

“Oh what wicked webs they weave”. Members of the Poverty Industrial Complex have various methods of profiteering off government money spawned from the War on Poverty in 1964. The method known as Gentrification is an effective way to keep poor people poor and greedy people rich. The poor remain so that federal money designed to help the poor keeps coming in and is transferred to the manipulators. The Webster dictionary definition of gentrification: “The process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents.” This term was first used in 1964 – exactly the same time the War on Poverty started kicking in. Trillions of dollars have come down the “pike” and we have none of it. In fact, we are worse off demographically today than in 1964.

Let me give you an example of how this works and what we did in Indianapolis back in the early 1990’s to fight it off. A group of small contractors complained to the Legislative Black Caucus about how they were being banned from any housing construction in inner city Indianapolis. The great State Representative Bill Crawford called a meeting among elected officials, church leaders and the Hoosier Minority Chamber of Commerce (me and Kay – my wife). It was amazing what we unraveled.

There were fourteen neighborhood associations with distinct boundaries in the City of Indianapolis. Wikipedia: “A neighborhood association is a group of residents or property owners who advocate for or organize activities within a neighborhood. An association may have elected leaders and voluntary dues.” Theoretically a neighborhood association policed the neighborhood to correct blight and turn vacant land into homes or businesses. Each neighborhood association worked hand in hand with a Community Development Corporation. Wikipedia: “A community development corporation (CDC) is a not-for-profit organization incorporated to provide programs, offer services and engage in other activities that promote and support community development. CDCs usually serve a geographic location such as a neighborhood or a town.”

The CDC’s got the federal money such as Community Development Block Grants (HUD funds) through the City Council and Mayor and also various War on Poverty funding from other federal agencies. They would fund the construction projects in the neighborhoods through the neighborhood associations. They would also pick the contractors doing the work and that’s where we initially focused.

We told the predominantly Black neighborhood associations that from now on the majority of

construction would come from Black contractors based in those very neighborhoods. Any license plate of a contractor that was not Indianapolis coded would sound an alarm and any out of state plates would cause a tow truck to arrive. We told the applicable CDC's that their officers and especially Chairs would have to be residents of the very neighborhood they were overseeing. Most of them were from the suburbs and we demanded their resignations.

The biggest thing we came across was that they were overpricing the cost of refurbishing older homes and building newer homes. Why? They were setting the "comparable pricing" of a neighborhood upwards and out of reach of the current residents of the neighborhoods. Thus, the current residents could not afford new housing and eventually the rising property taxes and even apartment rent would force them out. White contractors would make quick cash; white realtors would have higher commissions; bankers would have higher returns on financing and mortgages; so on and so on. Whites making the big bucks and Blacks being destabilized – this is how they do it.

Also, housing authorities would get in on the action. They would offer Section 8 Vouchers (rental assistance) to targeted residents providing they would move. In Chicago, they were shifting Section 8 residents as far away as Danville, IL (150 miles south). Here in Washington, DC they were sending them to Hagerstown, MD (90 miles away) – I heard this from a former Secretary of HUD himself. I remember our chapter in Danville, IL complaining about "all of a sudden we have car jackings and crack houses from these new hoodlums from Chicago".

Bankers would offer very attractive mortgage rates to Yuppies who would move into these targeted neighborhoods and take Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) credit for it as if they were addressing affordable housing and helping to eliminate poverty all the while fanning the "flames" of it. All of the above is like they held some kind of convention and showed how to displace Blacks and grab that federal money.

We slowed the gentrification down in Indy but it is still there and is growing everywhere. Greed has no end and as long as there is evil we must be vigilant and fight it wherever we see it.

Gentrification is the work of the devil.

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