

Date: 06 October 2014

To: Galveston City Council

Re: Poverty and Destiny

Forget it, Jake. It's Chinatown.

– Chinatown (1974)

Forget it, David. It's Galveston.

- City Council and GHA Board (2009-2014)

Why Did We Create This Series On Concentrated Poverty?:

Many people have asked us why we dedicated all of the time and effort to write a series about concentrated poverty, for the City Council, when we knew that the majority of the Councilmembers would ignore us. Probably only two or three Councilmembers will even read anything sent to them by the GOGP.

We also knew that this series would not be able to generate very much mail criticizing this Council regarding your lack of concern about the growing level of concentrated poverty. However, the lack of mail does NOT demonstrate the voters' lack of concern about this issue; it simply confirms their belief that you will ignore them, too, so why bother.

After their efforts to persuade the 2008, 2010, and 2012 City Councils to fix this problem, as part of the Hurricane recovery effort, many of the most civically-engaged residents have simply given up.

The perceived impossibility of making a positive impact on the important problems facing the City is completely demoralizing. The feeling that "the fix is in" tends to paralyze most positive civic impulses. Most people now believe that it is hopeless to even try to make the City a better place to live, so they find that they have to "stop caring" to continue to live here. Despair and apathy are the corrosive effects of being governed by elected officials who fail to demonstrate integrity or courage. Why should anyone vote or participate in City government?

This city is a truly magical place, but it is run like a plantation, by a political machine, so it is very difficult to feel good about it, if you are not living in denial. These are the reasons that the 2014 City Council did not receive hundreds of emails about the growing level of concentrated poverty.



Even though we understood that this Council would ignore us, and that this series would only generate a minimal amount of mail to the Council, we still thought that there were at least three very good reasons to undertake this project.

First, on some level, many people know that there is something terribly, terribly wrong in this city, but they can't quite put their finger on what it is. We wanted to let them know that they were not alone; many people share this feeling. We also wanted to demonstrate that the "source" of the unease that they feel is the "concentrated poverty" engulfing the City. The level is higher here (24.7%) than in any other city in the County, and in such cities as Chicago, IL (23.0%) and Ferguson, MO (23.9%).

Hopefully, this series will make people more comfortable now that they understand the source of their disappointment, disillusionment and despair. Coping with the unknown is often more stressful than dealing with problems that we understand.

Second, by sending these articles to you, it puts the issue on the record, and we are challenging you to do something about the most fundamental problem facing the City. When you choose NOT to do anything, we hope that that in itself will be of great service to

everyone who lives here, because it should leave no doubt in their minds that "things are NOT going to get any better".

In order to live in this city, most people have learned to immerse themselves in denial and to develop an unrealistic sense of false hope. We live in this magical place, with all of the potential we see around us, and we just can't believe that it won't get better "next year". Surely, paid parking on the Seawall will help to beautify the beach, new cruise ship terminals and hotels will propel the tourist business to new heights, or the new park at the East End Lagoon will be another reason to enjoy and embrace the Island. We are even on track to get a City swimming pool.

However, we now understand that none of those things, or others like them, will give the middle class a good enough reason to stay on the Island when concentrated poverty grows unabated and corrodes every aspect of their lives.

Finally, when we know that things are not going to get any better, we can prepare for them getting worse. We can look at how bad they might get, and how we can adapt to and cope with the new higher-poverty reality. We can also begin to determine our individual "tipping point", where we choose NOT to put up with this nonsense any longer, and just leave.

The best and the brightest, the energetic and the most enthusiastic, as well as those most committed to "community" have been leaving for many years seeking opportunity and relief from the City's high poverty level elsewhere. That leaves those of us who choose to stay with ever increasing problems, but with less talent and resources to deal with them!

Most middle class residents could find better business or employment opportunities elsewhere, so they stay for other reasons. Those reasons will also be constantly challenged by the rising tide of concentrated poverty.

What choice do we have but to seriously consider our options when we show you this problem and you ignore it?



What does the Future Hold?:

Without an active effort to reduce concentrated poverty, current GHA/City policy, and demographic trends, virtually guarantee that it will just keep growing. If there are no major inflows or outflows of residents, concentrated poverty will accelerate with the return of the 529 public housing units, and 1,700 to 2,000 more impoverished residents. This influx will surely also drive out more middle class residents. This raises the poverty level in two ways; it adds to the impoverished population while it reduces the middle class population.

In addition, with 38.8% of the City's children living in poverty, as older residents die off, the overall poverty rate should approach that of its younger residents; 38.8%.

A poverty rate of 30-38% could easily raise the crime index from 375 to something closer to 600. Massive additional resources will have to be directed to GPD, even as the population declines further, and the

tax base shrinks. Imagine the impact on GISD. This means that the infrastructure will never be properly repaired or upgraded.

