

The Dark side Of Los Angeles



Walter Mayfield

This is 56-year-old Walter Mayfield. He served 15 years in Vietnam and Iraq. 15 years of service for his country that ended in 2006. When he wanted to come back home, he planned of a modest recruitment with the fire department, as a firefighter, but was injured numerous times during the war, which required surgery.

On his return to his hometown in Los Angeles, he lived with the only remaining family member, his sister Tasha. She wanted to take care of him, but several of his injuries couldn't be mended and a year later when his hospital bills became pricier than his mortgage payments, he turned to living on the streets.

After serving that long in the war, Mayfield, through the harsh reality of the overwhelming rates in LA, was rendered homeless. Today, the former sergeant major can be seen outside grocery stores, asking for money and donations to eat dinner for the week.

Mayfield's story is just one of the many heartbreaking accounts, abundant in the alleyways of Los Angeles. While thousands of tourists pay homage to the glitz and glam across this Tinseltown every year, LA's back alleys, suburban streets, and neighborhoods are suffering with disparities that not many will be willing to talk about.

However, it isn't only homelessness that haunts the residents of LA, there's a whole lot more that's hiding behind silk sheets of success, displayed with all its pride on social media, billboards, and in entertainment. Mayfield's story is only the beginning. It serves as a meek reminder of what really happens behind the fake smiles for the camera.

This is the dark side of the city of angels, Los Angeles.

A Barrage of Homelessness

LA is home to one of the highest numbers of homeless people in the US. The number of people who are homeless in Los Angeles County has gone up by 10 percent compared to last year. Worrying in itself, but this surge highlights the ongoing and complex nature of the homelessness crisis in the city.

The abundance of disparities is pushing people into living in cars, on sidewalks, in tucked-away tents, or seeking refuge in shelters as they struggle to find stable housing and support. According to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, over 75,000 people experienced homelessness in Los Angeles County in 2023. It's safe to say that the efforts to move residents off

the streets have not caught up with the rate at which families and individuals are losing their homes.

California has the highest number of homeless people in the United States. On a single night last year, roughly 30% of the entire country's homeless population, totaling over 171,000 people, resided in California, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. A large number of which were in and around Los Angeles.

The second-highest city in the nation was New York, with just 13% of the nation's total homeless population, which amounts to 74,178 people. The figures show how serious the homelessness crisis in California is compared to other states, and how serious it could be without adequate provisions.

Due to the rise in these figures, Los Angeles has experienced a notable rise in the number of homeless encampments that are dotted throughout the cities streets. This rise has coincided with an emergence in crime rates and has led to an increase in unsightly scenes of trash, discarded needles, and even instances of human feces and urine in public spaces. Business owners have been frustrated and angry because these encampments are typically close to businesses and could stop customers from coming in.

On the flip side, accounts like Mayfield's are scattered across these encampments, with numerous people expressing their sorrowful stories of the inequalities in wealth, the skyrocketing rent amounts, and the lack of feasible infrastructure for jobs that could sustain these ever-increasing disparities. Additionally, other aspects have played a significant role here too. With poor access to mental health services, and an increased number of incarcerated people, the rate of homelessness in the city has shot up like never before.

Despite millions of dollars made in investments by the state to house those living on the street, the numbers keep increasing. A recent study by a specialist in homelessness at the University of California, San Francisco, revealed that a lack of accessible housing was the primary cause of the state's homeless population. Where many might think, mental illness or substance abuse could play a critical role, unaffordable housing takes the gold.

While the disparities continue, they aren't completely going unnoticed. The Mayor, Karen Bass, signed an updated emergency declaration that gives her more power to deal with this situation. She addresses it with vigor, calling it a "life and death issue."

Bass started a program in Los Angeles called InsideSafe. It aims to help the homeless. The initiative involves the deployment of outreach workers to various encampments, where they provide accommodation to its inhabitants. The goal is to help people move quickly from hotels to permanent homes. The plan is said to keep people off the streets, stop people from building encampments, and make it easier to find permanent housing than it is to live in tents.

Ms. Bass has emphasized the success of her administration in relocating 14,381 individuals indoors within the initial six months of her term. She's also been pushing to speed up the construction of affordable housing. Though, the actual impact of these efforts is yet to be determined, the count next year will be important for her administration. It will show how effective their measures have been in dealing with the issue.

