

**Gentrification:** The process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents. (Merriam Webster Dictionary).

This vile system of transplanting traditional Black neighborhoods from a geography rich with legacy to a redeveloped area void of any of the history and culture we created. The Black residents are taxed out or moved out if they are renters. Where is this happening? A report by Michael J. Petrilli of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute clearly shows where the worst gentrification is happening within our nation. His source is the US Census zip code tracking by race 2000 vs. 2010. He has compiled the Top 25 worst zip codes in this nation as far as gentrification is concerned.

Chocolate Cities aren't so chocolate anymore. You can take a good look at Washington, DC, our nation's capital. Gentrification is on the rampage. Of the 12 active city council seats, six are possessed by Whites. DC has three zip codes in the Top 25. Zip code 20001 grew in White population by 27.2 percent during those ten years. That is the tenth highest growth in the nation. Zip code 20010 grew by 24.7 percent which is the 14<sup>th</sup> highest. While zip code 20005 grew by 21.1 percent.

Only Brooklyn exceeds DC in having zip codes in the Top 25. Brooklyn has four zip codes. Zip code 11205 has White population growth by 29.6 percent which is sixth highest. That is followed by 11206 which grew by 29.0 percent. Zip code 11238 has growth of 21.5 percent and zip code 11237 has growth of 19.7 percent. No other New York borough made it on the Top 25. They are gentrifying Brooklyn like I-95 going north.

The city with the worst case of gentrification is none other than Columbia, South Carolina. This capital city's zip code 29202 had a change over from nonwhite to White of 47.1 percent. That is number one! Another South Carolina city, Charleston, has its strong dose of gentrification. Zip code 29492 had White growth of 27.0 percent.

Where are the Black folks going?

The mid-size town of Chattanooga, Tennessee doesn't surprise me. We have had experience with the contempt that is shown against anything Black in this town. It is mid-size but yet it has two zip codes in the Top 25. Chattanooga zip code 37408 had a growth of 38.7 percent which makes it the second highest gentrified zip code in the entire nation. Zip code 37403 experienced growth in White population of 22.9 percent. My brothers and sisters of Chattanooga, what are they doing to you?

What is happening in the South Loop of Chicago puts it in the Top 25. Zip code 60604 shows a growth of 37.7 percent which makes it the third highest gentrified zip code in the nation. It is not stopping there. The gentrification posse has the Southside on its mind and in its playbook. It won't be long.

Very few communities west of the Mississippi are experiencing much gentrification. San Diego, California and Portland, Oregon are the only cities with zip codes in the Top 25 - 21.1 percent (21<sup>st</sup>) and 20.1 (24<sup>th</sup>) respectively.

A solution to this onslaught of gentrification is strict planning ordinances and rigid building codes. Cities like Santa Barbara, California are fierce in enforcing their zoning laws. This beautiful city is just as beautiful today as it were when I was growing up 25 miles south of there in Oxnard, California. As for my town, it was once a peaceful city by the ocean. Its Black population when I was there was 12 percent and growing. Today it is less than four percent. It is really very sad. All of the landmarks are gone with nouveau architecture and landscaping. They should have learned from Santa Barbara.

When we brought the National Black Chamber of Commerce to Washington, DC the city was 82% Black. Today, it is less than 60% and the culture and business community is changing rapidly. Near Southeast around the new baseball stadium there is much newly built housing and it is inhabited by White professionals. The Shaw District is changing so fast that it is hard to find a Black owned restaurant in that area. At night, the side walks are filled with White pedestrians. Ben's Chili Bowl is packed with White patrons.

The late Rodney King's: "Can't we all get along"? Still applies today. We won't be able to really get along until we learn to live amongst each other and interact with peace and love. Sometimes it looks as if we are Bedouin tribes roaming about the land and holding only temporary roots until the next move. Let's cut the development schemes based on race and stand for stabilization and legacy building.

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