Gentrification: Mediating to a Resolution

As local neighborhoods are seemingly deteriorating with poverty and abandonment, options result to the refurbishment or urban renewal, better known as the term “Gentrification”. In the process, communities undergo physical redevelopment to attract higher income individuals, leading to the birth of a completely altered neighborhood. Proponents of gentrification view this process as a way of eliminating racial and ethnic divisions while improving the diminishing economical aspects of a city. New residents of gentrified communities believe they have the right to move into homes that they were going to pay for. Meanwhile, opponents of gentrification reject the idea of displacing local businesses and lower income residents, resulting to the ethnic unfamiliarity from one block to another. After presenting the opposing viewpoints, a common ground is recognized as the value of one’s rightful possession of land and claiming what is their own. However, who is to say that land rightfully belongs to individuals willing to pay higher property values? Do long-term residents have the right to claim land based on their possession throughout the past generations? Accepting the display of differing positions, one can move to explore a resolution in mediating the issue of gentrification.

When gentrification hits a neighborhood once enriched in ethnic history, every last bit of cultural familiarity is squeezed out in order to make room for thriving young
individuals seeking the newly renovated homes. The outcome is evident when predominantly Puerto Rican residents on Division Street forced to move out into different cities due to a sudden increase of property values (Olivo 1). The process of gentrification not only affects those who cannot afford housing, but also blocks out the unification in culture that once held the community together. Gentrifying neighborhoods then leads to the displacement of the community’s ethnic roots, likewise with Puerto Rican residents of Division Street who were displaced into other areas, forced to adapt to a new lifestyle.

Advocates of gentrification may take a different outlook on the renovation process as a way of eliminating the ethnic and class segregation that disenables cultural unity within Chicago. Most of the new residents with gentrified neighborhoods suggest that they move into places available and beneficial to them although the property values increased significantly. Moving into a community after experiencing gentrification creates a safer and cleaner environment for middle-class families to build a future upon and enabling a possibility for new businesses to encourage the regeneration of the economy.

The underlying issue of gentrification addresses the importance of self possession in land and developing property as a way of building economy. As Americans first settled in this new country and the land rush began to dawn, people were quick to claim what was possessively theirs. The ownership of property not only benefits residents with shelter, but over time, weaves its way into multiple generations as a landmark that represents historical familiarity. John Weaver of the *Journal of World History* explains that European settlers of the Land Rush found America to be rich in economical opportunities and found it prominent to claim property rights although Native Americans
possessed the land prior to the European immigrants arrival(2). The European immigrants dispersed the land according to one’s rank, the market, and the initiative of the settler (Weaver 2). Within this process, the settlers managed to displace the Native Americans although they have previously established their lives into the land. However, at the time the settlers had the power and wealth to fight for the enriched America. Similarly in the present day, although residents create an establishment in a certain community prior to the process of gentrification, they can be easily displaced because the influx of young professionals who can afford renovated housing.

In order to establish any form of success within America, the main objective one must accept is forming financial stability. In relation to different socio-economical class, those who are financially successful will find that they have more power and those who are on the lower ladder of the economic hierarchy will find that they cannot afford much power. With the labeling of upper, middle, and lower class, people experience discrimination within businesses, schools, and in politics, which enables the rich to have the upper hand against the poor. Julio Alves of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* writes about the financially distinguishing differences between hierarchal classes as he experiences with a fellow classmate, Ofra. He states, “I lived in an overpriced rented apartment; Ofra lived in a single-family brick home her parents had recently bought. My mother cleaned houses for a living, and my father was a kitchen worker in a restaurant; Ofra’s mother was a homemaker, and her father was a briefcase-toting executive in New York City” (Alves 56). As Julio lists the economical advantages and disadvantages of Ofra and himself, he realizes the definition of class as he says, “We didn't have a car; Ofra's family did. That's *class*. I was working *class*; Ofra was middle *class*” (Alves 56).
The understatement that wealth equates power in relation to the issue of urban renewal within a community explains that financial instability socio-economically enhances limitations. As the wealthier bourgeoisie families move into gentrified neighborhoods, those who can no longer afford housing within those neighborhoods are disadvantaged by displacement. However, one cannot scapegoat the upper or lower class in the advantages and disadvantages because the society sculptures certain aspects of social class directly with power.

After addressing the fundamental values and beliefs beneath the process of gentrification, one can reach an equitable representation in taking both viewpoints into consideration. Gentrification can take positive and negative tolls in the redevelopment of a cleaner and economically stable community; however, the community should reach a consensus of neutralizing old and new residents. If the arrival of new residents were limited while maintaining affordable housing for previous residents, the community can adopt a newer environment with a shared cultural familiarity between dissimilar backgrounds.

**Audience:** I believe that the main audiences are the city planners of urban communities. If the government funded companies made a safer environment while maintaining affordable housing for residents, then as the new residents move in the long term residents would have no need to be displaced. It would be up to the city planners to limit the intake of new residents and allow the old residents to continue residing in certain communities.
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