

Good People.

Written By: Joseph Green

Original Poem Created for the National Association of Realtors

History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.

-Dr. Martin Luther King JR

What if the good people don't know they are the good people?
Firefighters, doctors, athletes, actors, pastors and politicians
all have songs written about them.
Volumes of prose and poetry dedicated
to their immense contribution to human civilization.

But what about Realtors?
In the last years of his life, when Martin marched in Chicago
to protest unjust housing practices, he didn't march to the state house
or to the courthouse; he marched to the Real Estate Offices.
I think maybe because he wanted to remind the good people
that they were the good people- for everyone.

There once was a realtor
that played a pivotal role in me
becoming the person that I am today.

When I was 11 my father retired from the military
and we settled in Northern VA. We were one of three families of color
in a predominately white neighborhood. As a child there was no way
for me to fully grasp the significance of this act.

I don't recall the facial features, gender,
or the race of the person that showed us
the selection of homes from which we would eventually chose.
I can remember how I felt. The fire of excitement
lit my imagination ablaze with all the possibilities
of what life could be like in this paradise.
I mean we would have a driveway, a front and backyard,
a community swimming pool, and football field. What else could there be?

As a father now, I realize that my parents had to have *considered*
school systems, crime rate, vicinity to shopping,
and the recently announced metro line.

Maybe “consider” is too gentle a word to use when describing what my parents were doing. My father’s father died when he was ten and his mother provided for him by traveling from South Carolina to New York to clean the houses of wealthy families. My mother is not even a generation removed from sharecropping. No, they did way more than “consider.” They dreamed, they struggled, they plotted, and then they served this country. Yet when it came time to purchase a home all they could do is hope that the person charged with helping them manifest their dreams in the form a home understood how important their role was.

I wonder if that realtor knew.
I’d like to think that at some point in their life
they witnessed the right thing being done
despite it being inconvenient and they were inspired.

This modest piece of prose is a, “thank you.” A letter of appreciation
on behalf of every family that has been given a chance to thrive
because a real estate agent choose to be something more.
An agent for positive change in a world
that would have you believe that the bottom line
is always more important than being one of the good people.

Thanks to such a person I was given the opportunity
to be educated in one the finest school systems.
To never feel unsafe walking home at night and the chance
to provide the same for my son.

What a wonderful feeling it must be to know your job is so vital but not to worry about all the songs and poetry? To simply be able to go to work every day and if you choose, be one of the good people, for everyone.