

## chapter three

# Invasions

“We’re at war with the yuppies,” warned a Chicago public television producer to an audience assembled to protest a school closing in Humboldt Park. “There is an invasion in this neighborhood like the one in Lincoln Park, *compañeros*.”<sup>1</sup>

The concepts of “invasion” and “war” used in such street-level dialogue – as well as by Ruth Glass, Neil Smith, and other scholars – have meaningful connotations. Invasions are strategized. In the public consciousness they involve hidden rooms with large tables where light-hued men in dark-hued suits make complex plans many years in advance.

This chapter examines the historical events and trends that often precede and enable gentrification. Some of them actually do have the trappings of conspiracy. When low-income and minority group residents “smell a rat,” their well-attuned noses are often correct.<sup>2</sup> Even when starry-eyed do-gooders with the purest intentions warn that such resisters are overreacting, many residents see gentrification as such a rat.

Outside of the context we outline in this chapter, residents’ resistance to gentrification does look like paranoia. “Did you see those rehabbed houses on Humboldt Boulevard and Wabansia? When I saw they were rehabbing, I was like ‘Forget it. We’re out of here.’”<sup>3</sup>

Housing does not go on sale like other goods. If real estate located in the middle of a global city such as Chicago, New York, or London is cheap, there is a story behind it. The backstory behind the advantageous real estate values benefiting the gentrifier is one

reason why gentrification is often criticized, why it is – according to Neil Smith – a “dirty” word.

Ruth Glass, in her original formulation of gentrification, stated, “one by one, many of the working-class quarters of London have been *invaded* by the middle class – upper and lower.” She explained that “shabby, modest mews and cottages – two rooms up and two down – have been *taken over*.”<sup>4</sup> There are two ironies to such language. First, such a Marxist-tinged analysis of gentrification is in many ways a conceptual flipping of the ecological model of urban change. Instead of the poorer and darker *invading* the whiter and more established, as in the old “Chicago School” urban sociology models, what is portrayed here is the reverse.<sup>5</sup> Second, rather than middle-class departure (often assumed by scholars to be driven by malice) opening areas for working-class habitation near the centre, now working-class departure (often assumed by scholars to be driven by helplessness) moves further out as the wealthier inhabit the centre.

Our focus in this chapter is to establish that, when the gentrifier moves in, whether with all of her earthly possessions packed into a car’s trunk and back seat or in a large moving van that overshadows the sidewalk of her new residence, she enters into an accumulation of previous decisions, actions, and policies that frame the current reality in the neighbourhood. As is true of any new resident, when John, Jason, and Marc moved into their neighbourhoods, to some degree it *felt* like “Year Zero.” And it *was* in one important way: their biographies in those neighbourhoods began that day. But in reality it was *not* “Year Zero” by any stretch. This idea, once again, touches on the concept of an extant social structure, one that will shape, constrain, and enable our actions.

But what does this social structure look like? We take a scalar approach here. In the section called “The Macro Level,” we briefly consider what is going on at the global and national levels to facilitate gentrification. In “The City Level” section, we zoom in to overview the ways that cities – which we will also refer to as “the meso level” – have responded to, enabled, or helped to facilitate these higher-level transformations. In “The Neighbourhood Level” section, we introduce a framework – the “de-”s and the “re-”s – that

Figure 2: Scales and Processes

| Qualities & Processes  |   | Levels of Analysis  |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p><i>Demarcation</i><br/> <i>Devaluation</i><br/> <i>Deterioration</i><br/> <i>Deindustrialization</i><br/> <i>Departure</i><br/> <i>Demolition</i><br/> <i>Decoupling</i><br/> <i>Decentralization</i><br/> <i>Destabilization</i><br/> <i>Defunding</i><br/> <i>Delinking</i></p> | <p><i>Revaluation</i><br/> <i>Revitalization</i><br/> <i>Reprioritization</i><br/> <i>Refunding</i><br/> <i>Retainment</i><br/> <i>Restoration</i><br/> <i>Rediscovery</i><br/> <i>Redefinition</i><br/> <i>Reconnection</i><br/> <i>Reinvention</i><br/> <i>Renaming</i></p>   | <p><b>Political Displacement</b><br/> <b>Economic Displacement</b><br/> <b>Socio-Cultural Displacement</b></p>  |  |
| <p><b>Macro-Level</b><br/>           (Global, Regional, National)</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capital mobility</li> <li>- Deindustrialization</li> <li>- Suburbanization</li> <li>- Discriminatory laws and policies</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New economy</li> <li>- F.I.R.E. sectors</li> <li>- Producer services</li> <li>- "Meds &amp; Eds"</li> <li>- Technology firms</li> </ul> <p>International financial flows</p>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Urban service economy firmly established</li> <li>- Growing inequality</li> <li>- Public housing dismantling</li> <li>- Policies to stimulate corporate reinvestment</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Meso-Level</b><br/>           (City and Metropolitan Area)</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Segregation</li> <li>- Redlining</li> <li>- Middle-class and white departure</li> <li>- "Blight" removal and "slum" clearance</li> <li>- Racialized urban renewal projects</li> <li>- Suburban commuter-oriented transportation development</li> <li>- "Warehousing" of devalued land</li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Real estate investment and speculation</li> <li>- Jockeying of neighbourhood-based organizations and interests</li> <li>- Policies to stimulate middle class in-moving</li> </ul>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intense real estate speculation</li> <li>- Large scale real estate developments</li> <li>- Intense pressure for "highest and best" land use</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Micro-Level</b><br/>           (Neighbourhood and Street-Level)</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emerging rent gap</li> <li>- Low-income residents trapped</li> <li>- Declining population</li> <li>- Abandonment of housing stock</li> <li>- Blockbusting</li> <li>- Strategies to "contain" the neighbourhood's problems</li> <li>- Loss of services (e.g., utilities, police, sanitation)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Declining of rent gap</li> <li>- Critical mass of middle-class in-movers</li> <li>- Increasing media hype</li> <li>- Growing middle-class social networks</li> <li>- New consumption spaces</li> </ul> | <p>Increased gentrifier inflow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parents</li> <li>- Urban professionals</li> </ul> <p>Displacement potential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low-income residents</li> <li>- Small businesses</li> <li>- Remaining small manufacturing</li> <li>- Early gentrifiers</li> </ul> |

