# **Case 1: Bearing Witness, Bringing Change, or Trauma Porn?[[1]](#footnote-1)**

In 2019, *The New York Times* received thousands of photographs taken inside an Alabama prison and depicted appalling living conditions, gruesome injuries, and death. *The Times* initially published just five of these photos in an article opened with the question: “Would we fix our prisons if we could see what happens inside them?”[[2]](#footnote-2) In support of the decision to publish the photos, some have argued that showing these horrific images brings attention to the costs of social problems like mass incarceration, which are often hidden from public view and scrutiny.[[3]](#footnote-3) Graphic photos have the capacity not only to inform the public, but to make them care about those depicted. Images can elicit a response by making the situation feel more real and urgent to onlookers, resulting in demands for change. Filmmaker and professor Ariella Azoulay argues that photographs of suffering and injustice actually create a moral obligation on the part of the viewer.[[4]](#footnote-4) Azoulay claims that photographers and people who allow their pain and suffering to be photographed assume that one day the pictures will find an audience who will do something about it. If pictures fail to bring about change, it is because audiences have failed to live up to their obligations.

Even if an individual viewer cannot help to bring about change, some suggest there might be value in “bearing witness.” Refusing to push unpleasant realities out of one’s mind might be a sign of moral strength or evidence of compassion. In a 2003 essay, Susan Sontag points out that the existence of the Holocaust Memorial Museum and the lack of a similar museum chronicling slavery in the U.S. enables Americans to conceive of evil as something committed by *other* people in *other* countries.[[5]](#footnote-5) It would be more honest to recognize our own history, even if it cannot be changed. Even if one can do nothing more than observe films or photographs of tragedy and atrocity, paying attention to it is a way of recognizing it as wrong and affirming the humanity of those who suffer. Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, a writer, advocate, and Holocaust survivor said “We tell these stories because perhaps we know that not to listen, not to want to know, would lead you to indifference, and indifference is never an answer.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

Some criticize the publication of images like these, and see depictions of gruesome or tragic events as exploitative. Critics suggest that these depictions may harm a victim of injustice or their family members. One blogger suggests that many view shocking images or share them on social media to feel politically engaged without actually taking action or reflecting on injustice.[[7]](#footnote-7) Others argue that it is unfair for victims of trauma to shoulder the additional burden of sharing their pain publicly in order to garner public concern.[[8]](#footnote-8) To some, the way images of violence and injustice are perpetuated only seems to further dehumanize oppressed groups. These images are shared in ways that seems more like an awful kind of entertainment than something of ethical import.[[9]](#footnote-9)

1. What, if any, ethical obligations arise after viewing images of suffering or injustice?
2. What claims, if any, do those people have who are photographed when involved in incidents of injustice or suffering?
3. Do the potential positive effectives of publishing images of suffering or injustice outweigh the potential harms those photographed?

Case **4: Forced Chemotherapy**

In 2014, 17-year-old Cassandra Callender was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s lymphoma, a treatable form of immune cell cancer in the lymphatic system. In young adults and children with Cassandra’s condition, treatment with chemotherapy and radiation provides an 85% chance of long-term survival.[[10]](#footnote-10) Cassandra, however, objected to undergoing chemotherapy because she did not want “such toxic harmful drugs” in her body and wished instead to explore alternative treatments. She understood that, without chemotherapy, she would most likely die. But in Cassandra’s view, the negative side effects of chemotherapy would decrease her quality of life to such an extent that any gain in length of life provided by the treatment would not be worth it.

Although minors cannot make their own medical decisions in most cases, Cassandra’s parents agreed with her choice to refuse chemotherapy. However, courts have the authority to overrule parental decisions when those decisions threaten the life of their child. When courts do this, they temporarily remove parental custody and appoint a guardian to make medical decisions for the minor. In 2015, the Connecticut Supreme Court, after consulting with medical professionals, ruled that Cassandra was to undergo chemotherapy against her will.

This ruling was met with controversy. Many supported the decision of the court and the opinion of the medical community. After all, most people would judge that an 85% chance of long-term survival is worth undergoing the temporary suffering caused by chemotherapy. Physicians are morally required to avoid causing harm as well as to act in the best interests of their patients. Allowing Cassandra to decline chemotherapy would more than likely have resulted in her death and therefore, many would argue, was not in her best interest.

