

TESTIMONY BY DR. MARIA KONG

THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Growing a country of inclusivity in housing with diverse communities is important in creating:

1. Safer neighborhoods
2. Reduced discrimination
3. More racial tolerance
4. Increased community bonding
5. Barrier to predators
6. Reduced tensions between races
7. Better standards of living
8. Better health
9. Reduced government subsidies and programs

When individuals are given the opportunities to interact as neighbors they learn each other's cultures, they share and also adopt different ethnic behaviors, they look out for each other as neighbors, and so they defend and protect each other as community members, easing racial tension and separatism.

The United States has grown on the premise of segregated communities for hundreds of years—a process which promoted intolerance, separatism, racism, and ultimately feelings of superiority and inferiority in the races. It has only been forty (40) years since the Fair Housing Act was passed in the United States. Although this country is one of the most diverse country in the world, comprising of citizens of every race and culture, we have not been able to achieve a unity of cultures or a great reduction in discrimination as is experienced in other parts of the world such as Jamaica, whose motto is “Out of Many, One People”—a country where there is no need for any document requiring anyone to fill out their race or ethnic background. Everyone lives happily wherever they choose with no fear as long as they are able to afford that dwelling, whether it is in a rich, middle class, or poor neighborhood, because all those communities are shared by all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

It is important that the United States move forward to creating diversity in communities by planning for community integration. Although we promote fair housing, we realize from statistics that we have thousands of complaints on discrimination in housing, causing HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity to be backlogged many years in dealing with cases. Fair housing and discrimination cannot be just eradicated by laws, there has to be more definitive actions to change the behavior of people and to put communities into an integrated state to create acceptance, tolerance, and understanding between races. It is important that more be done to ensure the harmony of people of all races by creating:

1. Diverse communities by providing incentives for integration
2. Mandatory rules for builders
3. Tax credits with certain mandates tied to the credit
4. Proper monitoring and enforcement
5. Housing and community standards
6. More equitable standards and equipment in schools, hospitals, supermarkets, and social services for all communities
7. Plans should be made immediately within the government to help cities accomplish equitable standards for the people of those communities, with plans for integration of cities.
8. Eradicate discrimination where one race bears the burden of unfair increased utility and other bills because of living in one type of community or being a certain race.

There is no plan by the government to move America to a more perfect union. There is no plan to help citizens attain a better cultural tolerance and therefore reduce discrimination and increase access to neighborhoods. This must be a long term plan for the government which is adopted by states and cities. Discrimination and alienation in America will continue forever not only in housing, but in all other areas of life if action is not taken by the government to develop and support diverse communities so all races and ethnicities will feel included and have the same access to opportunities in all areas of life in America, including schools, jobs, and benefits. It is statistically true that black neighborhoods suffer neglect and are disproportionately discriminated against when it comes to the quality of schools, supermarkets, and other services in their communities. It creates frustration and feeling of hopelessness when inferior treatment is given, and it creates a mental barrier for an entire race of people. This promotes crimes, hate for those races that are treated better, alienation, and distrust for people of other races.

Creating diverse neighborhoods would be a start to working on "country unity", the hope of a better tomorrow for all races as well as:

1. The reduced ability of one race to be targeted for unethical practices and behavior because of residence in a transitional neighborhoods
2. The ability for cities to move forward with their economic agenda and not be strangled with the problems of so called "ghetto" areas created by unfair treatment and hopelessness.

You don't have to be in a rich housing development to have good neighborhoods, integration will promote:

1. Pride
2. Contentment
3. Harmony
4. Peace
5. Tolerance
6. Hope

When people feel they are all playing on a level playing field and changes occur in human behavior, this leads to:

1. Reduced crime
2. Reduced mental depression
3. Reduced feeling of hopelessness
4. Reduced neglect of property
5. Reduced predators
6. Reduced feeling of isolation and unfair treatment

7. Reduced anger

8. Reduced health issues

9. Reduced deaths in communities

10. Reduced need for government subsidies and living benefits.

Ultimately, integrated communities will be seen as aiding in the development of great communities which will attract:

1. New businesses

2. New residents

3. New investors

4. Growth for cities

5. Safer neighborhoods

6. Greater diversity