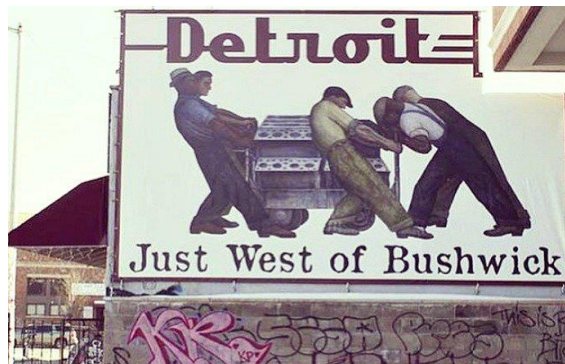




**Myth #2: Detroit is now a place where anything is possible and everyone is welcomed with open arms.**

In contrast to Myth #1, in the last five years a smaller, but growing, percentage of the population has taken significant interest in moving to Detroit, marketing it as a “comeback city”. I would specify that a growing percentage of Southeast Michigan holds this view, but surprisingly the news about Detroit’s revitalization and “hipster” renaissance has reached all across the country. For example, this piece of graffiti recently appeared in Brooklyn’s very trendy Bushwick neighborhood, making light of the iconic *Detroit Industry* frescos displayed in the Detroit Institute of Arts.



So, it is true then? Is Detroit all of a sudden a promise land full of nothing but opportunity, friendly neighbors, and cheap rent? Well one thing is for certain, every resident of the city that I talked to noticed that things were indeed changing. However, everyone experiences changes differently depending on their own history and location within the city. Dennis Kuo, a Midtown resident of five years completing his residency at Wayne State Medical School, had a particularly interesting perspective having grown up and attended college in Southern California.

Before coming to Detroit for medical school, Dennis had three pre-conceived ideas about Detroit from what other UCLA undergrads that went to Wayne State said. He laughs, “Well I was told to make sure to bring a jacket! That was good advice.” On a more serious note he added, “People also said that Detroit is dangerous, and that it is a ghetto.” Upon arriving in Detroit for the first time in 2010, Dennis described the sheer amount of empty space as overwhelming. He explained, “It was almost like a ghost town, the historical buildings are very beautiful, but very empty—makes it seem kind of eerie.”

From Dennis’s experience from living in Midtown, improved livability and increasingly abundant opportunity seems to be a reality. Instead of the poor, dangerous neighborhood filled with drug dealers he had envisioned, he states that if anything, he has seen more of a hipster culture. “This ‘hipster’ scene has gotten bigger and bigger since I’ve been here, and the Midtown area is very ethnically diverse.” Dennis went on to say that more and more businesses are springing up in Midtown, and that there has been an increase in the amount of independent sellers selling local products made in Detroit. Despite everything going on in the city Dennis clarifies that to most medical students at Wayne State, Detroit is just where the school is and that they go out of the city to socialize--usually in Ferndale or Royal Oak. “Lots of us are just indifferent to it”, he explains.

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Mark Gibson, a senior at Wayne State who has lived in Detroit for four years, has had a slightly different experience as a newer resident. Mark also reports that even within the few years he has been in the Midtown area he has seen more local businesses popping up, an influx

in community events, and increasing ethnic diversity. This past year, in order to save money Mark and a couple friends decided to venture outside of the typical Wayne State real estate market and rented a duplex in North Corktown, an un-gentrified neighborhood formerly known as Briggs.

“We made friends with one of the neighbors in August; it was going well at first. But the neighborhood was really anarchic; I’d never seen anything like it.” Mark goes on, “Within the first couple months we were there we got robbed, broken in through the back window. They stole a record player and some other electronics. Crazy thing is we knew who did it! They were squatting a place a few blocks down the street, but we couldn’t do anything about it because they ran the neighborhood, cops wouldn’t come and even if they did our neighbors were scared to call ‘cause these guys would retaliate.” “But after that we didn’t have any other problems until December.”

Mark told me about a party his duplex threw at the end of the winter semester. One of his roommate’s is close friends with a DJ so he was the main attraction for the party- meaning that many people that weren’t direct friends with mark or his roommates came. They had a bouncer to make sure that whoever was entering was connected with someone hosting the party, but the bouncer got too intoxicated to notice that 3 guys that nobody knew had entered the duplex. It was later learned that these were just guys from the neighborhood wandering around that heard the commotion and came inside.

When word got out that these three guys were there, he tried to tell them casually that this was a private party and that they had to leave. Upon this encounter, one of the guys pulled

out a handgun and fired about five shots in the living room of the party—and the fled. No one was seriously injured, but two people got grazed by bullets on non-vitals and needed medical attention. Cops came about a half hour to an hour later and filed a report yet nothing ever came of it. After this, Mark still stayed for a couple of months but immediately began searching for new housing.

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Contrary to popular belief, gentrification is happening in other neighborhoods besides Midtown, Downtown, and Corktown. Mary and Adam Cantu are both life-long residents Detroit residents who have lived together and raised a family in Southwest Detroit since the early 1980s. When asked about new people moving into the neighborhood Mary starts laughing and curiously replies, “Ah yes, the newcomers! It’s the strangest thing!” Mary and Adam live on a block off of a service drive connected to I-75. Often times it’s these blocks that suffer the worst crime and blight. “Our street is an exception”, Adam says, “We all look out for each other.”

When asked about the newcomers, Mary explained that in the last three to four years, three new couples or families have moved in on their block. These individuals are from Milford, California, and Seattle—and they fit a different socioeconomic demographic than the residents who have been living there for years. Both Mary and Adam had nothing but positive things to say about their new neighbors, the worst comment being that one of the families is relatively quiet and reserved. “Initially it did seem strange to us that they were moving here, but they are all very nice people. We always make an effort to get to know the neighbors.”

Shirley Woodson, another life-long Detroiter who currently lives on the west side in Aviation Subdivision, had a unique response to the new-comers. When asked on what advice she would give to new Detroit residents she replied, “Come in knowing that you’re not going to invent anything. You know, there’s a great bookstore on Cass called Source Booksellers. Look at those histories and those books [to become familiar with the history of the city].”

Those who have lived their entire life in Detroit have a completely different relationship with this myth. The nature of their permanent residence in the city excludes them from actively taking part in the culture surrounding the myth. The place that one has called home for decades is all of a sudden “welcoming everyone with open arms” and “a place where anything is possible”? Says who? For many Detroiters, it’s a perfect irony.