What's left of affluent enclaves will probably decide to add private security to supplement GPD's efforts. Cedar Lawn and Adler Circle have defensible perimeters; but the East End Historic District, Denver Court, Driftwood and the Silk Stocking District do not.

Cities with 30-40% poverty become notorious or even infamous and cannot remain viable and livable. Where is the population headed? 37,000?

We can keep building shiny new hotels on the Seawall, and beautiful new cruise ship terminals at the Port even as the central core of the Island, between 61st and 4th Streets, becomes more abandoned and blighted!

Higher and higher levels of concentrated poverty is a future no one wants to think about, even as all the forces currently in motion are marching unabated in that direction.



What Will You Win?:

If the City Council and the GHA Board continue to fight our efforts to de-concentrate poverty, through our lawsuit, and the appellate court

rules in your favor; what do you win? What does that victory look like to you?

Three years after all 529 public housing units are rebuilt, and occupied, if the City has a poverty rate of 37% and a population of 37,000, is that a big win?

The City probably made the worst deal since the Indians sold Manhattan Island to the Dutch for \$24 worth of beads and trinkets. The 2012 City Council sold the sovereignty of Galveston Island to the State and federal governments for a new sewage treatment plant and to get a few streets paved, but the added concentrated poverty that they agreed to import, will make it more and more difficult to retain the City's middle-class population. Explain that deal to the voters.

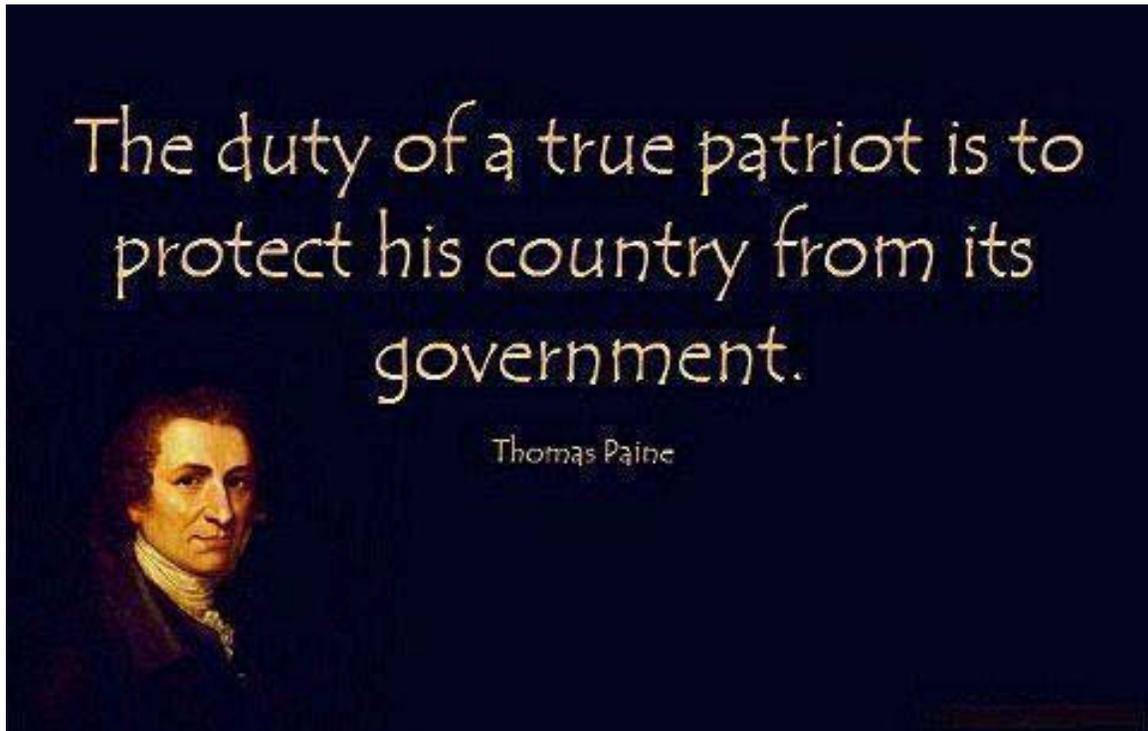
When historians write the history of the demise of the Island they will certainly point to what the 2012 City Council did on 28 September 2012 as the last straw. That act of betrayal completely demoralized the City.



Subsequently, when the City and the GHA began to fight the GOGP lawsuit, this additional betrayal took even more of a toll on the spirit of the people and was insulting and disheartening.

Celebrating the return of Cedar Terrace just added insult to injury and made your actions the death by a thousand cuts.

City government clearly has no sense of right and wrong, no moral compass, and no conscience!



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