

OPINION

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Community Land Trusts Build on Affordability

Portland's Proud Ground shows the way

BY JARRID GREEN

At this point, it's no secret that America has an affordable housing problem. Home ownership, long the staple of the "American Dream," is increasingly a privilege enjoyed only by the wealthier and whiter.

For many young people, the opportunity their parents had to build stable wealth through home ownership seems like a cruel joke in today's economy. There's even a viral tweet: "Millennials. Walking around like they rent the place."

But the housing situation in the U.S. is no laughing matter.

According to the Pew Research Center, America has more renters than now than at any point in the last 50 years. A generational shift in lifestyle choices? Unlikely. A 2016 survey of renters found that 72 percent would like to own a home, but many were holding off for financial reasons.



For many millennials, the choice between a job and an opportunity to own home is a stark one. As manufacturing and farming communities have declined, job opportunities are concentrating in cities like San Francisco and New York, hubs for the knowledge economy where home ownership is far out of reach for ordinary Americans.

For young people of color, the

own their homes, compared to 57 percent for Asians, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, 48 percent for Hispanics, and 42 percent for blacks.

And even when homeownership was attainable, these owners of color built wealth slower than their white counterparts. A recent Zillow study found that 80 years after the federal government used racial redlining to determine "good" and "bad" neighborhoods

means rethinking how home ownership works, and who has access to it.

One idea? Community-controlled land and housing, like land trusts and housing co-operatives. The idea is to create opportunities for people often excluded from the ownership economy, while also keeping a community's long-term interests in mind.

For instance, a community land trust works by entrusting

this means that economic revitalization doesn't need to be accompanied by the kind of skyrocketing prices making homes so unaffordable in cities like San Francisco or Boston. And it means that there's always an affordable first rung on the ladder of homeownership for future generations.

Even in cities where homes aren't expensive now, this can protect affordability for the future.

These are strategies with decades of on-the-ground testing behind them, and they're ready to be scaled up. For example, Proud Ground, a Portland-based nonprofit community land trust, has served more than 300 families since the early 1990s.

There are an estimated 225 active community land trusts across the country with a similar structure as Proud Ground. Many of these are small, and some are just getting off the ground. But with proper support, they can spread and grow to be a key part of the affordable homeownership solution America needs.

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Simply put, the American housing system may not be sustainable — either morally or economically. Fixing this system and getting the American dream back on track means rethinking how home ownership works, and who has access to it.

situation is even worse. Decades of racial disparities in housing policy and markets locked their families out of the wealth building opportunities enjoyed by the parents and grandparents of many white people. Those impacts are still felt today.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 72 percent of whites

for mortgage lending, the impacts of this discrimination are still being felt in depleted home values for many black owners.

Simply put, the American housing system may not be sustainable — either morally or economically. Fixing this system and getting the American dream back on track

ownership of a piece of land to a nonprofit dedicated to permanent affordability. That nonprofit can then sell homes on this land at below-market prices — with the provision that the new owners are obligated to pass this affordability on to the next buyer when they sell.

Locking in affordability like

Unlearning Racial Bias Takes Time, But It's Worth It

I had to learn what I was doing wrong

BY JILL RICHARDSON

Starbucks recently closed its stores for a one-day racial bias training for all its employees. Unfortunately, I think there's a good chance it won't make much difference.



How can I say so confidently that a day of training will have no effect? Because I teach sociology of race at the college level. I know what it takes to help begin to break down racial bias.

In part, it takes time.

As a white person myself, I reached my 30s before I began to realize the depth of my ignorance about racial issues. And in my classes, it takes most of the semester to really make an impact on students.

On my own journey, I learned that I'd been doing things that were racially offensive without realizing it. I had to work to learn what I was doing wrong, and how to stop doing it. Learning about race has been one of the most transformative, meaningful experiences of my life, but it took far more than a day.

White people often think that a racist is someone who uses racial slurs, advocates segregation, and openly believes that people of color are inferior to white people. And

yes, people like that are racist.

But there's a lot more that goes on in our society that falls under the larger umbrella of racism — and good, well-meaning white people are often unaware of it.

I'm sure most of them oppose racism, and want to be a part of the solution. But our society is set up in a way that hides racism from white people. And you can't change what you aren't aware of.

Some racism falls under the category of microaggressions. These are small incidents or remarks that happen on a day-to-day basis to people of color. The black PhD student gets mistaken for the janitor. The Chinese-American woman is asked where she is "really" from four times even after she says she was born in Tulsa. That kind of thing.

These are little incidents that remind people of color that they are "other" or that they're seen first as their race — and a stereotype of their race — before they're seen as an individual human being.

Some racism is implicit bias. These are the biases we have subconsciously that we aren't even aware of. Including me. Including most of us. Until we realize we hold these subconscious biases,

how can we confront them and change them?

Some racism is structural. It's baked into the fabric of society, in the form of segregated neighborhoods, unequal schools, and so on. It would continue even in the absence of prejudice and hate, and it will continue until we consciously change our society.

My privilege as a white person is that learning about race was, for me, optional. I could go through life without ever thinking about race if I wished, and no harm would have come to me. People of color don't get that choice.

Another white privilege is that you might believe my words more than you would if I weren't white. Yet a person of color actually knows firsthand what it's like to face racism. They're the experts, and they should be listened to.

Learning racial sensitivity and breaking down bias is possible. But it's not a one-day job. It takes time. And it's worth doing — even if you don't work at a chain store that sells bad coffee.

OtherWords columnist Jill Richardson writes about food, agriculture, the environment, health, tolerance, and well-being. Distributed by OtherWords.org.

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Macedonia Temple Church

**sunday
School
10AM**

7015 NE 23rd Ave and NE Bryant Street,
Portland, OR

Pastor & Mrs. James W. Booker

**worship
Service
12:30pm**

Everyone is welcome here. Your Past is your Past, and we don't Judge you. God wants to do something NEW in your life. Are you ready to receive Greater Blessings? Join Us. We LOVE meeting NEW people. Do you like to sing? Dance? Teach? Pray? Cook? Other?