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Haight Street Homeless

When walking down San Francisco's famed Haight Street, you see tie dyed clothes everywhere, quirky monuments, such as the giant legs sticking out the window of the Piedmont Boutique, and a lingering fog of pot. You see thrift shops lined down the street, big, bouncy hair, and skateboards ridden everywhere. There are so many sights to see on the street where the Summer of Love took place. These streets attract tons of tourists per year. In fact, what makes it a tourist attraction is the fact that the street is still very similar to how it was during the summer of 1969. People all over the world come to visit Haight Street to see how much history has taken place on these pavements. But there is one reality of Haight Street that the tourists do not come to experience: the homeless problem.

On the outside, Haight Street is a fun place to visit, shop, and admire the true beauty of the street. But when you dive deeper, you see that Haight Street is an important place for people who are lost and do not have a secure home, many of whom

are teens and young adults. You also notice the homeless shelters that are present, some even dating back to the time of the hippie movement. As a matter of fact, the current homeless population is proportional to that of the population of the hippie movement on Haight Street. It is a big problem that San Francisco has been trying to correct for decades, but has not succeeded.

Haight Street has a very long history. The hippie movement of the late 1960s began on this legendary street and counterculture flourished there. Haight Street was packed with 75,000 newcomers that came without almost any money, all with one thing in mind: focusing on the counterculture movements... and drugs. Drugs such as LSD and marijuana were very popular during these times. It was thought that drugs helped with the process of finding ways to go against the government and change the normalities of society. According to the AARP, "[Hippies] believed love was all you [needed]... believed drugs could make you a better person. I believed I could hitchhike to California with 35 cents and people would be glad to feed me.... I believed the Age of Aquarius was about to happen.... With the exception of anything my parents said, I believed everything." Hippies were known to be carefree and living life spontaneously. A popular phrase repeated by the hippies was "turn on, tune in, drop out." This essentially meant that they would have to take drugs, find out what was wrong with the "system," and then change the system by dropping out of it. The hippie movement changed the world and how they viewed the government and the normalities of society. After many people had gathered on Haight Street and had started the hippie movement, "bookshops, craft stores, head shops, coffee shops, health-food stores, and other businesses catering to the young crowd opened throughout the neighborhood. Local bands performed at several new nightspots, including the Fillmore and Avalon Ballroom, which featured such soon-to-be

famous bands such as the Grateful Dead, Big Brother and the Holding Company, and Jefferson Airplane. An atmosphere of sharing and easy living dominated the neighborhood, which was necessary, since few of the hippies had steady jobs” (Hippies). Then, by the late 1960s, the Diggers emerged. The Diggers were a group of people who were secretly “encouraging the hippies to take a more active stand against the society from which they dropped out.” The Diggers accused the higher power of profiting off of the counterculture and their entire movement. One of their most memorable trademarks was to hand out free food daily and to promote the words: "It's free because it's yours!" through tons of fliers that they passed around. These “Digger Feeds” fed hundreds of people on a daily basis. Their menu was often limited to “wilted vegetables, day-old bread, turkey neck stew,” and anything else they could manage to find. One memorable moment that The Diggers created was when they started the Free Frame movement, where they would give out household items and free clothes. In December of 1966, the Diggers had hundreds of marchers that were in costumes in a Death of Money parade. The Death of Money parade was a form of protest against the economic system. The Digger community wanted to get rid of the economic system that they claimed destroyed the lower classes through random expenses and high tax rates. After the climax of the Summer of Love, the Gathering of Tribes for the Human Be-In, began in 1967. The death of the hippies was approaching and the counterculture movement was coming to an end. Towards the end of the movement, the “atmosphere [of Haight Street] actually was not very loving: the sidewalks were too crowded for anyone to get anywhere; the drug scene had become seedier and more dangerous; police were cracking down more aggressively on the neighborhood; and racial tensions, as was the case over the rest of the nation, threatened to explode into

violence.” It was becoming a trashy place, unlike the giving and free spirited street it had been just a couple years before. During the final moments of the hippie movement, what was left of the hippies marched down Haight Street at sunrise with a cardboard coffin to symbolize the death of the hippies.

