

City of Houston Wants to Bulldoze 1 Black Church, Condemn Another

In a repulsive demonstration of hostility toward Christians, the city of Houston wants to bulldoze one church and condemn the property of another so they can build affordable housing and a public library.

Attorneys representing the Christian Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church and the Latter Day Deliverance Revival Center were in court Tuesday asking a judge to issue a temporary restraining order preventing the city from taking their property.

The Houston Housing Authority has already implemented eminent domain proceedings to take control of an entire city block in what was once called the Lone Star State's "toughest, proudest, baddest ghetto."

"The government cannot take a church's property and give it to some other business in violation of the law," said Hiram Sasser, the deputy chief counsel for Liberty Institute. "These churches, their congregations and this neighborhood are not for sale."

Tory Gunsolley, the president of the Houston Housing Authority told me he could not comment specifically on the merits of the case.

"I respect their right to their day in court," he said.

Gunsolley said the church buildings basically stand in the way of their plans for developing the community.

"The Latter Day Deliverance Revival Church that is essentially the alley of the block we are trying to redevelop," he said. "Without that strip of land we will not be able to build the units or library."

Since last March the city has been negotiating with church leaders hoping to buy them out.

"It's tragic that the city of Houston wants to take the churches' property away and give it to someone else, just so they can make money," Sasser said.

Both congregations are located in Houston's Fifth Ward—which has a notorious history of violence and crime.

Liberty Institute said the ministries of both churches have been credited with turning the neighborhood around—reducing crime and drug use.

However, if the city has its way, the food pantries, young centers and programs to combat drug use and gang violence will be evicted to make way for affordable housing.

"When we moved into this area, it was considered the highest crime-rate area in the city of Houston," said Bishop Roy Lee Kossie, the pastor of Latter Day. "People shot first and asked questions later."

Bishop Kossie said his congregation has no intention of moving—period.

"We love this community," he said.

The pastor said ultimately they serve a much higher power than Houston City Hall.

"This is where the Lord called us and this is where we want to stay," he said. "We aren't giving up without a fight."

Liberty Institute attorney Jeremy Dys told me it's absolutely

repulsive that City Hall would try to evict two historic churches from the Fifth Ward.

“The city is trying to steal the property,” he told me. “It’s remarkable that City Hall would ever tell a church where they can and cannot do ministry.”

It’s unclear when the judge will rule on the temporary restraining order.

Folks, I know it seems hard to believe something like this could happen deep in the heart of Texas. But just remember—this is the same crowd that tried to subpoena the sermons of five local pastors.

It’s a good thing the Garden of Gethsemane isn’t located inside Houston city limits. They’d probably bulldoze that, too.

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