EQUITY AND INCLUSION

DOWNTOWN MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT
By Barry Cassidy

What I have found interesting is the debate over what is being taught in schools. For example, when I was young, in Fords, New Jersey, school #14, we said the "Lord's Prayer" right after the Pledge of Allegiance. Then someone would be required to read a bible passage in front of the class. It was almost putting you on the spot. You had to be able to read, and if you went up there and stumbled around, it did not reflect well for you.

School Prayer then became an issue, and we separated religion from our school districts. I remember people were protesting and saying that people were anti-god. That was a fundamental change for me. Although I was Catholic, I did not say the part about the "Kingdom, power and glory forever and ever." Initially, that did get me in trouble, but I made my argument, and they accepted it.

Fast forward to today when school boards across America are facing protests about Critical Race Theory or CRT. CRT emerged from legal analysis from the late 1970s written by legal scholars Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, and other researchers.

The theory is not an actual analysis of what happened after the U.S. Civil War as there was great resentment on the side of the south after they lost the war. Some people were original pioneers that settled the land, and now they were forced to sell or borrow money to live. They had nothing left except the fact that they were white. So, what was legal property (slaves) was taken away from them and granted freedom of movement.

Of course, legal entanglements like charges of vagrancy or dressing too nicely sent the former slaves to prison, where they were rented out to industrialists like US Steel, as the forced labor continued.

The white establishment then segregated itself from people of a different race through zoning, restrictive covenants, and sanctioned violence. This happened. This is not a theory. In most cases, normal white people hanging out did not pay too much attention to what was happening as they lived in their all-white neighborhoods.

Back in the 1960s, in the Lafayette Estates section of Fords, NJ (so-called "New Fords" tract development), we were "sitting chilly" in an all-white neighborhood. There were no minorities in grade school and one or two in high school, common in the Woodbridge Township schools.

Minorities were hyper-segregated in Newark, and Puerto Ricans were segregated in Perth Amboy, and that was just an accepted fact. There was no talk about why they were clustered there, and maybe it was some invisible force. Not many people were racists, but there were some.

After World War II, when the government built public housing for white people, they built other public housing for black people in less desirable areas.

DOWNTOWN MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT

This is why disasters like floods disproportionally hurt minorities — because flood plain and industrial areas were often clustered.

I learned some of this in high school when we discussed the Radical Republicans' efforts during the Reconstruction of the south we detailed. But, unfortunately, I do not think they explained how the system has perpetuated in our daily lives.

Let's face it — not every white person is a racist. However, the fact that about 72 percent of the population is white makes it a white society. White supremacy, so to speak, is dictated just by the sheer number of people.

I agree that there needs to be education concerning how we got to this point in history. We are talking about "EQUITY." I think the more important thing is how we are going to integrate America. How can minorities that have been clustered in a city move to the suburbs and actively participate in the housing market now that affordability will be an issue? If this issue had been addressed after World War II, when the housing financing (and redlining) was developed to give the American Dream to the populous, we would not be in this situation today.

People have to live together in order to understand that all minorities are not bad, and they are your neighbor. This is the only way you can change things. You are not going to change things by teaching that all white people are racists in the schools. And…and… there are probably not that many teachers who will do that, but we cannot hide that certain events happened.
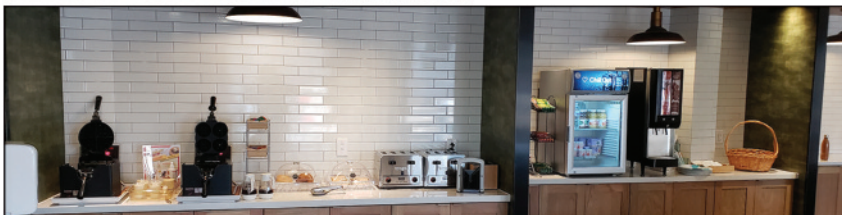
Part of the problem is that the government wants to cluster low-income minorities in scattered-site units, which are considered 12 units or less, and multiple units can be controlled by zoning. That is why in the 2010 census, the racial disparity in Chester County was a stark look at a black and white segregated America. As in the following municipalities white/black percentage ratio over 90 percent and less than two percent: Birmingham (90.6/1.4); East Bradford (93.3/1.4), East Pikeland (93.8/1.9);Elverson (96.7/0.6); Franklin (92.3/1.9); Honeybrook Borough (93.1/1.1); Honeybrook Township (95.4/1.1); London Britton (93.5/1.3); Londonderry (91.1/1.0); New London (91.9/1.4); Newlin (95.0/0.6); Pennsbury (93.6/0.7), South Coventry (95.5/0.5), Warwick (96.1/1.2); West Nantmeal (94.4/1.1); West Pikeland ((93.2/0.8); West Vincent (93.9/1.1).

DOWNTOWN MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT

(Continued from page 48)

Where are the progressives in these areas? Someone may be talking about a good EQUITY game as long as it does not affect them.

When you look at the plight of the Latino population being trafficked across the border and put into less than stellar working situations, they cannot complain because they are not allowed to work as employers take advantage of them. The modern way to get cheap labor! It continues, and no one wants to talk about what is happening to a vast segment of the population. Whether it be sex workers or farm workers, there are organized gangs using illegals as slaves. Right before your very eyes … right now. Modern-day slave traders are showing up at the Mexican border with automatic weapons supervising the trade.

We need to wake up, and the fight to tell of the discriminatory past and present day's inequity will only be solved when we all live together as Americans, side by side.

Barry Cassidy is a freelance grant and economic development consultant. He can be reached at barrycassidy@comcast.net.