



MICHIGAN CIVIL RIGHTS INITIATIVE

NEWS

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DETROIT'S RADICAL CITY-FUNDED "AFRICAN TOWN" BUSINESS DISTRICT STOPPED BY MICHIGAN CIVIL RIGHTS INITIATIVE

Since it gives one race preferred treatment over all other Michigan citizens, the "African Town" business district being promoted by most of the Detroit City Council would be stopped by the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative (MCRI). The City Council overrode Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's veto to approve portions of the "African Town" measure.

According to *The Detroit Free Press*, African Town is to be a zone in Detroit created in part with taxpayer funds, where black owned businesses would cater only to black clientele. Detroit City Council overrode Mayor Kilpatrick's veto to create a taxpayer-funded corporation to lend money to only blacks and only in the African Town area. Detroit received well over \$300 million in Michigan taxpayer money in 2003. African Town will apparently be a "redlined area," wherein people of certain skin color will be treated differently than all those outside. The City Council also overrode the Mayor's veto and designated the 83% of Detroit's population which is black as the "majority minority" group.

"No group or individual American," said Ms. Jennifer Gratz, Executive Director of MCRI, "should be treated better or worse than any other American because of their skin color, gender, race or national origin. That the largest city in Michigan would create a program to do just that is incredible."

The Detroit Free Press story (Sept. 21, 2004) reports that the proposal for African Town is based on a report that blames inner-city African-American poverty on Mexican, Asian, and Arabic immigrants stealing resources and jobs from blacks, suggesting the solution is to treat immigrating individuals from those groups suspiciously because they might have "their own agendas." The report, written by Claud Anderson, is entitled "*A Powernomics Economic Development Plan for Detroit's Under-Served Majority Population*." MCRI views the report's

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internal contradictions and use of "double-speak" as typical of the contortions governments use in justifying their use of discrimination.

The MCRI Constitutional amendment ends preferential treatment for and bias against anyone on the basis of race, gender, national origin or ethnicity by the State of Michigan and its local governments. When passed, actions such as Detroit's radical taxpayer funded "African Town" would be banned as unconstitutional. "It is unbelievable, that in this day and age, a major City like Detroit would pass a law saying that some people get special privilege over all other individuals because of their skin color," continued Ms. Gratz.

According to *The Detroit Free Press*, Detroit City Councilwoman Cockrel, among the many individuals and groups who supported Mayor Kilpatrick's failed veto, said, "I'm not prepared to support an economic development strategy that has the unintended consequence of pitting people against each other. At the end of the day ... the plan ... advocates exclusionary classification and illegal set-asides that only serve to divide and polarize within the city [sic] and region. And we have enough of that already." MCRI wholeheartedly agrees with Councilwoman's Cockrel's analysis and is working diligently to assure that ALL Michigan citizens are given equal opportunity by their governments.

The Michigan Civil Rights Initiative Committee (MCRI), a Michigan-based Ballot Question Committee, is dedicated to giving the people of Michigan the opportunity to end preferential treatment based on race, gender, ethnicity, or national origin by State or local governments. MCRI will make Michigan a place of equal opportunity for all, not a State that uses discrimination as a tool to create "diversity." Achieving "diversity" and "affirmative action" should never be an excuse to discriminate!

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