Others, however, argue that the judicial ruling violated Cassandra’s autonomy. Though she was legally a minor, at 17 years old she was no less well equipped than an 18-year-old to make her own medical decisions. Cassandra appealed to the “mature minor” doctrine, which grants minors the authority to make their own medical decisions if the court deems they are mature enough do so. This request was denied not because of concerns that Cassandra was too immature, but strictly on the medical advice of health professionals. As a consequence, Cassandra was forced to undergo the chemotherapy against her will. This kind of treatment can require up to six months of intense treatment and care: In Cassandra’s case, she first went through surgery to have a port in her chest installed for drug administration. She was then confined to a hospital, with her cell phone taken away, often strapped to her bed and sedated.[[11]](#footnote-11)

1. Does a mature 17-year-old have the right to decide whether or not to undergo life-saving cancer treatment after being fully informed of the benefits and risks?
2. What criteria should the courts and other civil authorities use to determine when a minor is old enough to make major medical decisions?

# **Case 5: Old-Fashioned Grandparents – TO BE USED IN ROUND 1**

# **TEAMS ANNOUNCE WHICH QUESTION THEY WILL ANSWER**

Sam used to enjoy visiting her grandparents. Recently though, she has become increasingly uncomfortable with many of the differences between their values and hers.

Her grandfather routinely makes racist jokes while watching TV and routinely makes aggressive, insulting comments about LGBTQ people—especially when he sees transgender people represented in the media. Though these issues are important to Sam, she doesn’t dare bring them up with her grandfather. Sam’s grandmother clearly disapproves of many of her husband’s offensive comments but would never directly challenge him. To Sam, this dynamic is problematic, too, and makes her feel less inclined to challenge him.

Sam also objects to her grandparents’ apparent lack of concern for the environment. They buy cases of bottled water at a time and never recycle anything. Sam also thinks that they consume way too much meat and waste a ton of food. She is also bothered by the way that they maintain their large lawn—she objects to the water, fertilizer, and lawnmower gas that it takes to keep it looking lush and green. Sam has occasionally tried to do subtle things to get them to be more sustainable—she purchased them reusable grocery bags and water bottles, volunteered to take in their recycling, and offered to help them put in a vegetable garden or some lower-maintenance plantings in their yard. But none of these attempts had any effect. And she has never tried to explain to them why they should be more environmentally conscious.

Sam would love to have an open, respectful discussion with her grandparents about her views, but her parents think it would be rude. “You need to remember to respect your elders”, they tell her. “Anyway, any discussion would be pointless; this is how they’ve always lived, and they are not going to change any time soon. You should just enjoy your time with them and try not to get so worked up about these things.”

Sam disagrees. She thinks it is disrespectful to assume that older people are too set in their ways to be able to change. It is even more disrespectful to not even try to talk with them. Sam thinks that her grandparents—especially her grandmother—might be willing to hear what Sam has to say. “My grandparents might be more open-minded and willing to change than my parents give them credit for” she keeps thinking. “But if my parents are right, I don’t know if I want to keep visiting my grandparents. Being at their house is not fun. It’s actually quite upsetting.”

1. In what ways, if any, is Sam ethically bound to try to talk honestly with her grandparents before deciding to separate from them emotionally or continue to see them?
2. Is it ethically permissible to not engage with grandparents and other close relatives because they may have views and engage in activities that you find repugnant?
3. What is the ethical course of action for Sam to take in this situation?

# **Case 6: To Forgive or Not to Forgive?**

Many people believe that the United States has a student debt crisis. Student loan debt is higher than it has ever been across all demographics and ages, with around 44 million American borrowers owing a collective $1.5 trillion. Many of these borrowers are struggling to keep up with their loan payments. As a result, more than 10 percent of student loan balances are currently considered seriously delinquent (the borrower has fallen more than 90 days behind in their payments) or in default.[[12]](#footnote-12)

In the lead-up to the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election, several candidates have proposed policies to address the student debt crisis. Perhaps most notably, Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, both Democratic contenders for the Presidency, have advanced ambitious student debt forgiveness plans. Both of these plans seek the widespread cancellation of outstanding loan balances and are projected to have high costs as a result. The Warren plan would cancel up to $50,000 in debt for every person with household income under $100,000, and provide substantial (though less) debt cancellation for those with household incomes between $100,000 and $250,000.[[13]](#footnote-13) This approach would fully eliminate the debt of up to 75% of borrowers, and provide some relief for over 40 million Americans. Bernie Sanders’ plan takes things a step further, seeking to make total debt forgiveness available to all of the nation’s federal and private student loan borrowers.