However, unlike the popular belief, Haight Street is one of the better areas in San Francisco to be homeless, according to Jasmine Drake, who takes part in Haight Street’s homeless population. Jasmine Drake is thirty-three years old and has been homeless for a couple of years. Jasmine grew up in San Francisco, and then moved to Sacramento with her mom when Jasmine was around nineteen years old. She later got married and had a child who is now living with Jasmine’s mother. Jasmine left her husband after the domestic abuse charge she filed on her now ex-husband. She then lost everything and moved back to Haight with whatever money she had left with her. Jasmine is doing everything she can to get back up on her feet so she can get her daughter back. “I think that there should be a rent control, because the reason why everyone is homeless is because their rent is so high... there’s no rent control... it’s about a profit being made.” Jasmine continues to explain how she can’t afford to live in San Francisco unless she were to live in the unsafe areas. “So, what needs to happen is the rent system needs to change and programs and more programs need to be put out for people to get opportunities to get off of the streets. But the rent control would be the biggest thing. Everyone is moving away and the majority of the people that work here... don’t even live here [in San Francisco]. They [live outside the San Francisco area] just to live out there, like Pittsburg and stuff.” Most people have to live outside San Francisco because the rent is too high for anyone with a low class working job to live.

Another option for most of the homeless community are homeless shelters. Homeless shelters are quite common on Haight Street, but to many people's surprise, they are not being used. Jasmine states that she had been to a shelter before and that her experience was not very delightful. She said, "the way I got into a shelter was through welfare. So, the shelter's are not like... what you would think it is, like where everyone gets a bed and everyone is, like, comfortable and stuff. There's no shower... and sometimes the people that work there can be rude to you and mean to you and they can kick you out. You have to be [really] nice, even if they are assholes."

After leaving the shelters, Jasmine was getting used to living on the streets for a while. Jasmine decided to go to a park one day, where most of the homeless community prefer to hang out during the day. During her visit to the park, she met a man named Clay Powell. Clay Powell is a forty-one year old man who has experienced homelessness for about six months. Clay was raised and spent most of his life in Oakland where he married his then-wife. His parents were very strict and held onto his reins very tightly. Clay became extremely unhappy and eventually depressed. Clay also described his wife as very mean and he said that she stopped him from being happy and living life the way he wanted to. He decided that he wanted a divorce and his wife begrudgingly signed the papers. Clay was given the car, his dog, and his personal belongings and was kicked out of the house. Clay decided to stay up in Redding for a while, and after about a month and a half, everything was stolen from him. His car, his wallet, his ID, his passport, his iPhone six, and his EBT Card was all gone, and he was at one of the lowest points of his life. One day, he got an opportunity to travel to Sacramento with his dog and he took it. He and his dog stayed there for a while until he

traveled his way up to San Francisco. He then met Jasmine in the park and they decided to move up to Haight Street after finding some trouble in other areas of San Francisco. They got married after about 7 months of being together and have traveled around San Francisco ever since. Clay says that the newlyweds are very happy and are going to get back on their feet as soon as possible.

Clay believes that the homeless problem stems from multiple problems that San Francisco has produced, but the culture on Haight Street has helped them a lot with their situation. “I like the idea of the culture around here a lot, due to the fact that I came from a culture of shoplifting and stealing anything in reach... This culture is not like that at all. It is a very community based culture and everyone seems to look out for everyone else. Everyone is about everyone rising up at the same time rather than keeping other people down and stomping your way to the top over anyone that gets in your way. You know? It’s much more about, like, let’s help everyone get up, and when we do get up, let’s look back down at the people that are now on the streets, past us, and help them where they can get functional help and up off these cold streets as well. Having had personal experience of living on the streets, you know?” Clay believes that the community helping each other is the only way to efficiently get up and off of the streets, since the city is not really helping the homeless situation. Clay then went on to talk about the problem of obtaining a job in San Francisco. “Getting a job without an address is impossible because you cannot get an address without a job. But getting an address without a job is impossible because you can’t get a job without an address. So, it is very much a cycle that you can get caught up in. If you don’t have anyone helping you get out of it, if you don’t have anyone, like... real honestly,

contributing to your come up- would be the most simple way to say it- if you don't have anyone helping you come up, then it's going to be a pull battle the whole way up." The entire cycle is completely rigged to where it is nearly impossible to make your way up off of the streets. It is really difficult to get even a simple working class job when you do not have an address.