can help us to examine the neighbourhood-level contexts that the gentrifier enters. We close by examining one important effect that neighbourhoods that have endured the “de-”s and the “re-”s are expected to witness: displacement. Overall, as in the rest of the book, in this chapter we endeavour to link factors that seem big and impersonal, factors that we observe as city leaders strategize in a new global context, and those factors that emerge during heated arguments at the kitchen table or the front stoop.

## The Macro Level

The structural pressures that enable gentrification are part and parcel of the capitalist economy that has enveloped the planet.<sup>6</sup> Most fundamental to understanding gentrification is to recognize that it is taking place in the context of broad, global, economic restructuring. Neil Smith noted that the process of gentrification in the 1970s was becoming increasingly “systematically integrated into wider urban and global processes.”<sup>7</sup> We take the stance that gentrification is not “one basic process” but the “outcome” of “a number of distinct causal processes.”<sup>8</sup> But what were these urban and global processes?

First, capital mobility – a state of the global economy in which firms can choose the most profitable location for their investment – began to profoundly affect the orientation of and decision making within companies. While capital flight was not unusual, as Bluestone and Harrison stated in 1982, what was revolutionary is that it became “a *necessary* strategy, and from a technological perspective, a *feasible* one.”<sup>9</sup> Capital mobility occurred within a context of the broadening, deepening, and speeding-up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of life: economic, political, social, cultural – what we understand to be globalization.<sup>10</sup>

Over the past six decades, the world was becoming more connected economically as tariffs and restrictions on global foreign investment were reduced. Interrelated with this economic interconnectedness was the fact that the planet was also becoming more connected politically: the European Union was formed; the

International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization coordinated the actions of governments; and social movements spilled across national boundaries. Around the world, explained Neil Smith, “deregulation, privatization of housing and urban services, the dismantling of public functions – in short, the remarketing of public functions” – could be observed “even in bastions of social democracy such as Sweden.”<sup>11</sup> Concomitant with this economic and political globalization, the world was becoming more connected culturally, as tastes and orientations around the world – while still quite distinct – bore unprecedented commonalities. Even where distinctions were drawn, they were increasingly consciously drawn in opposition to *other* cultures.

Accompanying globalization and deindustrialization was a worldwide increase in what at first were termed the FIRE (Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate) industries. This rise eventually became associated more broadly with professional white-collar employment that required higher degrees of education such as “meds and eds” (health-related industries and universities) and technology firms.<sup>12</sup> Some of these jobs were termed – by Saskia Sassen, among others – producer services, among which were *advanced* producer services: high-value professional services performed by well-compensated and highly educated workers to meet the needs of transnational corporations.<sup>13</sup> Sociologist Alvin Gouldner identified producer services workers generally as a new class of intellectual workers; political economist Robert Reich would term their jobs symbolic analytic; and sociologist Richard Florida identified them as an increasingly important creative class. Over several decades Florida has gained both attention and notoriety for exploring the amenities and environments that creatives desire.<sup>14</sup>

The processes of financialization (and, more specifically, securitization) have helped to foster a speculative market for real estate and the instruments created around it. In the process of mortgage securitization, a household’s home mortgage is first pooled with other home mortgages and then shares of these pools are sold to investors. Increasingly, after the deregulation of the mortgage market, further speculation on these mortgages was enabled by new financial tools (e.g., credit default swaps) that proliferated around

them, financial tools so complicated that their formulas were designed by physicists and mathematicians.

The super-profits generated by such new financial instruments not only have made other investments (e.g., in manufacturing) less attractive, but also have fostered a demand for more mortgages to be securitized. The drive for more mortgages fostered a need for more home ownership – encouraging banks to court clients (such as a younger Marc in Philadelphia) who previously had not been considered creditworthy. Even subsidized housing policy in the United States was transformed during this time from a model of public housing owned by the state to vouchers that could be used to rent properties – properties for which a private landlord usually holds a mortgage.

## The City Level

When Ruth Glass coined the term “gentrification” just over fifty years ago, she was thinking through the changes that were already sweeping across post-war London. Glass noted that the gentrification that she observed was “an inevitable development, in view of the demographic, economic, and political pressures to which London, and especially Central London, has been subjected.”<sup>15</sup> Modern London had always been a site of immense change, including demographic and occupational change. In fact, British social science developed in part to address those changes, in a manner homologous to the development of urban social science in Chicago or New York.

The issues discussed in the previous section – the combination of economic transformation with its accompanying geographic and physical transformation, a reformation of social class boundaries, and other related forces – helped to create the material conditions for gentrification on the city or meso level. City leaders worked to accommodate and exploit economic opportunities while hedging against disinvestment. Neil Smith points out that, as they did, they increasingly “found themselves competing in the global market, shorn of much of the traditional protection of

national state institutions and regulation.”<sup>16</sup> Much gentrification research focuses on patterns of disinvestment and reinvestment resulting from macro-level changes as well as on cities’ policy decisions within them.<sup>17</sup>

One defining, meso-level manifestation of capital mobility in industrialized nations was (and is) also an *outflow* of capital, especially in the form of deindustrialization, the removal or reduction of manufacturing activity from a region as a means to control expenses such as land, labour, energy, and taxes.<sup>18</sup> Cities jockeyed for the remaining jobs that had been diminished by automation in an effort either to create a new infrastructure for reindustrialization (e.g., the case of GM’s Poletown plant in Detroit) or to create a brand new industrial base (e.g., the case of the rural “developed” world such as the American South and, later, “developing” nations.)