But there have been problems with the program. Only a few people have been able to move from hotels to permanent housing, and the city is having trouble getting data on how effective the program is overall. It has also proven difficult to provide access to mental and physical health care for the homeless.

The sustainability of InsideSafe has also been a concern, as the program is considered expensive for the long term. This raises questions about what will happen when funding becomes limited. The use of hotels to house the homeless in Los Angeles has been a controversial issue. In the coming year, people in Los Angeles will vote on a controversial idea of making hotels in LA offer empty rooms to homeless people.

While ideas are being implemented by the state, bigger issues need to be addressed, which play an unsurprisingly bigger role in this situation. They seemingly circumvent the current provisions provided by the authorities, and even though, the efforts being made are novel, the challenges that are being

faced are outwitting its attempts. One such problem is the skyrocketing cost of living in the city.

If you're enjoying this video, make sure to hit that like button, and subscribe to the channel.

Break-neck cost of living and inequalities in wealth

Social media has played a notorious role in being the voice of the common person, but it seems that only influencers are doing all the talking. While some may not display their concern for the overwhelming issues in the city, there are a few who face the reality of the perpetual increase in costs.

Meet Brooke Baevsky, a private chef in Beverly Hills. She posted a video on TikTok last year showing how she spent \$3515 to fill her clients' pantry at Erewhon, a fancy grocery store in Los Angeles that is becoming very popular with influencers.

[!\[\]\(74d4806277d7e73349d8e8c0897931e9_img.jpg\) BUT this included the last-minute granola & sea moss gel adds, so i... | erewhon | TikTok](#)

Considering the average monthly costs of Los Angeles citizens are \$1,123.5 without rent, this extreme spending on basic necessities such as groceries shows the increasing gap between the Los Angeles wealthy and the rest of its citizens.

It also draws attention to living expenses in the city. The cost of living in Los Angeles is significantly higher than the national average, soaring to 50%. Housing costs, especially, are known to be among the highest in the country, with both home and apartment prices consistently ranking at the top. The average home price in Los Angeles reaches a staggering \$915,500, nearly three times the national average of \$388,500.

When combined with the high prices of food, transportation, and other necessities, living in Los Angeles can pose financial challenges to many residents. It's hard for people to save money or build wealth since it costs so

much to live. This is a problem even more prevalent for people who are just starting out or planning for retirement.

The glamorous city of Los Angeles is often portrayed as a dream destination for fame, fortune, and socializing opportunities, but what you see on social media should always be taken with a pinch of salt. While poverty rates in the United States went down in 2019, the situation changed after the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Poverty rates went up again in 2020 and 2021, and household income went down.

The current poverty rate in Los Angeles is 16.6%, which is higher than any other major American cities. That's over 635,000 out of the city's 3.8 million plus inhabitants who live below the poverty threshold. This poverty rate is 34.96% higher than the California average.

The federal guidelines specify that the poverty line is earning less than about \$12,000 per year for individuals or less than \$25,000 for a family of four. The astonishment of how much four pantry contents can surpass the annual income of an average person living in poverty puts the grocery haul mentioned earlier in the TikTok video, into stark perspective.

In the past decade, various projects have been implemented to aid those affected by poverty in California, particularly in Los Angeles. These initiatives include social programs, a minimum wage increase to \$15 an hour, and tax relief efforts.

Proposition HHH, which was passed in 2016, aimed to build 10,000 apartments in Los Angeles with a \$1.2 billion property tax fund for people in poverty. However, despite these efforts, the rate has continued to rise significantly, reaching 42,000 individuals in 2022, up from 28,000 in previous years.

The Senate Bill 3 was passed in January 2023 and raised the minimum wage in California to \$15.50 an hour. However, the United Ways of California's Real Cost Measure revealed that a family of four would require both adults to work full-time at an hourly wage of \$22 to meet basic living needs. This amount is nearly 1.5 times higher than the current minimum wage, which shows that the current wage is not enough to help families in Los Angeles.

The California Budget & Policy Center's Alissa Anderson, a senior policy analyst, drew attention to the state's income disparity in Los Angeles saying in a statement, *“I think we're just too rich a state for there to be so many people struggling to have a roof over their head or put food on the table.”*

This observation highlights the stark disparity between the wealthy and the less fortunate in urban areas, as well as how online platforms often present idealized versions of certain tales, focusing on extravagant actions that garner the most attention and views.