Waiting in the wings, of course, are questions about how to finance such ambitious policy proposals. Both candidates have argued that a tax increase is the ideal way to fund student debt relief. Warren proposes to fund her relief program with an “ultra-millionaire tax” that would include a 2% annual tax on families with at least $50 million in net worth. Sanders plans to fund his program with a new tax on financial transactions, which would include a 0.5% fee on all stock trades, a 0.1% fee on all bond trades and a 0.005% fee on all derivatives trades.[[14]](#footnote-14)

While most candidates for high office recognize the depth and severity of the debt crisis, other candidates have been more measured in their approach to relief, ranging from the lowering of education costs, the expansion of federal Pell Grant programs, making public colleges “debt-free,” and making improvements to existing public service forgiveness programs.

Proponents of debt forgiveness argue that higher education is a public good which it is in the country’s interest to subsidize. Moreover, forgiving student debt would strengthen the middle class by unburdening a generation of Americans—especially those from working class backgrounds—thereby enabling them to more fully participate in the economy. Some critics of debt forgiveness fear that this is a problematic fix that does not address the root causes of the student debt crisis.[[15]](#footnote-15) Additionally, many critics believe that these proposals are unfair. Some people point out, for example, that such plans would help many students who are on their way to becoming well-paid professionals (e.g., doctors, lawyers, etc.), and who might not need this assistance. Others point out that people who took out student loans promised to pay them back, and so using taxpayer money to forgive their loans is unfair to those who are student-debt-free because they chose to avoid taking out loans in the first place, or because they worked hard to pay their student loans off.

1. Is it ethical to tax the general public to forgive the college loans that students and/or their parents took out voluntarily?
2. What is the most ethical way to address the student debt crisis?

# Case **8: Extra! Extra! Don’t Read About It! – TO BE USED IN ROUND 1**

# **TEAMS ANNOUNCE WHICH QUESTION THEY WILL ANSWER**

The news can be overwhelming. Almost everyone has to take breaks from the unending cycles of breaking headlines. Erik Hagerman has gone even further: he decided to opt out altogether. After the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, Hagerman “swore that he would avoid learning about anything that happened to America after Nov. 8, 2016.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

Hagerman, a retired corporate executive from Nike, lives on his Ohio farm, works on art projects, and avoids the news. He’s abandoned social media. In his free time he listens to music, relaxes in coffee shops, watches Cleveland Cavaliers games (always on mute), and steers away from any conversation about politics. (He’s trained his friends, family members, and even the local baristas never to discuss politics in his presence.) Hagerman’s strategy is partly a protest, and partly an “extreme self-care plan.” “I’m emotionally healthier than I’ve ever felt,” he says.

But is Hagerman achieving peace of mind at the expense of his ethical obligations? On one hand, you might think that this is entirely Hagerman’s prerogative. It is up to him whether or not he engages in the news, particularly if it is distressing to him. After all, many of us avoid things that cause us displeasure.

On the other hand, we live in a democracy, where the policies and institutions which make up our government, and affect people around the world, depend on the actions of ordinary citizens. For a democracy to function, citizens must play an active part, and must therefore be informed about issues of political import. Abdicating this responsibility, you might think, amounts to becoming a civic deadbeat: Hagerman should endure the stress and pain of the news because it is his duty as a citizen. You don’t get to just opt out. Hagerman himself sees this side of things: “The first several months of this thing,” he admits, “I didn’t feel all that great about it. It makes me a crappy citizen.” As his blockade continued, however, Hagerman began to think somewhat differently, concluding that being a news consumer does little to enhance society, and that he could make genuinely worthwhile civic contributions by other means.

Even if Hagerman is able to screen himself off from the news in this way, others are not so lucky. Hagerman’s sister sees his blockade as an exercise in privilege: “He has the privilege of constructing a world in which very little of what he doesn’t have to deal with gets through…We all would like to construct our dream worlds. Erik is just more able to do it than others.”

1. Do citizens in a democracy have an ethical obligation to stay informed about current events? If yes, what is the minimal level of civic engagement that can be considered ethical?
2. Does one person’s desire to avoid staying involved with current events increase the ethical obligation on others to become involved?