The real or perceived threat of capital mobility intensified place wars in which jurisdictions proffered locational incentives and the promises of a good business climate: the marketing of an economic environment as more conducive to corporate growth, productivity, and profits than other competing environments. In the manufacturing economy, such incentives – aimed at producing more goods and allowing firms to keep more of the profits in the process – were quite predictable: site preparation, low-interest loans, tax benefits, and so on.

But ultimately, the most manufacturing-heavy cities lost tens – or often hundreds – of thousands of manufacturing jobs in the second half of the twentieth century, leaving a landscape of devastation.<sup>19</sup> The homes of unemployed workers sat deteriorating or abandoned. The bars, religious congregations, and meeting halls that had served as the networking sites of the local community suffered and eventually collapsed, socially and sometimes physically.<sup>20</sup> Manufacturing buildings and the warehouses that contracted with them became ruins of steel and stone.

At the same time, as the post-industrial economy took hold, city and business leaders worked to erect what urban sociologist Sharon Zukin called “landscapes of power.”<sup>21</sup> In the early twentieth century large cities, as Richard Lloyd explains, were already “hosting both factories and the office towers devoted to bureaucratized

administration of the expanded corporate economy."<sup>22</sup> In a context of deindustrialization, such cities redoubled their efforts to attract the headquarters of transnational corporations, while smaller cities courted regional or "back office" functions such as bookkeeping and call centres. Headquarter office buildings rose out of the old seaport – literally out of the river– at New York's Battery Park City and out of the carcass of a decimated industrial economy in London's Canary Wharf in the 1980s and 1990s. Cities such as Detroit, Lille, and Bilbao, with few potential sprouts of renewal within the decay of the old, seemed destined to rust. But, of course, not all cities responded to the structural realities in the same way: there was room for the agency of urban leaders.<sup>23</sup>

Glass also recognized that the structural changes apparent in London were accompanied by a change in consumption patterns. The end of post-war austerity contributed to a growth in new forms of daily consumption such as coffee bars and new restaurants.<sup>24</sup> Much has been written about the new businesses that arise to cater to gentrifiers.<sup>25</sup> In the service economy the connotations of "good business climate" included such landscapes of experience: sites of leisure and consumption replete with places where global business visitors could meet for lunch, families who lived elsewhere could enjoy and explore while on vacation, and couples could unwind on a romantic waterfront walk after work. And cities began to compete on these terms in what amounted to amenity wars, as – in time – leaders from Glasgow to Bilbao to Providence raced to build, remake, or expand their offerings of convention space, office space, restaurants, promenades, parks, and museums.

In cities in the developing world, industrialization and the burgeoning of a global service industry landscape can proceed concomitantly. In such contexts the inequality among residents is often more acute, as global marginality and global centrality cut through the same city.<sup>26</sup> And given the use of state power behind many redevelopment projects in the developing world, the remake of the urban landscape can be more abusive – although the increasing violence of such processes in developed countries makes this distinction less acute.



At the same time, government and business leaders conspired to limit the vernacular that “ruined” such experiences – such as being solicited by a homeless panhandler – as “corporate redevelopment and gentrification” proceeded “hand in hand amidst extreme poverty and unemployment.”<sup>27</sup> In such a context the landscape of power is always “tested by [the] resurgence of the urban vernacular,” explained Zukin, “especially by the presence of homeless men and women.”<sup>28</sup> In the words of one New York City Bowery restaurant owner, “the flophouses” – the single-room occupancy hotels (SROs) where homeless people often spend the night to avoid city-run shelters – “became fun houses.”<sup>29</sup> Indeed, American cities have lost hundreds of thousands of such units – some practical, some inhumane – that served as a free-market safety net for the most vulnerable housing consumers.

Amid all of these transformations, though, is the one most central to our purposes: a new middle-class demand for housing in the city. Glass recognized this change in early 1960s London. Suburbanization was not the privileged policy in Britain, nor did it constitute the “British dream.” The longer commutes were a deal-breaker for many British households. Over the next five decades middle-class residents around the world made similar decisions to live in the neighbourhoods of the central city.

## The Neighbourhood Level: The “De-”s and the “Re-”s

When we examine gentrification at the street level, neighbourhoods that undergo gentrification have witnessed some combination of “de-” processes – processes with names that connote an undoing of something, that embody negative and/or unjust processes. These “de-” phases are vital for understanding the conditions that allow for, but do not cause, the later waves of gentrification. Often, these histories play a major role in “why gentrification became significant when it did and where it did.”<sup>30</sup> In gentrification the “de-”s are followed by other processes characterized by “re-” words: redefinition, reinvestment, renaming, refunding, and others. What can be missed, however, are the ways

in which these “re-” processes are dependent upon the preceding “de-” processes.

The various formulations and reformulations of Neil Smith’s idea of the “rent gap” tried to capture this difference between what John calls the “de-”s and the “re-”s.<sup>31</sup> Smith argued that gentrification arose in areas with a gap between their current property value and the property’s potential value in the market. The gentrifier’s obliviousness (or privilege, if you prefer) – wilful or unintentional – of the “de-” processes that set the stage for gentrification helps contribute to gentrification’s negative connotation.

