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Posting: My old neighborhood is turning into a ghetto. . . Poster: J. Richard Phaneuf Date: 6 June 2007 11:10 AM	Posting 1
<p>I find it very sad to see my old childhood neighborhood in it's rundown, unpainted and trash ladened state after being away for 52 years.</p> <p>From 1938 until 1955 I lived in the section of town then called "Sodom" among very poor but proud immigrants from Canada, Poland, Italy, Russia, Latvia, Lebanon, Ireland and other countries who were drawn here during and after the great depression by jobs in the local factories. For us, it was the American Dream come true and we all worked hard, learned English in school and in the streets, lived peacefully together and built a new life for ourselves and our families.</p> <p>During World War II our fathers, brothers and uncles went off to fight and many didn't return or came home badly wounded. Those of us left behind at home dedicated ourselves to the war effort, collecting metals, cooking grease, milkweed for kapok life jackets and spent many days and nights cutting up old flannel sheets into two inch square rifle cleaning patches for our soldiers. Things were scarce and rationed and we did without but at wars end, we proudly pulled ourselves together and went on with our lives.</p> <p>We kept our streets and sidewalks clean and mixed gallons of whitewash to keep our homes neatly painted and clean. There were no abandoned cars or trash in the neighborhoods and drugs were bought uptown at Hickey's pharmacy. We were dirt poor but happy and most important. . . We were proud to be Americans.</p> <p>I don't know what happened over the years nor do I know who to blame. Is it the fault of the current residents in the area? Is it the fault of greedy landlords? Is it the fault of city government officials? I think there's plenty of blame to go around but I continue to have hope. Harlem in New York City was once one of the most violent slums in the country and it has been reborn into a thriving business community with many important offices, including the office of former President Bill Clinton. Perhaps someday, "Sodom" or whatever it's called now will rise up from the dirt and trash and be a nice place again in which to grow up.</p>	
Posting: Re: My old neighborhood is turning into a ghetto. . . Poster: Dick Donovan Date: 6 June 2007 2:20 PM	Posting 2
<p>Great post Richard. Your memory and observations probably represent many of us who were born and raised in Willimantic during this period. Some where in the early 60's the city started to lose its industrial base that employed many of the citizens. Good paying jobs became more scarce and prices began to grow. Somehow the spirit of what our parents and grandparents had seemed to get lost on the new generation. Our whole culture was changing dramatically--look how the music, movies, books, etc changed becoming more acceptable to things that were once not said or displayed a generation before. Not trying to make any judgements -- just my opinion. After 30+ years the city government has not made any headway with the "revitalization program" for Main Street. It has lost its opportunity to build on the opportunities of ECSU and UConn. Two big colleges in its backyard and students who would shop if there was some place to shop, eat and entertain. Willi has a great natural resource--the Wmtc river that could be a great recreational development. Seems like a sad state of affairs.</p>	
Posting: Re: My old neighborhood is turning into a ghetto. . . Poster: John Boudreau Date: 6 June 2007 8:55 PM	Posting 3
<p>Obviously , this is happening in many cities all over America . Go to some parts of NYC and you'll see the same thing . Hartford ...Boston ...Big and small cities ...A cancer that is spreading over the land ...Different " class " of people inhabiting these areas . No doubt there are some landlords who neglect the dwellings they own , but I daresay that there are many more tenants who just don't give a s--t . Some landlords spend \$\$\$ fixing up dwellings only to see them brought right on back to ruin in a few years . Why bother refurbishing ? Families of 4-5-6 people and nobody can bend over and pick up the trash ???</p>	
Posting: Re: My old neighborhood is turning into a ghetto. . . Poster: Fred Masterton Date: 6 June 2007 9:04 PM	Posting 4
<p>It's not all bad. Easy for me to say, I suppose, since I don't live in the area any more. Take a look around Willi - lots of gorgeous Victorian houses that are being nicely maintained. I love to just drive and walk around Willi every time I am back in the area and marvel at the architecture and diversity. Sure, there are some run down areas, but compare it to areas of Chester PA, or Camden, NJ, that look like Berlin after WW2. Or where I live now, where all the houses seem to have one of about six floor plans. Little boxes, on the hillside.....</p>	
Posting: Re: My old neighborhood is turning into a ghetto. . . Poster: J. Richard Phaneuf Date: 6 June 2007 9:22 PM	Posting 5

I think its a cancer in the social fabrique of our society and it runs from the bottom to the top. Hallowed words and phrases from our vocabulary like conscience, personal honor and responsibility, pride of accomplishment and decency have all but disappeared and our country is losing its soul.

The bad thing about the problem is. . . nobody is doing anything about it.

Posting: Re: My old neighborhood is turning into a ghetto. . .
 Poster: Dick Donovan
 Date: 7 June 2007 12:54 AM

Posting 6

I had a good friend who lived in Norwich, raised in Willi, worked at EB until about 1994. Norwich was going thru the same decline as was Hartford, New London and other communities. However, I understand that New London and particularly, Norwich is making a successful comeback. Have not been to Hartford in the last 20 years but I understand the downtown area (Main St) is still pretty much of a wasteland. I read that Willi's form of government is considering or at least discussing changing to a elected mayor and full time city manager. I believe that was what it was when I was growing up in the 40s-50's--I remember the name of Mayor Bergeron--plumber by trade. From what I have read/understand recently is that the Mills buildings and other buildings on Main St are pretty much in debt and their ownership is held by CHFCA---the conglemerate that owns and was going to develop the Hooker House, Nathan Hale and other buildings on Main St. I still don't understand how the City planned a revitalization 30+ years ago and still has not made step one. There is probable an ugly story underneath it all and someone/group is making some \$\$.