C**ase 9: Teacher Strikes**

In the spring of 2018, teachers in Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky, Oklahoma, North Carolina, and West Virginia either performed a walkout or went on strike to protest what they considered to be low salaries and inadequate educational funding. One common complaint is that teachers frequently need to take on extra jobs in order to pay their bills. For instance, Craig Troxell, a full-time high school science teacher, drives a school bus before and after school to make ends meet, in addition to working over the summers mowing lawns and roofing houses.[[17]](#footnote-17)

In several of these states, the strikes had some measure of success. In other places, the outcome was less clear. Regardless of the outcome, the strikes had a big impact on the communities in which they occurred. The most immediate impact is clearly on the children—which is also the group who has the least say, politically. For example, some people argue that teacher strikes are bad for kids, as the strikes disrupt the learning environment and hurt student progress. In 1992, a judge ordered striking teachers in Detroit to go back to work, on the grounds that the strike caused “irreparable harm” to students.[[18]](#footnote-18) These strikes can have important impacts on other community members, as well—in particular on working parents, who now need to make special arrangements for childcare. This can be especially difficult for lower-income families, who might not be able to afford to take time off from work or to pay for additional childcare.

In support of striking teachers, others maintain that strikes are only bad for students in the short term. Good teachers can have a profoundly positive effect on children. The only way to reliably attract and keep good teachers is to compensate them adequately for their hard work. Strikes are a way to achieve that end.

Recent polls show that most Americans support teachers’ right to strike. Nevertheless, in most states (including in some of the states in which striking occurred) it is illegal for teachers to take collective action such as striking.

1. Is it ethically permissible for public school teachers to go on strike?
2. In what ways, if any, is it less ethically permissible for teachers to go on strike than it is for people in other professions or careers?

C**ase 11: Billionaire Backfire**

On April 15, 2019, the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris was greatly damaged by a fire.[[19]](#footnote-19) Large donations to help rebuild the cathedral, totaling more than $1 billion, quickly flooded in from wealthy individuals and major companies. Many people saw these donations as a good thing. After all, it seems important to preserve and protect things with major cultural, historical, and artistic significance.

However, these donations were not universally praised. Critics argued that the wealthy donors should have spent this money on solving larger socioeconomic problems, like homelessness and poverty.[[20]](#footnote-20) Carl Kinsella expresses this sentiment: “With a click of their fingers, TWO French billionaires have given 300 million to restore Notre Dame. Just imagine if billionaires cared as much about *uhhhh* human people.”[[21]](#footnote-21) Proponents of effective altruism (EA) concur with this assessment. According to effective altruists, resources should be directed to charitable causes that will do the most good. In particular, resources should go toward charitable organizations that focus on an issue that meets three conditions: “It’s important (it affects many lives in a massive way), it’s tractable (extra resources will do a lot to fix it), and it’s neglected (not that many people are devoted to this issue yet).”[[22]](#footnote-22) So, an effective altruist might be inclined to donate to high-impact charities that address homelessness or water quality over rebuilding Notre Dame.

Some people respond that critics are presenting a false choice between donating to the rebuilding of Notre Dame Cathedral and helping the poor, and that it’s reasonable to donate to both. Julia Wise, for example, argues that a person can have many goals: in addition to altruistic goals, we can have personal goals. When it comes to donating to charities, we can donate to causes for personal reasons or altruistic reasons. For example, donating to a friend’s fundraiser for a sick relative serves a personal goal of supporting a friend, rather than the goal to make the world a better place in some bigger, impersonal sense. One should not have to feel bad about donating to something that is personally meaningful.[[23]](#footnote-23)

But still, critics might respond, the fact that these philanthropists made such significant donations toward restoring a building when this money could have made a large impact on (and possibly saving) many people’s lives does demonstrate that their priorities are misplaced.

1. What factors should wealthy donors consider when choosing the causes to which they donate?
2. What rights and responsibilities should wealthy people have with respect to their justly-acquired assets?
3. Should some types of charitable donations be considered more ethical than others?