### The “De-” Neighbourhood

One Harlem street vendor told Marc, “These folks been through every change you can imagine, most of it *rough*. And now that it’s good, y’all come around and act like it’s ‘day one’” Translated into our de/re language, the street vendor’s argument is “We lived through all of the ‘de-’ events, working to keep the neighbourhood intact, and here *you* come in during the ‘re-’ events acting like the community just began around you.”

Similarly, Spike Lee lectured at the Pratt Institute, “people have a culture that’s been laid down for generations” before “*you* come in.” D.K. Smith, the Black audience member who asked the question that sparked Lee’s impromptu lecture, remarked that “white folks are not moving back because it’s the ghetto, they’re moving back because there are beautiful blocks full of beautiful brownstones that have been well maintained by people of color” who have “seen it through everything” and “[stuck] in.” In other words, long-time residents had taken what society came to see as economically, politically, and socially marginal spaces and forged neighbourhoods, communities, identities, and home places that were hardly marginal.

Herbert Gans noted the ways that urban residents can create smaller communities within the city.<sup>32</sup> He found one in his study of Boston’s West End. For those residents, Gans suggested back in 1962, the neighbourhood was an “urban village.” Such communities had very strong social capital, connections among people that

contribute to social cohesion. Urban scholar Marshall Berman commented on his life in the Bronx during this same era: “The neighborhood was very dense. Everybody lived out on the street a great deal of the time. In the summer, the kids would play until it got dark. Parents would sit out in folding chairs and watch us, and play cards, and gossip. There were always women leaning out of the windows who would comment on the action, on what you were doing, and asked about the family. And said ‘why are you hanging out with that no good I saw you walking home from school with?’”<sup>33</sup>

The West End in Boston was an “Italian, Russian Jewish, Polish, and Irish” neighbourhood when Gans wrote about it.<sup>34</sup> Berman’s Tremont neighbourhood was predominantly Jewish. Some of the same descriptors used to describe these neighbourhoods could characterize New York’s Loisaida, the Puerto Rican Lower East Side of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. And many of these descriptors could be (and have been) applied to some Black neighbourhoods during the first six decades of the twentieth century when millions of Black Americans moved out of the rural American South into neighbourhoods such as Houston’s Third Ward, Chicago’s Bronzeville, and New York’s Harlem. Such contexts offered “a dynamic situation where people went their own ways but came to support each other in numerous ways.”<sup>35</sup> Some of this forging of community was driven by the desire of newly arrived residents to live in close proximity to one another. But as sociologists St Clair Drake and Horace Cayton argued in *Black Metropolis* and as we outline below, there was more than just consumer preference or some organic process at work here.<sup>36</sup>

This pull of opportunity to American cities in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s is not altogether different from the steady stream of rural to urban migration in contemporary so-called developing countries in the decades that followed. These rural migrants formed the slums, shanty towns, and favelas (i.e., the “informal settlements”) of Mumbai, Lagos, and São Paulo on land that was often considered marginal, peripheral, and unwanted. Like their American counterparts, despite inheriting the worst of conditions, migrants built socially rich communities that mitigated some of

the effects of their poverty. While dubbed informal settlements, such places are far from informal: they are highly organized and complex communities.

These various backstories of gentrification must be a part of the discussion. The primary reason that social science is valuable is because there are remarkable threads of similarity in how this macro-level trend unfolds throughout the world. At the same time, there is also great value in learning from the contours of the differences. Such commonalities and differences can be understood by examining a neighbourhood's history in terms of these "de-" and "re-" processes. We will outline some of the "de-"s in the next section. While we discuss them in a particular order we do not intend to ascribe to them any specific chronology.

### The "De-"s

An early process that facilitates the gap between the actual value of real estate and its potential value is a *demarcation* or boundary making that marks land as marginal. In some cases around the world the housing stock within the demarcated area was *devalued* from the beginning. It is composed of tenuous housing built on marginal land. Such is the case in many of the slums of the developing world. Alternatively, the demarcated area may have otherwise been more attractive but was nonetheless devalued based on a new resident population within the neighbourhood and the flight of other populations. Such neighbourhoods, often working class and well kept, might have been devalued and thus relatively affordable, but were still far from deteriorated.

A more blatant method of demarcation in the United States was racial zoning, quite straightforward in its intent. Yet when racial zoning became illegal in 1917 after *Buchanan v. Warley*, there remained plenty of wiggle room for segregationists to manoeuvre. Racially restrictive covenants used in the United States and elsewhere were legally binding provisions on the deed of a property specifying which groups could and could not own that property.<sup>37</sup> White homeowners adopting restrictive covenants were often "driven by an intense and crude antipathy to living near Blacks

and by widespread agreement that a Black presence provoked falling property values."<sup>38</sup> The covenants were worded in language such as "No person or persons of Asiatic, African or Negro blood, lineage, or extraction shall be permitted to occupy a portion of said property."<sup>39</sup>

Writing a covenant into the deed of a home was a legal act that required an investment of time and money. Therefore, racial covenants would never have been as successful in maintaining boundaries of segregation if not for institutional support. Real estate boards and community organizations created templates of ready-made legal language, and community organizations spread the word through door-to-door campaigns. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) encouraged the practice, suggesting that it provided "the surest protection against undesirable encroachment and inharmonious use."<sup>40</sup>

Covenants were made illegal in the United States in 1948 after *Shelley v. Kraemer*. The *Shelley* decision was, like *Buchanan* before it, also far from an indictment on segregation.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, even when covenants became unenforceable after *Shelley*, they remained a readily available guide for developers, builders, and real estate agents to communicate and maintain accepted demarcations.

