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ENG 023: College Composition

16 April 2015

The Tiny House Movement

Becoming an adult is exciting. But how many are ready to spend their life savings just for a down payment on a house then continue to live with the thousands of dollars in debt? On [census.gov](http://www.census.gov/const/uspriceann.pdf) they say that today the average price for a medium size house is just over $250,000. It is rare that someone can fully pay off a house when they first buy it, so for many they will be spending the rest of their life paying off the mortgage. Imagine a society where everyone owned their own home. Also, in this society no one is in debt from their house because their home only ran them between $10,000-$50,000. The solution is simple, live tiny and simply.

The idea of tiny living was first seen in the 60s but has been becoming more popular today with the tiny house movement. People turn towards tiny house living as a means to escape. To avoid paying mortgage or rent for the rest of their life and own their own home with a small income. You can either build your own tiny house to manage your budget down to the cent and making it more customized. It also gives you the option of using salvaged, vintage, or hand me down materials. The other option is to hire professionals to build the home of your dreams or buy a pre-made general model. Tiny house living is an alternative to our materialistic society. In more recent years we have been going through overconsumption, or owning more things than one actually needs. Today wages are down, jobs have become scarce, and rents are inching higher every day. The tiny house movement is a solution to scale things back so everyone can live comfortably and stress free. The lifestyle requires one to simplify their life and pare down their belongings to the essentials and the things that mean the most to them. This often creates stronger bonds between people who live together because they are surrounded by less object and have more time to build their relationships.

For a home to be considered a tiny house it has to follow certain codes and restrictions. Mary Murphy, experienced tiny house builder, explains some of these codes. "In the United States, it must be no bigger than eight feet wide and thirteen and a half feet tall"(Murphy 1). Although this is the legal size for tiny houses, not all tiny homes follow these rules. The reason for this is because most towns have a minimum dwelling size which is much larger then what most owners want. To avoid these guidelines some homes are categorized as trailers to avoid these legal constrictions. Another point Mary makes is, "building codes are specific features such as broad hallways, wide doorways, and other details that make it harder to build"(Murphy 1). These codes and restrictions are created for safety reasons and so rescue teams can assist in cases of emergency. However, these codes were made without thinking of the scale of a tiny house. The simple solution to getting around these codes is to build your home on a trailer allowing you to follow RV laws instead. "Also, in many cases you will not have to pay property tax on the tiny house since it is not attached to a foundation."(Murphy 1).

A lot of people have had success in building their own tiny house with a very small income. Lloyd Kahn, editor and chief of Shelter Publications and a tiny house owner describes tiny homes, "Tiny homes are all unique and vary from elegant to funky from handmade or bought"(Kahn 1). Kahn built his tiny house in 2009 because he wanted an alternative to get out of debt and rent. He also wanted to simplify his life by getting rid of a large portion of his belongings. For anyone who has a mortgage, "over the years you pay back about twice what you borrowed"(Kahn 3). Also, by choosing to build your tiny house instead of buying it, you can cut your cost by about fifty percent. Mary Murphy, fellow tiny house owner, built her own home and used a lot of recycled item. This resulted in her end project only costing her $5,000.

Tiny house living is not just about owning a home with a small carbon foot print. Since you are limited with space you really have to cut back on all things you own. This means making decisions about what you realistically use on a daily basis and what is just there for materialistic reasons. You have to decide what is truly important to you and what you really cannot live without. In a sense you are separating yourself from our materialistic society where many people like to show off how big their house is or all the expensive items that someone might own. It is also a more humble way of life. It isn't fancy or boastful and it allows one to be free and to experience life. The idea of living small is a way to live a more simple life and not get caught up on all the latest products. Most people are forced to work jobs they hate for the majority of their life with over time when they can just to keep up with paying off a big fancy house that they aren't even enjoying because they are too busy working. Tiny houses may be small but they re liberating and allow their occupants to explore life, travel, and live more adventurously.

There are plenty of tips given by experienced tiny house builders that are quite useful for anyone who has decided on building their own tiny house. Lloyd Kahn recommends a few techniques, "Start small. Kitchen and bathroom back-to-back for efficient plumbing. Hot water from solar panels in the summer; water-heater coil in the woodstove for the winter. This is your core. You can live in it while you add on."(Kahn 6). Mary Murphy, an experienced tiny house builder and owner explains how she reduces the cost of her bills. "In its first winter I heated it with an electric space heater I got from a thrift store for $15, and even in the frigid January my heating energy bill was only $80 per month"(Murphy 3). In the case where you do own more stuff then what you can fit in your house there are simple solutions because it does happen. You can easily rent out a garage for a low cost to store items that you don't need on a daily basis but you do not want to get rid of them for good.

Some townships today are starting projects to develop tiny house communities to shelter the homeless." A typical tiny home is 500 square feet or smaller compared to a medium size house of 2,598 square feet"(Kirsti). Tiny houses can be built with recycled items which makes building one of these homes rather inexpensive and has a lot of benefits to people who are homeless. A group of people outside of Austin Texas named Community First started a tiny house community in a 27-acre land for the chronically homeless. Also in St. Cloud Minnesota, a resident group is planning on building at least one tiny house for the homeless in their community." The group got approval for a village of nine tiny houses -- at 98 square feet, costing about $4,500 to build"(Kirsti). To be able to give a homeless person their own home is a huge accomplishment. Everyone can benefit from having their own place. Not only does it keep a person warm and give them a safe place to sleep but it can also give people motivation in life. To live somewhere you can call home and not a random alley out in the cold. It has a good chance to get people off their feet and strive for something higher in life. These cost efficient houses make this dream plausible which leads to a brighter future for our society.

The tiny house movement provides us with a vast amount of benefits to living a healthy happy life. If you are one of those people who know that your future income is going to be low there are now alternatives from living pay check to pay check. No more worrying about rent or mortgage or stressing about how you spend your money. Your tiny home does not have to be your permanent residence. If you decide to make a family and need more space for obvious reason you will always have your tiny house that you can use whenever you want. A tiny house on wheels makes a great vacation home because you can bring it anywhere! It makes a great tool to follow your dreams and travel across country, or to start a new life. Not only can a tiny house benefit yourself, it can benefit your community. Setting up tiny house communities you save a lot of energy compared to average size homes today. These communities are being built for affordable living for anyone or to provide shelter for the homeless. The tiny house movement provides endless amounts of opportunity for people to follow their dreams.

Works Cited

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Preface

As I first started researching for this paper I wanted to get an inside look on personal experience from tiny house owners. From that research is where I really learned why people choose to live the tiny lifestyle. After I completed my first rough draft it was clear that I needed a lot more information on what a tiny house actually is since it is still a new topic and a lot of people do not understand what a tiny house consists of. From there I learned that tiny houses have strict building codes and restrictions. There are many specific details that define a tiny house. My previous drafts I only concentrated on how tiny house living affected people's lives instead actually explaining what a tiny house is. Finishing up my final draft I believe that I made a clear understanding of all of the benefits from tiny living. Also by discussing how easy it is to get started on the project including tips from professionals on where to begin and how to expand. If I were to continue researching and expanding on this paper I would probably start by getting more information on how popular the tiny house movement is spreading worldwide by giving statistics on how many people actually own a tiny house.