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HEADLINE: Beyond a Doubt...But Does it Matter?

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## Beyond a Doubt...But Does it Matter?

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Far from Wall Street, on streets in every community across this great land, are irrefutable signs of how sincere we are about the Pledge of Allegiance. Young Marcus, Elena, Ja-Che, Tommy, Marisol and over 1.5 million like them represent shameful gaps in the “justice for all” promise.

Two recent reports, “The Economic Crisis Hits Home,” and “America’s Youngest Outcasts” make an irrefutable case that children and youth are being ravaged by homelessness. Both reports offer comprehensive, common sense suggestions to un-ravage the hope of our future, young people.

The good news: all indications point to the First Family’s astute grasp of the tremendous injustices of poverty. The bad news: these reports pile one more crisis onto a chock-full Obama platter. The question: bluntly, do homeless kids count, specifically, where do they stand in the ranks of crucial issues facing this nation and world?

“*Nouveau-homeless*” families, joining the ranks of the “*we’ve-been-here-all-along-but-you’ve-managed-to-ignore-us*” homeless families, are causing a quite a stir, in part because they’re hitting the pocketbooks of school districts struggling to provide education for homeless kids. To no surprise, when more families become homeless, more kids are homeless.

My fear is that these kids end up as scapegoats. Complaints about expenses of educating homeless students are rising as districts examine their budgets. I’d like to believe that they’ve looked elsewhere before trying to balance the budget on the backpacks of

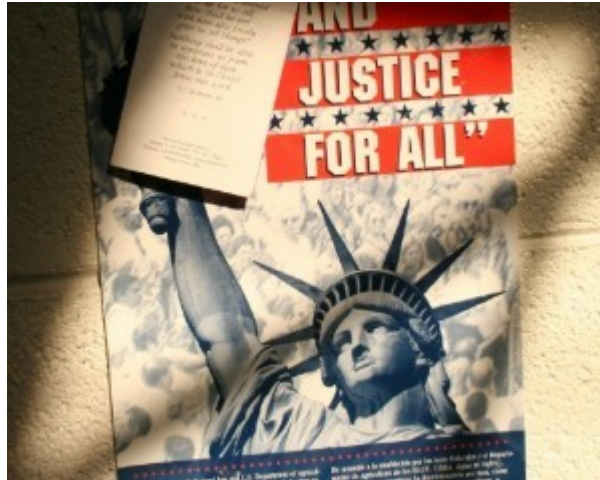
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homeless and poor students. But one district in my home city of Aurora, IL has put a [bounty on the heads of “non-residents”](#) by instituting a tip hotline.

My fairly extensive experience is that even “trained” professionals can totally miss the boat identifying homeless kids. I shudder to think of vigilante movements scouring communities for alleged or imagined residency scofflaws. Is this the way of the future? ...*one nation, under God...*



These reports confirm children’s worst nightmares—losing their home, school, friends, and world as they knew it—which should inspire compassion, not rejection. The devastating depth of family homelessness, a long-ignored escalating issue, stems from injustice of poverty, as seen in unaffordable and substandard housing, inadequate wages and financial support, and shortages in childcare and health care. The shredded safety net is a symptom of the economy’s imbalance. To no surprise, significantly more households are falling over the edge, but who is paying attention?

Perhaps the biggest challenge of these reports is to generate a sense of urgency in policymakers, school administrators and educators, and the general public about the scope of the problem and essential actions to avoid the worst case scenario—widespread disregard of children and youth whose homeless situation is not only not their fault but outside their realm to solve.

What more is required to convince people of the need to reverse the traumas that devastate the lives of our nation’s young? ...*with liberty and justice for all...*

It seems to me that the new First Family offers hope from the White House to the house-less. I have the audacity to hope.