Homeowners also took racial segregation into their own hands by using the already extant mechanism of neighbourhood improvement associations, which were simply alliances of homeowners who organized around neighbourhood concerns. In the United States in the mid-twentieth century these organizations were used by white residents to restrict the in-flow of non-white residents through various methods. Walter White, then assistant secretary of the NAACP, attended the meetings of such associations while passing as white. He wrote that the methods under discussion included "securing the discharge of colored persons from positions they held when they attempted to move into 'white' neighborhoods, purchasing mortgages of Negroes buying homes and ejecting them when mortgage notes fell due and were unpaid, and many more of the same caliber."<sup>42</sup> (It is interesting to note for our general purposes that Walter White put the "white" in "'white' neighborhood" in quotes, implying – it would seem – that no racial

group can make a durable claim on a neighbourhood. This is an idea that we revisit in chapter 4.)

When a boundary between marginal space and “prime” space is demarcated and the marginal space is devalued, that space can undergo a *deterioration* in its housing stock. Informal settlements can deteriorate because they are considered illegitimate and are therefore excluded from city services. But in other cases where marginal land had once been coveted prime space its devaluation and deterioration often took some doing – resulting in disinvested ghettos with rather stately housing stock. In the United States several policies and practices facilitated the latter case.

“Redlining” was one policy employed by the federal government. FHA manuals instructed banks to avoid lending within certain less “secure” neighbourhoods, such as those that were racially mixed.<sup>43</sup> The Federal Home Loan Bank Board assigned rankings to guide brokers and lenders in assessing eligibility for mortgages and home loans. “Most important in determining a neighborhood’s classification was the level of racial, ethnic, and economic homogeneity,” explained historian Thomas Sugrue. In fact, he explains, “every Detroit neighborhood with even a tiny African American population was rated ... ‘hazardous’ by federal appraisers, and colored red.”<sup>44</sup> Los Angeles’s Boyle Heights neighbourhood, noted by the report as being populated by Jews, “Mexican laborers, WPA workers, etc.,” was a place where “schools, churches, trading centers, recreational areas and transportation [were] all conveniently available,” but it was nonetheless marked red in 1939 because there was hardly “a single block in the area which does not contain detrimental racial elements.”<sup>45</sup>

This type of mortgage redlining, which was reinforcing the insurance redlining that followed race rioting in the United States, allowed for the reinforcement of disinvestment and devaluing of Black neighbourhoods in the name of sober, objective, unbiased “actuarial” assessments. In the United States formal realtor “codes of ethics,” ironically, were another mechanism for reinforcing the ethno-racial boundaries of neighbourhoods. The *Code of Ethics* of the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB) stated that “a realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a

neighborhood ... members of any race or nationality ... whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood."<sup>46</sup>

In this environment of ethnic and racial fear, blockbusting was a practice in which local real estate agents would buy a house from a white owner for one price and sell it to a non-white (often Black or Latino in the United States) consumer for a higher price. "These weren't individuals doing this secretly, these were *firms*," John's seventy-year-old Black friend George shared as he recalled the names of the blockbusters of his youth in Englewood, Chicago. The practice was premised on the idea that the real estate agent could get the white owners to sell for a low price in the fear that a non-white neighbourhood would soon envelop them.

The crafty real estate agent could then coerce non-white homebuyers to pay at a premium, pointing to the fact that few people wanted to sell to non-white households. Blockbusting is a form of house "flipping" in which the gap between the buying price and the selling price – the quintessential example of a "rent gap" created by injustice – was determined by fear. It enables "shady real estate agents" to capitalize on the "mental connections" residents make between economic deterioration (e.g., property value decline) and social deterioration (e.g., crime, sexual threat).<sup>47</sup>

In a twenty-first century echo of this same process, sociologist Anasua Chatterjee discusses the "clever manipulation of [Hindu fear of Muslims] by the local real estate agents" in contemporary Kolkata, India. Her Muslim interviewee explains that a local Hindu will "sell a flat worth six lakh for twenty" to a blockbuster who "rope[s] in rich Muslims, who like the comfort of living among their community members, to buy property in the area," as the blockbuster makes "huge profits in the bargain."<sup>48</sup> While blockbusting involves raising the price of a particular property, it further legitimates the neighbourhood's devalued status while also increasing its footprint.

The broader orientation underpinning codes of ethics, redlining, and blockbusting, as planner Marisa Novara expressed to John, also conditions "long-time residents to see residents of a different background as a threat of a takeover, rather than, say, a random

new neighbour of a different race or the start of the creation of a stable, more diverse neighbourhood." Of course, how this plays out depends on context. After moving into a mostly Black neighbourhood north of a Latino neighbourhood in Chicago, the Sicilian Novara learned that several of her neighbours were suspicious because they assumed she was Latina. When they learned she was "just white" they relaxed: "Latina signalled a possible incursion from the south" but in the absence of broader gentrification, "white was just random." As in several examples within our accounts, the interpretation of who she was depended on context.

Blockbusting notwithstanding, the rather fixed demarcated boundaries of a neighbourhood meant that during times of heavy population inflows either housing development needed to be vertical or existing housing had to be subdivided in order to multiply the residences within the same area. Ruth Glass discussed this topic in her initial formulation of gentrification. She noted that in London "larger Victorian houses" were "*downgraded* ... used as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple occupation."<sup>49</sup> She highlights here that there had been a conversion of larger Victorian single-family homes into multi-unit buildings to keep landlord profits stable as a lower-income population moved in. When conversion increases, units of housing – many illegal – increase, despite there being no new housing built. What had once been a single-family home during a neighbourhood's "prime" era may be converted to six apartments, a rooming house, or a single-room occupancy hotel. John's Fort Greene brownstone rooming house was one example of such a conversion.