# **Case 12: Flying High**

From a personal standpoint, there are excellent reasons to incorporate travel into one’s life. First of all, many people simply enjoy it. For many people, flying to faraway destinations is a fun and exhilarating way to spend one’s vacation. For others, first-hand exposure to other cultures is a significant source of personal growth. Many people also travel to see friends and family who live across the country or around the world. And for some people, flying to and fro is simply part of the job. Travel can have a number of important benefits. Psychological research suggests that those who focus on experiences instead of material objects tend to be happier.[[24]](#footnote-24) Additionally, traveling abroad is a great opportunity for learning, for cultural immersion, and for self-knowledge. It can even be life-changing. At many universities, academic advisers encourage students to travel abroad in order to expand their perspectives on the world, open their minds, and create wonderful long-lasting memories.

Yet taking a long flight is, perhaps, an individual’s single largest contribution to climate change. According to one estimate, one passenger’s share of emissions on a 2,500-mile flight melts 32 square feet of Arctic summer sea ice cover.[[25]](#footnote-25) Taking one round-trip flight between New York and California generates about 20 percent of the greenhouse gases that one’s car emits over an entire year.[[26]](#footnote-26) And the problem is likely to increase over time, as passenger numbers are predicted to double to 8.2 billion by 2037.[[27]](#footnote-27) For these reasons, people are increasingly deciding to limit unnecessary air travel. In some parts of Europe, this anti-flying movement is taking off. In Sweden, new words , such as “flygskam” (flying shame) and “smygflyga” (flying in secret) are being coined to express some of these anti-flying sentiments.[[28]](#footnote-28) Out of a concern for her carbon footprint, teen climate activist Greta Thunberg decided to travel from Sweden to North America by boat rather than plane, in order to attend the United Nations Climate Action Summit.[[29]](#footnote-29)

But even if air travel contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, many people do not see anything wrong with flying. Some might argue that climate change is a systemic problem that people have little individual influence over. On this line of thinking, even if someone decides to completely give up flying, this is not going to have any significant long-term impact on climate change. If so, one might argue that individuals do not have a moral duty to give up the benefits that air travel can bring to their lives.

1. Is it ethical to engage in an activity that you consider ethically repugnant but which you enjoy or that furthers a cause about which you care?
2. Do individuals have an ethical obligation to make major changes in their lives to reduce the rate of climate change?
3. Do individuals have an ethical obligation to actively engage in social programs that reduce harmful effects to the environment caused by others?

**Case 13: Is it OK to Punch a Nazi?**

On January 20, 2017, Richard Spencer, a well-known member of the American “alt-right”, was punched in the face by an unknown assailant while he was being interviewed by an Australian journalist. The attack, which was captured on video, was almost certainly a reaction to Spencer’s vocal form of white nationalism, which includes his public support for the establishment of the U.S. as a white ethnostate.[[30]](#footnote-30) Footage of the attack soon became a popular internet meme, accompanied by the question, “Is it O.K. to punch a Nazi?”[[31]](#footnote-31) with some people comparing the masked assailant to Captain America and Indiana Jones.

The punch, and the internet memes that followed it, have spawned vigorous debates about how people should respond to increasingly frequent, public displays of racism. Critics of the assault argue that violence is not the right response to political disagreement. Instead, according to this view, racism and other repugnant attitudes are best combatted with open conversation and rational argument. Such violence, in contrast, seems to be incompatible with treating someone else as a fellow citizen. This seems to be Spencer’s view of the attack: "I kind of like getting into vigorous back and forth with people who disagree with me. … But punching like that just crosses a line—totally unacceptable." He admitted that he feared future attacks, saying, "Certainly, some people think I'm not a human being and I can just be attacked at will."[[32]](#footnote-32)

Some anti-racists, by contrast, maintain that violence and intimidation are perfectly legitimate response—and perhaps even the best response to political views that themselves seem to call for or condone violence against vulnerable groups. They argue that trying to appeal to the better natures of, or try to reason with, those who openly endorse white nationalist and white supremacist ideologies will very likely be futile. Interventions like these, then, seem only to provide the opportunity for hate speech and racist attitudes to flourish without effective opposition. Admittedly, punching a vocal white nationalist (or threatening to do so) might not be a way to reason with them as fellow citizens. But there may be other important values at stake. Rapper B. Dolan, created a line of hats with the slogan “MAKE RACISTS AFRAID AGAIN” in order “to express solidarity with those opposing racism, homophobia, and fascism worldwide.”[[33]](#footnote-33) As Dolan explains his motivation, “If we can’t change their minds, we can at least drive them back into isolation so their targets can be free from harm and harassment. We can make them afraid again.”