This contrast is evident in Erewhon, the aforementioned lavish local grocer in Los Angeles that has become a hotspot for celebrities and influencers. This grocery store and its products have been getting a lot of attention on social media and even got a New York Times article called “How Erewhon Became L.A.s Hottest Hangout.”

The glitzy image of Erewhon as a hip hangout spot fails to acknowledge the glaring gap between the hype and reality, as the prices of individual items in the store can surpass the annual income of the average LA dweller in poverty. Even though a large part of the population lives in bad conditions, the spotlight continues to focus on the wellness-based and expensive parts of Los Angeles, leaving those who are in financial trouble in the shadows.

These wellness-based dreams that many individuals could have lead to other challenges that the city faces, to meet the needs in hopes of financing this lavish lifestyle of the rich. People then turn to doing whatever they can do to achieve success, even if that means a life of crime.

Crime

Over the years, Los Angeles residents have expressed concerns about the increasing crime affecting their quality of life, as well as those in communities nationwide. The aftermath of the COVID-19 epidemic prompted USA TODAY to conduct an analysis to find out the actual extent of crime escalation and whether people are now safer or more vulnerable than they were in 2019.

The statistics show that in 2022, Los Angeles saw an 11% increase in overall crime, with 60 reported crimes per 1,000 residents, compared to 54 per 1,000 residents in 2019. Now many may think, this is purely because of the several prohibitions the pandemic had arrived with, but the numbers tell a different tale. The crime statistics encompass a variety of violent offenses, as well as property crimes.

The significant unhoused population, and the continuous rise of costs in Los Angeles, considered one of the largest in the country, is an essential part of tackling crime in the city. The escalating rate of criminal activity in the city and affluent areas was fueled by the presence of a large number of tents during the peak of the pandemic.

Aforementioned, Mayor Karen Bass has committed to making solving the city's crises her top priority in her first year in office. According to Los Angeles police Capt. Elaine Morales, the commanding officer of the Central Division, a variety of factors contributes to the increase in crime numbers.

Mental health issues, the influx of people living on the streets with guns are among the several issues that exist. The Central Division also encompasses Skid Row, a 54-block neighborhood in which a large portion of the Los Angeles homeless population resides near services specifically designed for them.

Before the pandemic, downtown Los Angeles was becoming a popular place for entertainment, dining, and business. However, it experienced a significant increase in crime. In 2022, the crime rate in downtown Los Angeles was six times higher than the citywide rate and three times higher than other neighborhoods in Los Angeles. Last year, more than 370 crimes were committed in the area for every 1,000 people.

In comparison, Mount Washington, a hipster community in the northeast, Beverlywood, a wealthy Westside neighborhood, and Porter Ranch, a quiet suburban area in the San Fernando Valley, had the lowest crime rates. These three neighborhoods each had fewer than 24 reported crimes per 1,000 residents. While these neighborhoods had lower crime rates, they were collectively less inhabited than downtown Los Angeles.

The city's crime doesn't paint its own picture. It exists because of the numerous disparities that are prevalent in the city. The issue of crime in Los Angeles tangled with the city's massive unhoused population, and the lack of employment will only change with good provisions. The rising crime rates, pose additional challenges for city officials in their efforts to address homelessness, income disparity, and ensure public safety. All the issues we've spoken about today are deeply intertwined.

However, there's no doubt that Los Angeles is the city of dreams. It's got its fair share of pauper to princess stories, and there are ones that keep defining the odds. But as Los Angeles continues to face these obstacles, it's crucial for city officials, neighborhood leaders, and locals to work together to ensure the security and well-being of all its inhabitants. A safer and more equitable future for all its residents can only be achieved through comprehensive efforts that address both the symptoms and root causes of these issues.

This shouldn't stop you from moving to or visiting the city of dreams. Like most places on this planet, LA has its issues, but while a lot of it is hidden, the glitz and the glam is most definitely a spectacle to see at least once in your life.

So what do you think? Have you been to LA? Tell us about your experience. And what should be changed to make LA the ideal city of dreams? Let us know in the comments below, and as always, thanks for watching.

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