But ultimately, as the NAACP's Walter White quipped in 1919, "one cannot put ten gallons of water in five-gallon pail."<sup>50</sup> In other words, an intense use of the housing stock and unintended levels of residential density were going to cause both physical strain on buildings and social strain on communities. Densely populated and under-serviced ghettos were strained to the breaking point in a way that suggests parallels to some of the current informal settlements of the developing world. But if extreme density is a negative, so too would the extreme decrease in density and widespread suburbanization that followed fair housing laws



(e.g., the Fair Housing Act of 1968) also prove debilitating for communities. As Detroit natives know, it is equally troublesome to have five gallons of water in a ten-gallon pail.

Industrialization and *deindustrialization* – respectively, the addition or the reduction or removal of manufacturing activities and accompanying services from an area – are an important part of the gentrification story. The reality is that, in the mid-twentieth century, when many established industrial cities witnessed an unprecedented in-flow of poor residents looking for factory jobs, those factory jobs began to decline because of the increasing capital mobility discussed above. Many of the more profitable sites were in the industrializing countries, such as India, Mexico, and China. In these nations, rural migrants streamed into industrializing cities as globalization and trade agreements both allowed manufacturing to prosper in urban regions and decimated small rural farms.

While the rural poor built informal settlements in the marginal areas of developing world cities to be near work, the middle class fled deindustrializing communities in North America and Western Europe. This middle-class *departure* exacted a huge cost from former industrial communities. Whether housing stock became devalued and deteriorated because of government policy, government neglect, shifts in employment opportunities, prejudice and discrimination, or all of the above, the situation was viewed as dire enough to warrant radical, government-led renewal projects that involved wholesale *demolition* in order to start fresh with a “clean slate.”

Urban renewal is the term used to describe the efforts of urban leaders in the United States in the 1950s through the 1970s, using national funding streams (e.g., the Housing Act of 1949) for “slum clearance” and the creation of amenities that they saw as being important for the post-industrial city. The federal government paid two-thirds (actually, much more in practice) of a local government’s costs of tearing down blighted areas. “Blight,” generally defined, is something that is considered to mar prosperity. In practice, local governments were given tremendous latitude to determine a self-serving definition of blight. This meant that, if leaders could find “the blight that’s right,” land attractive enough to be worthy of development but unattractive enough for a blight label

to stick, they could use the Housing Act to spark a real estate boom. (The term blight and the use of it as a designation remains highly contested today.)

This period marked one important milestone of *decoupling*, a term John uses to describe the demolition of old housing that is not coordinated with the concomitant building of new housing – leaving significant numbers of displaced residents. Despite all of its loopholes, the fact that the Housing Act was initially about bettering the condition of *housing* stock sometimes got lost in the shuffle. Urban renewal (as it existed) fizzled out in the 1970s, due to a cocktail of mobilizations that related to civil rights, aesthetics, and – most generally – a discomfort over the dispensing of democratic process.

Deindustrialization and the departure of the middle class helped to foster a *delinking* of residence and work. Lower-skilled workers were “trapped” in the city and work had “disappeared.”<sup>51</sup> Meanwhile, highly skilled office workers increasingly lived in larger homes away from their downtown offices. In the United States the various levels of government fostered the “pulling” of remaining better-off residents out of deteriorated neighbourhoods by building infrastructure (e.g., highways or metropolitan public transportation) and offering incentives (e.g., tax credits, loans) that encouraged the *decentralization* of development, which in turn fostered the departure of residents from the central city.

Highway building was a mechanism used by federal and state officials to make “greenfield” sites outside the city accessible and thus hastened the departure of both residents and capital investment from the city. Within the city it was most efficient to build highways in lower-income and ethnic minority neighbourhoods, which were less likely to develop an organized resistance and offered cheap acquisition costs – at least partially the result of decades of artificially depressed real estate values. As one adviser of Robert Moses stated, “efficiency sometimes implies heartlessness when you are on the other end of it.”<sup>52</sup>

Often, however, the motives were explicitly heartless. In the United States Miles Lord, the attorney general of the state of Minnesota, recalled of Minneapolis-St Paul: “We went through the Black section ... and we took out the home of every Black man in

that city. And woman and child. In both those cities practically. It ain't there any more, is it?"<sup>53</sup> Either way, highway building was a "handy device for razing slums," since it was funded almost completely by non-municipal funds.<sup>54</sup>

During this era slum clearance, public housing, highway building, and suburbanization were used in concert to create a new metropolitan fabric. Public housing, originally conceived as a type of class-integrated emergency housing, eventually became a mechanism "to collect the ghetto residents left homeless by the urban renewal bulldozers." It was built in "the poorest and least socially organized sections of the city and the metropolitan area."<sup>55</sup>

The role of the US government and the larger society in urban segregation has been widely recognized, even by the US government itself. In 1968 the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders found that "white society" is "deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."<sup>56</sup> In 1972 a Department of Housing and Urban Development official acknowledged that urban renewal policies fostered injustice. "It has been said," he began, "that 'urban renewal' is nothing more than 'Negro removal.'" Then, after listing other charges, he concluded that "it is time to ... admit that there is some validity to these allegations."<sup>57</sup>

Policies favouring whites moved large numbers of white-ethnic city residents into suburban housing. The remaining white-ethnic communities in cities often viewed themselves as being under siege from both non-whites and elite policy makers. All of these developments were part of the logic of community for "me" not for "we," a crucible that forged many current urban contexts. Despite some movements countering this trend, cross-class and cross-racial communities were treated as improbable and unappealing. Efforts to integrate along class or racial lines or to expand the types of housing and jobs in suburbs were greeted with protests of "not in my back yard."