Posting: Re: My old neighborhood is turning into a ghetto. . .
 Poster: Ted Perch
 Date: 11 June 2007 9:51 AM

Posting 7

It's Post WWII American History endlessly repeated, hoping against hope that we haven't missed something. Pretty much the only reasons both Norwich and New London are rebounding economically are the casinos. Norwich was not so slowly sliding into the Thames River before Foxwoods opened. New London never really recovered from the destruction of the 1938 Hurricane. After WWII Hartford, New Haven (my home town) and the other major cities emptied out into the suburbs, leaving the poorest behind and then the mainline manufacturing companies employing thousands of us went global, out of America, to China. The poverty gets deeper, the resources fewer and we chase ourselves to the bottom. Anger rises, but hard drugs appear that pacify, distract and terrorize the remaining population now living in urban free fire zones. Skilled labor gone, professional work, factory jobs gone, this was repeated all over the Northeast, the "rustbelt." Willimantic shares this history. Locally, you can make up any conspiracy theory you want about why a recovery boom has never taken hold that coulda, shoulda, woulda restored Willimantic to some shade of its former glory. It would only be a distraction from the fierce reality of economics, markets and corporate decision making that happens away from Main St. We are left competing for development crumbs, scraps from the big table. Connecticut is emptying out. The 20 and 30 somethings are heading everywhere else but here. How much stuff can you sell to people who aren't here? Toyota is investing several billion dollars in Mississippi, while at home we are left to ponder the economic impact of a liquor license renewal for a local restaurant.

Posting: Re: My old neighborhood is turning into a ghetto. . .
 Poster: Ernie Gesner
 Date: 11 June 2007 1:05 PM

Posting 8

Very Well Said Ted

Posting: Re: My old neighborhood is turning into a ghetto. . .
 Poster: John Boudreau
 Date: 12 June 2007 9:53 PM

Posting 9

We are inexorably sliding into the third world abyss thanks in large part to our imbecilic Senate , House and President .

The middle class can be an uppity lot (sarcasm on) . Poor people are easier to control .

Remember that small city in Maine where our leaders brought in a tribe from Africa that wreaked havoc with the city. No one would go to work as they wanted hours from 10AM until 2PM. All male children of the transplanted tribe are receiving government-paid orthodontal work as their stone-age custom required that all bottom teeth of teen boys be removed with a blunt spear because the elders thought it made the youths look like animals to have the bottom teeth. Now they're happy with their new implants costing millions, but their parents still don't work and the small city is bankrupt.

I expect any day now for the anti-Americans in the US Senate to vote for Span-ish to be the official language of the United States of Mexico. And we will not have to worry about flag burning as our flag will be the yellow one of Mexico as we return to the rat infested third world and maybe even the fourth world.

Posting: Re: My old neighborhood is turning into a ghetto. . .
 Poster: John Boudreau
 Date: 12 June 2007 10:02 PM

Posting 10

This is well worth a read folks .

<http://www.renewamerica.us/columns/adamo/070606>

Posting:	Re: My old neighborhood is turning into a ghetto. . .	Posting 11
Poster:	Kate Fortier	
Date:	13 June 2007 10:13 PM	

Wow ...

Are you for real, John?

Posting:	Re: My old neighborhood is turning into a ghetto. . .	Posting 12
Poster:	John Boudreau	
Date:	14 June 2007 11:31 PM	

Yes , I am not a figment of your imagination . ;)

Posting:	Re: My old neighborhood is turning into a ghetto. . .	Posting 13
Poster:	J. Richard Phaneuf	
Date:	16 June 2007 12:08 AM	

OKAY. . . . We've heard all the bad news and negative comments while tossing the blame around in just about every direction. . .
Sooooooooo. . .
what can be done about it?

During the Vietnam War, our streets were filled with people young and old, wearing beads, headbands, long straggly hair and smoking pot and we wondered what was happening to our country. Looking at those crowds of hopped up students made many of us lose faith in the American boy and girl. But in the midst of all this chaos, loyal American young people were enlisting in the military and after a mere 12 weeks of military training AND renewing in them the behavior, principles, ethics and character traits not taught to them by their flower children parents, some of them ended up in my Company in Vietnam. I can tell you without exception that they were magnificent in the face of extreme danger, they looked after each other and were there, standing tall, every time I needed volunteers for a difficult mission.

There's no sense in arguing the necessity of the Vietnam War or any other war but my point is. . . Don't lose faith in the basic abilities, innate character and deep seated courage of our young American men and women. We old codgers can sit around and complain and blame this one and that one but we must look to our young people and urge them to strive to return this great nation to it's rightful status in the world. We did a pretty good job up to about the 1960's but then things started going downhill. It will be our youth who will turn it around and I'm confident that they, with our help and urging will succeed.

JRP