

Dear Donald Trump, stop talking about neighborhoods that I love

By [David Kamphuis](#)

October 9, 2016

Dear Donald Trump,

Let me be clear at the outset that this is not an attempt to argue with you over your political beliefs. I am not trying to convince anyone to vote a certain way.

I simply want to ask one thing of you: please stop talking about neighborhoods that I love.

[At last night's debate you made you made several references to inner cities.](#) The statistics you cited and the picture you painted of these neighborhoods can be summed up by what you said about them in the first debate: [“We have a situation in our inner cities: African Americans are living in hell because it’s so dangerous.”](#)

Mr. Trump, for most of my life I have either lived, or worked, or attended church in inner-city neighborhoods. Currently I do all three. As someone who works, lives, and worships here let me tell you one thing: these neighborhoods are not hell. Instead, they are places where I find more grace and life than anywhere else.

This is no attempt to gloss over the problems that inner cities face. I can also cite a litany of problems, statistics, and stories to tell you of the challenges that my neighborhood faces.

But please, stop talking about us because this place is not hell.

In my neighborhood, children walk to church on their own. Knock on my door when they are bored. Walk 20 minutes to come to church events.

That is not hell.

In my neighborhood gardens and life spring out of demolished houses. Neighbors meet in an effort to solve our problems. Those same neighbors come to my door when they are in trouble.

That is not hell.

In my neighborhood people who haven't even finished high school can give a testimony to the mighty acts of God that is more powerful than any seminary degree. People know and respect the church because they know that the church, unlike virtually everyone and everything else, did not leave.

That is not hell.

Please stop talking about my neighborhoods. You are telling a story that many believe: that inner cities are only violent. This story is wrong.

The story you tell also assumes that inner cities are only black. This is wrong, too. There are white inner cities, Latino inner cities, Asian inner cities in addition to African American inner cities. My neighborhood has all sorts, all trying to live together.

That diversity is not hell. It is beautiful.

So please, stop talking about my neighborhoods. Stop talking about places that I love. Please stop talking about them because instead of dealing and wrestling with the real issues you are feeding a narrative, telling a story, that says because my neighborhood does not look like the suburbs that means it is less valuable. I run into this story all the time. Every time someone asks me, "Aren't you afraid to live there?" or "How'd you end up here?" I encounter this story.

To tell you the truth, I am sick of it. Sick of the impression that my neighborhood is hell. Sick of the idea that it is somehow worth less in God's eyes because of the way it is. Sick of the idea that statistics on a page that mean God can't possibly be doing miracles here.

God does work here. God works here in beautiful and wonderful ways.

I pray that one day you can see that.

*Originally posted at [The Fire Escape](#)*