Haight Street has a lot of history and this history plays a very important role in today's life on Haight Street. I believe that Haight will unfortunately not have a future without battling homelessness. It is sad to see, but it is most likely true. I believe this because it is the ideal area in San Francisco to live on the streets. Relating back to Jasmine and Clay's statements, where they stated that Haight Street is the ideal place for the homeless because of it's hippie culture. It is a "very tight-knit community" where everyone tries to help everyone. The new happily married couple aspires to live in a home, possibly in another area of California, and to retrieve Jasmine's daughter. Clay was just signed to a record label to become a DJ. Clay wants to travel the world with his new family and DJ for clubs. Jasmine also wants to continue her career in music, which is how she makes most of her money now, playing on Haight Street. She is very talented with the guitar and has written many songs that she plays daily. "I think the reason there's so many people on the streets is multiple layers of issues, one of them being mental illness. If you go out to the tenderloin district, you can see mental illness on a mad display. Drug usage complicates that, and there's certain drugs, hard drugs, that severely... complicates mental illness. If those were to be cared for there might be a large slice of the population of homeless cut like deeply in half," says Clay Powell. Many changes need to be made because there are many layers to the homeless issue. Clay finalizes his statement by saying, "I don't want somebody to steal my idea [of how to better the homeless

problem on Haight Street], but by all means come up with an idea better than mine and freaking apply it. These people are hurting out here, man!”

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Rubric:

| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Focus (Angle and Research) | No angle present. Feels summarized where narrative style and structure should be creatively developed. Information dominates the article – boring the reader – or writer obviously exploits the subject. | Angle is present but reflects a fairly obvious perspective of documentary subject. Article lacks balance between information and entertainment. Ethical line between exploration and exploitation may be hazy. | Angle communicates journalist's perspective of documentary subject, although it could be more distinct, allowing for a more interesting (informative and entertaining) picture of the subject within the context of a current researchable topic. | Angle communicates journalist's distinct perspective of documentary subject, sustaining an entertaining & informative article that illustrates how the subject is interesting as well as important within the context of a current researchable topic. |
| Organization (Profile Structure) | No clear profile structure. Existing parts don't connect in a logical way, making the profile difficult to follow. | Profile structure is somewhat apparent, but some parts are obviously flawed or disjointed. Feels too summarized. Needs more anecdote/story and quotation/dialogue to define the narrative arc. | Profile structure is complete and easy to follow, but could be better arranged to enhance reader's experience. Somewhat effective use of anecdote/story and quotation/dialogue. Narrative arc is present but has some weakness. | Profile structure is organized professionally, enhancing the reader's experience. Highly effective use of anecdote/story and quotation/dialogue to create a compelling narrative arc. |
| Style | No literary devices or | Language is fairly plain, with some | Obvious thought has been put into the use of | Obvious thought has been put into the use of |

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| | <p>significant details are used. Paper may read like an obituary or a Wikipedia page. Vocabulary is overly simplistic or vague, with no attention to purpose/audience.</p> | <p>specific details about the subject, but more/varied details and literary devices needed. Portrait of subject seems incomplete. No visual metaphor present. Vocabulary may reflect a couple instances of specificity or sophistication, but it largely lacks attention to purpose/audience.</p> | <p>diction, imagery and detail to portray the subject creatively, although the visual metaphor needs to be more clearly developed to communicate writer's angle. Vocabulary occasionally reflects attention to specificity and sophistication, although it could be improved in consideration to purpose/audience.</p> | <p>diction, imagery and detail. Visual metaphor is well developed, communicating writer's angle. Overall, stylistic choices give the article a fresh and original creative texture. Vocabulary reaches a level of specificity and sophistication that is appropriate for the purpose and audience of this article.</p> |
| <p>Research and MLA Format</p> | <p>Writer doesn't use interview transcripts and/or there is no indication of secondary research. No indication of research-backed questioning. In-text citations and works cited page are missing.</p> | <p>Writer makes limited use of interview transcripts and secondary sources, or relies solely on the "star" interview transcript. Interview testimony prompted by research-based questions is vague. Not a clear sense of an informed angle. In-text citations and works cited page exist, but they contain many errors or inconsistencies.</p> | <p>Writer makes satisfactory use of the required interview transcripts and secondary sources (see Level 4 description), although some interview testimony or secondary source material may be either overused or too limited. Interview testimony prompted by research-based questions is apparent, but could create a clearer sense of an</p> | <p>Writer makes intelligent use of the required three interview transcripts and three secondary sources (Honors students need at least five secondary sources, including two scholarly database sources and a nonfiction book). Effective use of interview testimony prompted by research-based questions gives the reader a clear sense of an informed angle. In-text citations and</p> |

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| | | | <p>informed angle. In-text citations and works cited page are close to MLA standards, but there are some errors.</p> | <p>works cited page are perfect by MLA standards.</p> |
| Mechanics | <p>Writing obscured by spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.</p> | <p>Writing contains some errors, affecting the reader's understanding.</p> | <p>Writing contains a few errors, but not at the expense of understanding.</p> | <p>Writing is polished, free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.</p> |

Grade: 78%