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Los Angeles Times

Homeless and Heartless

It's Spiritual Death to Be Nobody in Our Culture

By **JEFF DIETRICH**

munity believe that the problem of homelessness in America goes to

hall—rent for as much as \$400 per month.

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I hope that the severity of Dietrich's condemnation of contemporary values ("the system is rotten to the core") does not incline readers to dismiss the essential accuracy of his views. The reality behind his message is that, unless we change our basic attitudes, most of us will be homeless, too.

The gap between the rich and the poor is growing, and the middle class is under pressure. Other problems we face are staggering. The national debt (resulting from the tax cut of 1981), the proliferation of toxic waste, the greenhouse effect, and diminishing resources are all testimony to our overriding appetite for material things, and a seeming lack of concern for the world we will leave to our children.

To extend Dietrich's analysis, "given the [current] set of public policy alternatives and the predisposition of the American public," we can expect a future where a "beggar-thy-neighbor" competition for even the bare amenities of life will be the norm.

We had better accept the fact that laying the groundwork for a decent future for ourselves and our posterity will cost money (yes, the dreaded "T" word), and that only our elected officials, from the city council to the President, can have the interest, ability, and moral authority to lead the way.

Let us hope that it is not too late to elect those leaders.

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