

Brooklyn Patterns:

Time to Connect the Dots... If Not, They'll Connect Themselves

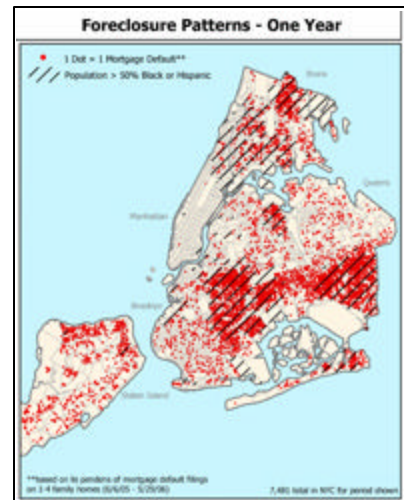
View From Here: David Mark Greaves

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What is happening to the African-American community in central Brooklyn isn't called genocide or ethnic cleansing, but when you put it all together, it appears more malevolent than not. One of the elements now coming to the fore is the Category 5 foreclosure hurricane bearing down on central Brooklyn, or rather, on the African-American population in central Brooklyn. Because what is particularly of note about this hurricane, is that it, like Katrina, is race-specific for the worst of its wrath, this according to testimony given at the Senate Democratic Conference Public Hearing on Subprime Lending Practices in New York, convened by State Senator Velmanette Montgomery and held at Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration earlier this month.

"African-American borrowers were almost 4 times more likely than white borrowers to receive a high-cost home purchase loan," and Latinos are three times more likely, testified Sara Ludwig, founder and executive director of NEDAP, the Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project.

Ms. Ludwig held up a page with side-by-side diagrams showing the neighborhoods with the highest African-American populations, the ones with high-cost refinance loans and those with the highest rates of foreclosures. Even from a distance we could see the patterns were not only identical in geographic area but also familiar. They are the same geographic distribution patterns you get from maps on prison admissions by home addresses, people living with HIV/AIDS and every societal ill from infant mortality to diabetes, homicide and school dropout rates.



And yet, like all of these patterns, the correction of subprime lending abuses, which at its worst gives every appearance of legalized theft, as in the case of "Mr. J" (see side bar), is said to be a very complex matter and very difficult to prosecute. If you jump a turnstile you risk being put through the system. If you steal tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of dollars by conspiring as part of a fraudulent loan scheme, the only risk is some extra paperwork.

At the same time that these attacks on the homes, health and freedom of area residents are going on, there is laid over this scene an information fog of hundreds, if not thousands, of multimillion-dollar advertising, marketing and public relations campaigns vying for attention and setting agendas for people to follow on a moment-to-moment basis. Working the fog machine are the owners of mass media, multibillion-dollar corporations gifted with a citizen's rights as a starting point, followed by various protections, enhancements and through an endless supply of managers, eternal life.

But all is not grim in media or even in central Brooklyn. In fact, you can easily imagine the situation of the pain and suffering of a homeowner whose fingernails have been broken and the home, at last, has been lost, giving way to a *New York Times* account of some charming white couple, either same-sex or mixed, who've transformed a central Brooklyn apartment, loft or a brownstone, into a sanctuary from the outside world. *"Got it at a foreclosure, and look! It still has the detail!"*

Same space, different worlds linked by the vestiges of slavery. We've seen the tsk tsking about the sheltered lives the Sudanese Arabs lead, while their society allows the genocide in nearby Darfur to continue, but there are no "Mothers Against Foreclosures," or any other acknowledgement of the slow-motion removals and displacements coming up in the multiple listings and happenings just a few blocks away.

Because they don't call it genocide, does that make the dying out any less painful? And because they don't call it war, does that mean we don't have to fight

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