1. Is it ever ethically permissible to use violence against another person who is promoting hate and bigotry?
2. What is the proper ethical response to people who spread hatred and bigotry?

# **Case 14: Project Prevention**

Project Prevention is a North Carolina-based nonprofit that attempts to prevent people with addictions from having children.[[34]](#footnote-34) To do this, Project Prevention pays people with drug addictions $300 to volunteer for long-term or permanent birth control. Ultimately, approximately two-thirds of participants agree to use forms of long-term birth control, such as 5-year IUDs, with the remaining third opting for sterilization.[[35]](#footnote-35) According to Barbara Harris, who founded the controversial organization, the goals are to stop people from having children that they are not in a position to adequately care for, and to reduce the number of babies born with drug-related defects. Ultimately, according to Harris, this program helps people with addictions get their lives back on track while protecting innocent children from the various harms associated with parents’ drug use or from being caught up in the foster care system.

Critics say Project Prevention is manipulative, taking advantage of people who are not in a position to make rational, informed decisions about what reproductive choices they may want to make in the future. For this reason, it seems problematic to encourage them to undergo sterilization. Moreover, according to critics, despite Harris’s claim about wanting to help these individuals, this program doesn’t do anything to address the real problem: their addiction. Additionally, critics argue, this program is based on and reinforces problematic stereotypes about people suffering from drug addiction. According to National Advocates for Pregnant Women, Project Prevention “perpetuates the myth that drug-using parents have a disproportionate number of children.”[[36]](#footnote-36) Harris’s language reinforces this perception, as she routinely describes addicted women as “having litters of children”. Critics also argue that Project Prevention’s rhetoric—such as the motto “Don’t let pregnancy get in the way of your crack habit”[[37]](#footnote-37)—increases the stigmatization of drug use and addiction, and conveys the message that women who use drugs do not deserve to have children.

1. Is it ethically permissible to offer money to people addicted to drugs to not have children by agreeing to long-term birth control use or to being subjected to sterilization?
2. Is it ethically permissible to discourage people from having children if they are liely to have trouble supporting them financially or otherwise?
3. Is it ethically permissible to support organizations that produce positive outcomes but have ethically problematic intentions or rhetoric?

**Case 15: Involuntary Commitment**

In states like West Virginia, Ohio, and Kentucky, which have seen a significant number of deaths by overdose during the recent heroin/opioid “epidemics,” an increasingly popular solution to protecting the addicts is civil or involuntary commitment. Research suggests that those who are involuntarily committed have outcomes at least comparable to the outcomes for people who make the decision to seek inpatient treatment themselves.

Shows like *Intervention*, *Recovery Road*, and *The Heroin Triangle* depict the frustration often experienced by family and friends of addicts who want only to protect and help their addicted loved one. Some family members of addicts see involuntary commitment as the last and only chance for their survival. “The only hope that many addicted individuals have is that someone will do for them what they are incapable of doing for themselves,” according to Charlotte Wethington, the mother of Casey Wethington, who overdosed from heroin at the age of twenty-three and is the namesake of Casey’s Law in Kentucky, a law that is considered by some recovery advocates to be a model law for involuntary commitment of substance abusers.

Civil commitment which was previously reserved for those diagnosed with some form of mental illness and who were deemed a threat to themselves or others, has been a somewhat controversial mechanism throughout its long history. Most states now allow for involuntary commitment of individuals with substance-abuse disorders or alcoholism and a handful of states include substance abuse and alcoholism in their definitions of mental disorder, making involuntary commitment easier in those states.

In Massachusetts, where approximately 6,500 substance users/abusers were subject to civil commitment in 2017, those civilly committed can be housed not only in treatment facilities but also in prisons. Critics of incarceration for addicts point to the suppression of the rights of the addict, especially when the only available space is in a prison with violent criminals. When addicts are “committed” to prison areas with other prisoners who have actually been convicted of crimes, those other prisoners are resentful of the addicts as they receive special treatment like private cells and extensive therapy.

1. Under what conditions is civil commitment an ethical reaction to the problem posed by people who are addicted to drugs?
2. Given that people with severe mental illness who pose a danger to themselves or others can be involuntarily committed, is civic commitment an ethical way to address the problems of those addicted to substances?

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