



JUSTICE

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ADDICTION REQUIRES TREATMENT, NOT PUNISHMENT

When we try to understand something new, we often think about it in terms of something we already know. When trying to understand addiction years ago, we thought in terms of misbehavior and crime. Our response was to incarcerate people suffering from addiction, denying them treatment. New research suggests that addiction is like a disease, causing physical changes to the body and mind, with some people more predisposed to it than others. Diseases require treatment rather than incarceration.

It is undeniable that people with addiction often make poor choices, and these choices negatively affect not only the person in addiction, but their families and communities. But this requires us to address the conditions of life that caused the substance abuse in the first place, and to provide the individual with addiction the counseling and treatment necessary to navigate choices differently. It is now clear that treatment centers, not prisons, are the places where this can happen. This is even more true for people with a “dual diagnosis” of addiction and mental health issues.

The Newark Think Tank on Poverty, in collaboration with the Ohio Organizing Collaborative and other grassroots organizations, will be collecting signatures for a petition to put the **Neighborhood Safety, Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Amendment** on the ballot this November. This amendment will reclassify low level, non-violent drug possession and probation violations, releasing incarcerated people to treatment centers where they can get the help they need. As a result of easing the prison overcrowding crisis, the millions of dollars saved on incarceration will be directed to rehabilitative treatment programs for people with addictions.

Statewide, the campaign needs more than 300,000 signatures to get the amendment on the ballot this November so that citizens can decide. We need 3,000 in Licking County. The measure calls for no new taxes or resources, but only to direct money we now spend on prisons to treatment facilities where the problem of addiction can really be addressed.

We hope you will join us in our canvassing effort at our next General Meeting on April 14th, 11:30 a.m., at the Denison Art Space.

The Newark Think Tank on Poverty

The Newark Think Tank on Poverty is a diverse group of local people who have experienced systemic barriers in obtaining safe housing, affordable healthcare, accessible transportation, education, and a job that provides a living wage. We believe all people should be treated equally, fairly, and have the ability to live with dignity.

We also run a blog. Visit www.newarkthinktank.org/justice for the latest news and writing.



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NewarkThinkTank

" I WISH THE RENT WAS HEAVEN SENT "

Ohio is the 34th most expensive state in the nation for renters. According to the Fair Market Rent value of 2017, an average one bedroom apartment in Newark will rent for \$687 per month. This means a person would have to work 17.1 hours a week at a pay rate of \$10 per hour, an amount just above Ohio's minimum wage, to afford that apartment.

United Way released a study in the summer of 2017 with reports that show the average annual Household Survival Budget for a single adult is \$17,652, translating to an hourly wage of \$8.83.

For a family of four, the average annual Household Survival Budget is \$60,396 – more than double the U.S. poverty level for the same size family. That translates to an hourly wage of \$30.20 for one parent (or an hourly wage of \$15.10 per parent, if two parents work).

In 2015, 14% of Ohio households (660,897 households) were in poverty. But according to an additional United Way study, 26% (1.2 million households) qualified as ALICE: Asset Limited, Income Restrained, Employed. For Newark, this translates to 21% in poverty and another 34% below the ALICE threshold. **Together, 1.8 million households—40% of households all across the state of Ohio—were in poverty, or on the margins of poverty.**

Simply put, when money is pulled from the pockets of people faster than they can earn it, and in a community with little supply of affordable housing, the result is an eviction epidemic.

In many cities, this is true. And in Newark, this is true.

DISEASE OF DESPAIR

According to a study by Princeton Professors Anne Case and Sir Angus Deaton, the mortality rate of middle-aged white Americans has almost doubled since 1998, from 3,859 per 100,000 people, to 6,096 in 2015.

In communities like Newark, a lack of jobs with living wages and educational opportunities are strongly linked to deaths by chronic liver disease, drug overdose, and suicide. Case and Deaton refer to these trends as the “diseases of despair”.

It is not difficult to find these trends in Newark. For citizens without the money or ability to access loans, higher education is out of reach. With a high school diploma or less, your opportunities in the labor market consists of fast food, retail, and other service sector jobs that pay poverty-level wages.

Surrounding these streets and businesses are homes and apartments unaffordable to those with the poverty-wage jobs. In the neighborhoods closest to the “developing” Downtown, low-income families and senior citizens are being evicted to have their homes sold to speculators hoping to cash in on the gentrification.

People who use drugs as a coping mechanism to deal with this economic despair in their lives often end up inside the criminal justice system. And for people with a felony record, all of the above opportunities are even more limited. After being thrown in as a result of the disease, you're thrown back out without a job, a home, or any kind of treatment.

Those of us who have experienced the worst of these systemic barriers can report a feeling of despair that sets in. We were always on edge, trying to predict that One Moment in the future that would spell the end of any comfort we had.

Am I going to lose my job because of an email an angry customer sent? Am I going to lose my car because I cannot make the payments? Are politicians going to take my healthcare away because I lost my job?

The barriers between people and jobs with living wages, safe and permanent homes, and the treatment needed to deal with past and current traumas have been created by a diseased political and economic system.

The people of Licking County can change this system, and a number of our neighbors have already organized with this purpose. Book groups, teach-ins, and nonviolent protests focused on addressing systemic oppression have been occurring on nearby campuses and Downtown, hosted by groups like the Think Tank, the Denison Student Union, Democracy First, the Newark chapter of March for our Lives, and Strong Voices Rising, to name a few.

Want to get involved? Check out [the calendar on our website](#), or reach each out to the Editorial Board at justicentp@gmail.com.

Withdrawal

There is a demon chained to a chair in my brain

His name is dopamine, his goal is addiction
He laughs while my skeleton is melting

He grins when my soul is aflame
He whispers sweet assurances that he is not to Blame
He vows that he alone can ease the pain

He urges me to pack it in and take the midnight train
He scoffs when I refuse to play a part in his game

There is a demon chained to a chair in my brain

Poetry Day

addiction kills slowly
talking first what you love the most
like putting it on a silver platter
and giving it to the host

my kids, my home, my feelings, my friends
in the end, it's always the drugs that win

but now I'm sober and full of life
you won't take this from me again

you're the devil, I will no longer sin

Written by participants in Writing and Rewriting the Self, a poetry-writing workshop in Newark for people in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction.

For more information about the program or If you have a short poem (under 300 words) that deals with contemporary social/political issues and would like it to be considered for the NTTTP newsletter, please send your inquiries to D. B. Ruderman at ruderman.nttp@gmail.com.