAIS Foundation does not receive money from the government because it is a private organization. Their money comes from donations, companies, members and owners. Because the government plays no part in issuing the RAIS Foundation money this is an issue with their program only being substantial for the time being. A Spaniard woman (asked that I do not use her name) who has been a volunteer for this program since 2013 told me in an interview over email that the RAIS Foundation’s main focus is to provide people who are experiencing homelessness with a place to stay for the night. Housing is their number one basic need that they spend the most money on as well as effort. She continued on to say that the RAIS Foundation needs some renovation with its program in terms of focusing on other beneficial parts for people who are experiencing homelessness. The end of the interviewed ended with a question about my proposal for implementing education programs to their foundation so that the people who come and ask for help are the ones who want to get off the streets and re-start their lives. She agreed immensely with my idea for the implementation of educational programs being added to the RAIS Foundation as a new program. She told me that since she has been volunteering they haven’t created any educational programs for the people using their facilities. The implementation of these educational programs are important because it gives the people who are using the facilities something beneficial and long term. Giving people who are experiencing homelessness shelter, food and protection is very important however after a while its never going to permanently get them off the streets. An education on new technology, finances and constructing resumes is something that will be ingrained and will hopefully lead them to re-entering the work force.

 My main focus is working with the RAIS Foundation to find an avenue to start a slow process of implementing different educational programs in their foundations work. This work could be solely work of those loyal volunteers who have background in a higher education. With the help of the volunteers teaching programs on resumes, interview skills, social and emotional skills as well as learning to work with money. These programs will have a long term effect on those who are determined to get off the streets. However, with every argument there is another opposing side. There are estimated 404 people who sleep on the streets every night in Valencia, those who sit out all day with a raggedy cup in hopes of receiving some change is one thing. But on the contrary there are those who are sitting on the side of the street begging for money but also talking on a cell phone, or buying a beer, drugs or caring for a dog. In addition, the RAIS Foundation states that there are no charges for a night stay or a day visit in their facilities. All of these things add up to questioning if they are really without a home. Some people in society who find themselves asking this question are the ones who wouldn’t agree with my proposal for helping these people get off the streets. They are on the side of do these people really need help or are they taking advantage of people who see them and feel bad?

I asked another Spaniard woman whom I live with her stance on homelessness here in Valencia and what solutions she think should be done. She told me that she believes homelessness here in Valencia is a big problem especially because there are no jobs for them. The ideas she had for solutions started with creating one big organization that does the jobs of the little ones around the city. This idea is interesting because of its main goal of unifying and expanding the idea of helping people who are experiencing homelessness. I later told her about my proposal on implementing education programs into the large organizations like the RAIS Foundation. She found my idea interesting in terms of helping the people re-enter the work force however, she thinks that most people here in Valencia just want to get by day by, asking for food, money to by food and money as well. She told me that many people here who are experiencing homelessness are those who are mental and or physically sick, therefore have no motivation to gain an education.

An objective to play devils advocate to the Spaniards response to most people here are just trying to get by day by day could be true, however the RAIS foundation alone helped 12,457 that were in bad health condition and 25,648 people were given a place to stay for the night. There are people in the community who need help but those people receive it differently whether they are just going to ask for it all day or find the help they need. However, in conclusion the RAIS Foundation needs to implement educational programs into their daily and night centers, as well as their habitat centers in other cities in Spain. These educational programs will not only get them to think about re-entering the work force but help them with getting healthy again. With the enforcement of education on the people who are using the facilities it will give them a chance to restart their lives, be the underdog and be an inspiration for all.