

Obama's proposed policies are about concentrating power

October 27, 2016

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I have been writing about a new publication released by the Obama administration in September entitled the Housing Development Toolkit.

The authors of the document assert that current zoning regulations are too stringent and that they discourage the construction of multi-family housing in urban areas where economic development is, they claim, creating many new jobs.

According to Obama, "We can work together to break down rules that stand in the way of building new housing and that keep families from moving to growing, dynamic cities."

This is a curious statement given that GDP is growing at the miserably slow rate of 1.2 percent, and has been for the entirety of his term in office. There are no growing, dynamic cities in America except Washington D.C., at least in comparison to other times in America's history. Some growth is not dynamic growth.

Quoting another source, the publication claimed that "families facing extreme rent burden often suffer lasting trauma resulting from their housing insecurity, destabilizing their lives and marring their prospects for upward economic mobility."

Trauma? If extreme rent burden causes trauma, why do we not also hear about the trauma that rising health care premiums cause? Should not the same logic be applied? I could finance four brand new, moderately priced cars for what my monthly health insurance premium will be.

The publication claims that local barriers, i.e. zoning codes, have "intensified, particularly in the high-growth metropolitan areas increasingly fueling the national economy" and that "locally-constructed barriers to new housing development include beneficial environmental protections or well-intentioned permitting processes or historic preservation rules, but also laws plainly designed to exclude multifamily or affordable housing."

So the conclusion is that cities are intentionally blocking people from job opportunities through zoning restrictions on housing, and that it creates barriers to "households" who want access to those jobs. This in turn creates hardship on those who must commute to a job: "The long commutes that result from workers seeking out affordable housing far from job centers place a drain on their families, their physical and mental well-being, and negatively impact the environment through increased gas emissions."

That statement is reminiscent of a presentation that I saw several years ago by an urban planning student who had been convinced of the evils of cars. As he made his presentation, he nearly broke down in tears when he described how much time people spent in their cars instead of being with their families.

Yet people really believe this sort of thing. They have been convinced that the only right thing for us to do is to concentrate populations in dense city centers so that they can walk to their jobs and not create global warming with their cars.

But they forget that the automobile – not housing, not mass transit, not walking or riding a bicycle – has been one of the most economical ways for people to take advantage of job opportunities.

Even while progressives claim that they want more affordable housing (which really means subsidized housing), when people are willing to invest in communities with new jobs and homes, they claim “gentrification” will only force people out of the very neighborhoods that they want more people of working class to move into.

The publication stated that “when new housing development is limited region-wide, and particularly precluded in neighborhoods with political capital to implement even stricter local barriers, the new housing that does get built tends to be disproportionately concentrated in low-income communities of color, causing displacement and concerns of gentrification in those neighborhoods. Rising rents region-wide can exacerbate that displacement.”

Dinesh D’Souza, in his book *Hillary’s America*, explained it this way: “... progressives scream every time entrepreneurs attempt gentrification projects in cities like Baltimore, Detroit, and St. Louis. No matter that gentrification would bring new money, new jobs, and new people into the inner city. Crime would go down, and people could move up. Here progressive opposition is most revealing of all. A transformation of the inner city is precisely what progressives do not want to happen.”

This policy that Obama proposes has nothing to do with creating more opportunities for people. It has everything to do with concentrating power, concentrating populations and gaining more control over the lives of Americans.

More on this in coming articles.



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