

‘Income inequality’ is leading to entitlement mentalities

February 6, 2014

by [Randy Bright](#)



Articles by urbanists who talk about the importance of community fascinate me. It’s as if it is some new concept that we need to embrace, along with the notion that the only way for people to connect to each other is to encourage them the (*sic*) to live closer and closer together.

Moreover the community unit, if there is such a thing, appears to be the smallest denominator in the concept of community.

One blogger, who called himself an urbanist, quotes author John Michael Greer from his book *The long Descent*, “One core concept that has to be grasped is the rule that the community, not the individual, is the basic unit of human survival. History shows that local communities can flourish while empires fall around them.”

A disclaimer here. I haven’t read the book, so I can’t say whether or not the author was taken in or out of context. That’s not really the point. The point is that someone wrote something that could be construed to have left out at least three other units. The first unit is the individual, the second is the family, and the third is the local church, or its counterpart, a tribe.

Obama is making much of the idea of income inequality. There are too many rich people, too many poor, and the diminishment of the middle class is the result of the rich keeping too much for themselves. It’s the classic ploy for dividing people and setting them against each other by creating class envy, and if anything is anti-community, it is that. The result of this kind of thinking is the entitlement class filled with people, individuals, who are entitlement thinkers. Their dominant thoughts are “I can’t” (as in I can’t accomplish anything on my own) and “I’m owed” (as in since it’s my right to be provided with the same stuff others have).

So instead of encouraging individuals to make something of themselves, to contribute to their family’s well-being, to enrich their community, we do just the opposite, creating a whole class of people we can’t hold up as an example.

The second unit, the family, is also taking fire. Despite the fact that a monogamous man and woman, united in marriage, especially a strong Christian marriage raising children in a stable home environment, creates more good with their lives than other lifestyles, is ignored.

Instead, planners tell us we need to plan our communities for more two-income, no-children families. This, they say, is the current trend, and we must accept this as a reality.

Finally, the church is no longer seen as an important part of a community. We have allowed atheists to convince us that Christianity, and therefore the church, must be suppressed and eliminated. Many urban planners and those in government see churches as parasites on community, not the good they bring to it.

Many urbanists make the point that people should depend upon other people, upon their community, upon their government, to create a quality of life for themselves. But it seems to me that, in nearly every article I read by them, urbanists seek an answer to making life better by making changes to our built environment. I don't fault them for wanting to improve lives, and some of their methods may in some cases do just that, at least for a while. Even churches do that – create built environment to improve lives – but there is a difference.

The difference is that the church, in the form of a local congregation, has done more for the community in this country than any other tribal group, and it has done so by encouraging strong family relationships and practices. The local congregation is an intricate community with individuals and families as its moving parts, but it doesn't work without faith and morality.

While I disagree with Greer's assertion that "the community, not the individual is the basic unit of human survival", or with the exclusion of the individual, family and church, I don't disagree with his statement that "local communities can flourish while empires fall around them".

If this country collapses economically or otherwise, it can survive and be rebuilt at the community level. However, it will take individuals who have a stake in succeeding, for the sake of themselves and their families, and for churches to provide the right assistance to their communities for that to happen. History has also shown that socialism and communism doesn't work, and capitalism does. Real community can exist only with the latter, and the local congregation, living according to scripture, has been the real model of community for a very long time.

Randy W. Bright, AIA, NCARB, is an architect who specializes in church and church-related projects. You may contact him at 918-582-3972, rwbrightchurcharch@sbcglobal.net or www.churcharchitect.net.

©2014 Randy W. Bright

© 2014 Tulsa Beacon