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Sociologist Denies Negroes Cause Realty Prices to Drop

The widespread belief that Negroes moving into a previously all-white neighborhood cause property values to drop has been called a myth by a USC sociologist.

Rather, says John M. McQuiston of USC's Population Research Laboratory, prices decline before Negroes move in and not because they do.

McQuiston's findings, confirming the conviction held by many human relations and open-housing groups, are included in his research study, "Changing Relative Housing Values in Negro and Caucasian Neighborhoods in Los Angeles."

He based his study on the population censuses of 1940, 1950 and 1960.

The price decline in a neighborhood, he contends, often begins at least 10 years before Negroes move in and is caused by the fact that the housing has begun to deteriorate and become less desirable to Caucasians.

McQuiston says, "The often-used term, 'Negro invasion', is a misnomer. The Negro does not invade a neighborhood. It is bequeathed to him by the Caucasian who has moved on to newer and more desirable housing."

Nor, he says, does the Negro "initiate a vacation of the area by white residents. By then, the trend has already been long established."

There is even, he found, a temporary stabilization of prices as middle-class Negroes willingly pay more than property is worth. But the pattern is such that the decline continues to increase and the value continues to go downhill.

With the gap between Negro and Caucasian neighborhoods widening, he says, "it appears that the polarity between the races in housing will continue for some time."

McQuiston concluded that housing discrimination does exist in Los Angeles and noted that fair-housing laws "have impact on only the middle-class Negroes" who can afford to seek homes outside solidly Negro areas.

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Point Loma Open Housing Workshop

WHY A WORKSHOP?

San Diegans live in a segregated community. Segregation based on racial bias is incompatible with our traditional concepts of the equality of man. As a consequence there are tensions within the community which more and more often are leading to clashes and violence as the minority community seeks to gain truly equal opportunity. Many feel our number one domestic problem is the reduction of racial tension.

Point Loma, as a part of San Diego is also a segregated community. Almost no Negroes and few other minority citizens live in the Point Loma area. Although there are no legal barriers preventing any citizen from moving to Point Loma, few minority citizens do. Differing explanations for this are give by different groups and individuals. Although there is logic and some validity in the conflicting arguments presented by these groups and individuals, none have solved the problem. It remains true that there is tension within the community and between communities.

The Point Loma Dialogue Group is a group of citizens in Point Loma who are concerned with the problem of racial tension. For abour a year we have been meeting with minority citizens, primarily Negroes, and with other interested groups, in dialogue, in order to try to understand the problem. The dialogue has been enlightening and challenging and our involvement in it has moved us in the last few months to seek ways to actively demonstrate our concern. This workshop is one result.

Some of us are acquainted with minority citizens who do live here in Point Loma. Their youngsters play with ours in the Little League, some of the parents are managers and coaches of the teams. One Negro neighbor has been an active participant in our dialogue as has another Negro engineer working at N.E.L.. The obvious quality of their citizenship has won our respect and their personal warmth has made them our friends. It is painful to us,having these people as friends, seeing the quality of their lives and enjoying the benefits of their contributions to our community - and yet knowing that there are many who do not welcome them and who are exerting subtle and overt pressures to bar them from the community. It is a cruel contradiction that we should see these friends and appreciate these neighbors while we maintain a bias against others of their race and treat these nameless others as non-people. It makes us feel hypocritical and unclean, and we don't like it.

This workshop is specifically concerned with the problems of segregation in housing and the tensions that result from it. Our aim is to reduce these tensions by extending our hand to the minority community in friendship. We ask that all like-minded citizens and organizations in Point Loma to join with us and let their participation in the workshop be a witness to our mutual concern, a demonstration of our willingness to act, and a testimonial of our responsibility to act in Point Loma, our own community.

We are not telling others, either our neighbors or the minority community, what they ought to be doing but rather by gathering together ourselves to give serious attention to these problems, we are saying to our friends and neighbors as well as to our neighboring communities, black and white, that we care. While we cannot open the doors or hearts of others, we can open our own.

A suggested question for the discussion groups:

What can I as an individual do personally to improve the housing situation and reduce tension?

A few types of possible answers:

1. I can write letters to my councilman, assemblyman, congressman, etc., in support of civil rights programs.

2. I can participate in local organizations, supporting efforts or initiating ideas which move towards equal rights for all. This does not mean just civil rights organizations, but any organization to which I may belong, the PTA, Boy Scouts, Little League, Kiawanis, church group, etc.

3. I can speak to my neighbors and friends on human rights issues.

4. I can support civil rights groups financially.

5. I can start a dialogue group or participate in one.

6. I can form a group, or participate in one, that would be available and open to the minority person that might be interested in moving into the community. This group would not necessarily do such things as helping in finding a house or financing, but would at least be a point of contact in the community. They would be available to answer questions, introduce themselves, and just generally welcome the person to the community.

7. I can seek ways of expanding the list of like-minded individuals, those sympathetic and concerned about racial tension.

8. I can try to contact minority members already in the community. For example, families now in Navy housing whose children attend our schools.

9. I can help to establish a continuing public information program.

All of these things require only that we ourselves act. They may require help and cooperation within the community, but they do not require anything from outside the community.