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*Tent City, U.S.A.* follows the lives of residents of a homeless encampment in Nashville, TN during just before and after the floods that struck much of Tennessee in 2010. The encampment of nearly 100 people was the most well known in Nashville and at the end of its demise was extremely well organized. The Otter Creek Church came to the encampment a few years previous to when the movie was shot. Volunteers and clergy helped organize the “city”. They ordered dumpsters for the cite, gathered resources for shelters, helped feed the residents, and facilitated the residents in organizing a sort of council to help run the affairs of the camp. They even provided a trailer in which the meetings were held and which provided storage. The church was an indispensible help to the camp and really transformed it into a livable community from what was becoming a filthy slum. The church helped the residents find their own agency and self-respect in relation to their situations. With the church’s help, the residents were legitimized and on their way to learning how to build a community from the ground up. One could make a case that they were learning skills beyond what many of us living in “normal society” have. They themselves shaped their world with in the constraints of the underpass. The floods in the end had the final say and were all the more devastating when what they had built on their own was taken into account.

The flaw to their story is the church’s quest to bring them into *normal society*. It seems a missed opportunity they had to help those residents figure out a new narrative. Wendell made the point, “Once you get down this far it’s hard to get back up.” Indeed, and what is it they were getting back up *to*, more of the same slave-wage-subsistence-level-life that drove them to shun society and live off the map? By “helping” them return to “normal” society the church was denying that they possessed any sort of critique to offer upon the world, a critique implicit in Tent City. At the same time it undercut that they had in fact done anything truly worthwhile. They were just to be dropped back into the same cycle. The residents of tent city were in fact *a part* of *our* society, a part that plays a key role for the current power structure’s ability to keep us under control. They play the part of the *consequence.* *You don’t play the game, you end up like them.*