During the period of suburbanization, burgeoning local suburban governments employed various strategies of exclusion. Some were explicit, but others merely imposed extra costs (e.g., aesthetic or architectural standards) or requirements (e.g., lot size, restriction

of multi-unit dwellings) intended to exclude undesired low-income populations. Because of the confluence of race and class, geographically separated white enclaves for the middle class could achieve many of their race-based goals simply by maintaining the costs of real estate to “keep out the riffraff.” Such policies are sometimes termed “exclusionary zoning.”

The policies of the twentieth century left low-income neighbourhoods *destabilized*. Disinvested neighbourhoods lost the cohesion of relationships that strengthens a community’s fabric. In many cases, governments *defunded* communities in need. Neighbourhoods became *delinked* from their context, isolated from the rest of the city. Such neighbourhoods fell off most residents’ mental map of the city.<sup>58</sup> People had little reason to visit these neighbourhoods if they did not live there; most sought to avoid them altogether. Local governments refocused their efforts on the containment of their ills, most prominently with disparate policing strategies that only reinforced their demarcated and delinked status. The turn of the twenty-first century saw a new wave of *decoupling*: again, the destruction of existing housing without the simultaneous construction of replacement housing. As the United States instituted the Hope VI housing plan, the federal government – following a Chicago pilot program – removed the “1:1” rule, which stated that for each unit of public housing demolished, one must be built. While proponents of removing the 1:1 rule noted that this plan freed local authorities to demolish dangerous housing without the attached cost of having to build new housing, it also marked another circumstance in which residents could lose their home without any clear strategy to minimize the stress of relocation.

Similar decoupling occurred in the UK, where leaders assured that “residents [would] be able to return and live in those redeveloped areas,” but that in practice, “replacement homes [were] delayed or not built at all.”<sup>59</sup> The perverse irony of this “decanting” in the name of progress is that much of the public housing being decanted is now embedded within the very type of middle-class (read: gentrified) context that the new generation of housing policy makers views as ideal for the prospects of low-income residents.

## The “Re-”s

As we were finishing this book, Monique sent John a recent commercial real estate advertisement for Bedford-Stuyvesant. The magazine format brochure announced on the cover that Bed-Stuy was being “Redefined,” on page two that it was being “Reimagined,” and on page three that it was being “Re-Visioned.” It featured pictures of Bed-Stuy exterior architecture, some of which had been Photoshopped to assist the imagination. It also showed images of retail spaces filled with the mostly white patrons that realtors assured commercial real estate consumers they could expect in the community. “Somewhere between the tough streets immortalized in the hip-hop genre and the chatter of gentrification and hipster invasion, BedStuy [*sic*] offers an interesting mix of transition and history in one of Brooklyn’s most fascinating neighborhoods.”<sup>60</sup> Bed-Stuy, the advertisement suggests, is positioned within the gentrification sweet spot – harkening back to the urban renewal era idea of “the blight that’s right.”

On the day in 1998 when a relative of John’s rooming-house landlord told him that the landlord of a nearby brownstone would be knocking down the walls of the subdivided floors so that each level would house one apartment, he was confused. “Why would the landlord do that?” he wondered. He got a clue, however, when he saw the exquisitely dressed, South Asian female exchange student from London moving in. As mentioned in the opening of chapter 2, John lacked the tools to interpret what was occurring.

One thing that was occurring is that the “downgrading” of real estate, in Ruth Glass’s terms, during the “de-” eras had set the stage for “upgrading” so that homes were undergoing deconversion. The subdivided homes were “upgraded once again,” as higher-income renters were willing to pay more for one large unit than the sum of the rents that could be garnered from individual small units.<sup>61</sup> This recalculation unfolded in rooming houses and single-room occupancy hotels all over the nation. In fact, marginal land was becoming prime in many nations around the world. “It’s like they’ve looked at buildings like Balfron,” one displaced East End resident in London said in 2013, noting the size and architectural

quality of her unit, “and thought, well, why should poor people have them? They did consider them crap once, and as soon as they consider them not crap, they say, well, we don’t want the poor to have them ... They think the land’s too good, it’s too prime for normal people.”<sup>62</sup>

In Istanbul a municipal mayor stated of a working-class district in the city: “Okmeydani will be the Champs-Élysées.” Local leader Zafar Ciger, however, echoes a common refrain: “After transformation, where will I live?” “They are not telling us. They are not following protocol. Nothing is clear about what’s going to happen.”<sup>63</sup> In Istanbul’s transformation we see echoes of “the blight that’s right”: Turkey’s highest court found that in another Istanbul district the condemnation of a large area was based upon “visual inspections, not scientific” of just fourteen of its buildings.<sup>64</sup>

In São Paulo reinvestment has reached such a frenzied pace that previously marginal space packed with favelas, where poor residents are forging a life, are being revalued as prime. Usually this occurs in favelas near existing prime areas, which makes it a lower-risk project for a developer with economic and political capital to move the perceived boundary line – again, “the blight that’s right.” The São Miguel favela, for instance, was situated next to the gentrifying Ermelino Matarazzo neighbourhood. In 2012 the favela was being disproportionately destroyed by arsonists. Architecture and urbanism scholar Raquel Rolnik suggested that it is “very strange” that these favelas, despite being generally more sturdy than those in the past, were so disproportionately “catching on fire now, amid one of the biggest booms in the São Paulo real estate market.”<sup>65</sup> Such a suggestion is far from outlandish: the same trend of suspicious arson on undervalued central land occurred in Chicago’s West Town, New York’s Lower East Side, and Boston’s Dudley Street in earlier eras.

