

OPINIONS

Gentrification is Destroying Our Communities: The Difference Between a Tiny House and a Mobile Home is Just Socioeconomic Status

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Tiny House Nation, Tiny House Hunters, Tiny House Big Living...

ALL OF THESE TV shows contribute to the popularity of “tiny home living” in the United States. The tiny house movement as we know it today probably started in the 1970s, but a closer look at how we define these homes reveals a horrible truth about how our society is still class-based.

What makes a tiny house? It’s a house that’s, well, tiny. As of late, a lot of them are on wheels! Technology is so cool, and having tiny homes makes sense for minimalist living and mobility. Who doesn’t want that in life? It’s the epitome of freedom, right?

Well, more socially aware beings may have noticed that this definition of a tiny house also applies to mobile homes and RVs. But tiny homes are so different from mobile homes, and the difference is this: the socioeconomic status of their owners. Mobile homes are considered “trashy” whereas tiny homes are considered “cool” and “chic.” Why is that? Socioeconomic differences.

Don’t feel bad if you haven’t thought about it that way—I didn’t realize it at first either. I was enamored with the idea of tiny homes. They’re creative, neat, and so aesthetically pleasing. Despite their size, though, some of them are being sold or rented at sky-high prices. Sure, they’re still more affordable

than regular houses, but they’re not accessible to those who need cheap housing. Tiny homes can be built for as little as \$8,000. Depending on the cost of the land and the size of the house, it can be even cheaper. Yet, mobile homes abound as homelessness increases. Why is that?

The rich are taking advantage of the glamor of tiny homes and reinventing them as luxuries. Meanwhile, poor people are struggling to buy a run-down mobile home or hopping shelter-to-shelter. There could be projects where tiny homes are built for good, like housing homeless people until they can get on their feet, but that brings no revenue, so is it possible in our capitalist society?

Realistically, tiny homes are the perfect solution to end homelessness. They’re cheap, livable, and work great as temporary housing for people with only a few possessions. Think of them as halfway houses for the homeless. Tiny home communities can be a safe place to get back on your feet, find a job, find a new place to live, and build community.

The homeless and transient population have already started this community with tent cities. However, these tent cities are unsafe for multiple reasons—crime is rampant and the tents cannot withstand all weather conditions. Additionally, tiny homes would provide an address, which is a necessary part of getting a job.

The good news is this: people are catching on to this idea. In Minneapolis, the organization known as Avivo is doing exactly what I just described: using tiny homes to temporarily house the homeless as they look for permanent housing. Avivo has mental health and addiction resources, as well as socioeconomic resources to fully serve individuals who come to them for help. Avivo has continually expanded their community impact since the 1960s when it was founded as a rehabilitation facility for the disabled. Today, it is mostly funded by donations and volunteer work.

Avivo’s tiny home project, Avivo Village, is relatively new but has proven to be successful. According to their website, “323 total individuals have been served (230 exited, 93 current), 95 individuals moved on to safe, permanent housing, 65 overdoses have been reversed, 12 babies were born to Avivo Village residents, 62 individuals connected to healthcare services, [and] 12 pets... have lived with residents.”

Our system doesn’t support organizations like Avivo, and they must survive on the good will of the people in their communities. Consider donating toiletries, money, or time to organizations like Avivo to give back to your community and make a difference in society. Push for the government to allocate resources for our communities through organizations like Avivo—that’s what will make a difference.