In the New York neighbourhoods where John, Jason, and Marc lived, reinvestment had partly followed a path cut by deindustrialization. The bulk of sites gentrified out of an industrial shell: Soho, the Lower East Side, and Chelsea in Manhattan; Williamsburg, Red Hook, and DUMBO in Brooklyn; and Long Island City in Queens. In such places gentrification happened in former industrial

neighbourhoods on the expanding edges of the central city or in a disinvested core.<sup>66</sup>

But usually deindustrialization is only one part of the story. It is the other “de”s that, as John and Monique look for homes, John calls the “blood in the soil.” These more pernicious “de-” terms have greater moral connotations: demarcation, devaluation, deterioration, demolition, the decoupling of demolition from replacement, the decentralization of development, the departure of middle-class residents, and the defunding of urban communities by the government. Policies and practices such as codes of ethics, redlining, blockbusting, conversion, and other historical specificities produced multiple markets for real estate, meaning that similar San Diego American Craftsman houses, Philadelphia row homes, New York brownstones, or Chicago bungalows in similar condition and near similar amenities but on different sides of town could have vastly different prices. There are many “re-”s – revaluation of properties, revitalization of economic activity, reprioritization of the area by elected officials, refunding of city services, retainment of local heritage, restoration of old properties, rediscovery by people with purchasing power, redefinition of neighbourhood meanings, reconnection to the city’s fabric, and reinvention and renaming by real estate interests – and each can have a very different connotation. Yet within the grooves made by these “de-”s of injustice, any “re-” can have adverse effects on more vulnerable incumbent residents, a fact well illustrated by a Mary Pattillo anecdote set in Chicago.

In 2004 a Chicago city planner reported to an audience of largely Black, middle-class leaders in Chicago’s lakefront North Kenwood-Oakland neighbourhood that “land prices have shot through the roof in this area.” One resident responded, “How much is [vacant] land in Lakeview?” Lakeview is a lakefront neighbourhood, like North Kenwood-Oakland, and is the same distance from the Loop as North Kenwood-Oakland. But it is in a mostly white section of the North Side as opposed to a mostly Black section of the South Side. “The point was made,” says Pattillo. Lakeview, she notes, “was *really* the proverbial roof, and [North Kenwood-Oakland]’s land prices, roughly one-third to one-tenth of those in Lakeview,

were nowhere near shooting through it.”<sup>67</sup> This “rent gap” was rooted in race.

In this case rising real estate values, as the Black homeowners were arguing, would mean justice – right? Or would they be an *injustice*, due to the pressures that they would place on a neighbourhood of low-income residents who – albeit largely because of the injustices of past “de-”s – currently had access to affordable housing? This conundrum highlights in clear terms the contradictions of gentrification founded upon the perversities of injustice.

### **Displacement**

When John and Monique sold their family’s home in San Diego’s Golden Hill in 2012, John felt as if he was observing a social and economic structure that constrained his options. He was complicit in it. He saw the types of people looking to purchase his home and he could tell their orientation to the neighbourhood was different from his perception of it. What were John and Monique’s options in this situation? Keeping the home and renting it below market value? Selling it for one-third less than they paid? Such options were laughable to Monique. Their property’s appreciation represented their family’s wealth and they chose the common route for sellers facing such options: sell for a profit.

Spike Lee also took this route in his beloved Fort Greene. He purchased his most recent residence there in 1990, selling it in 1999 for 50 per cent more than he paid.<sup>68</sup> As Fort Greene changed, Lee’s comments seemed to suggest that current residents should avoid selling. But his theory runs into his practice as he thinks about people like John’s retired in-laws, whose block has increased in value some 1000 per cent over the last twenty years. “They’re selling their houses and I don’t blame them,” said Lee. “I can’t say to them, ‘you can’t sell your house.’ They’re like, ‘[Forget] you, Spike.’”<sup>69</sup>

As one urban thinker, Sidney Lowe, argues, “No one told white city residents they should stay in place during the period of white flight,” as we labelled departure above.<sup>70</sup> In many cases, as outlined in the Lakeview versus North Kenwood-Oakland anecdote, the value that long-time homeowners are gaining is the very value



that housing discrimination had suppressed. Indeed, if a long-time homeowner has unprecedented access to wealth through equity, one must admit it is at least somewhat ironic that this resident cashing in on the “injustice gap” in her property value would be viewed as a compromised outcome. It is usually considered an injustice when a family does *not* get the full value of an asset.

This was the original point of Spike Lee’s questioner at the Pratt Institute, Black Brooklyn native and tech entrepreneur D.K. Smith. “My one sole point, though, is wealth creation in the African-American community,” he explained, “Now we have an opportunity for wealth creation that we’ve been locked out of. So now while it may not help the renters ... what about that *one* aspect of wealth creation for people that have paid those taxes, that have fought to keep the crime down on their blocks, and all the other things they did to maintain [their community].”

Of course, after Spike Lee’s and John’s home sales, Fort Greene and Golden Hill, respectively, became less affordable. To be plain, John, for one, would no longer be able to afford his San Diego home if he tried to repurchase it now. In fact, the couple he had sold it to heavily invested in it and sold it in 2015 for a 50 per cent markup from their purchase price in 2012. This process is where the potential for economic displacement comes in. “*My crucial concern*,” explains Tom Slater, “[is that] gentrification robs a city of its affordable housing stock, and banishes working-class households to peripheral locations (where they have to migrate in search of cheaper housing).”<sup>71</sup> This is our concern as well; we turn, then, to the idea of displacement.

### *Types of Displacement: Political-, Economic-, and Sociocultural-Rooted*

We think of displacement in terms of its political, economic, and sociocultural dimensions. We overview these three types here. As we do, we acknowledge that political, economic, social, and cultural life cannot – of course – be delinked in practice. In fact, creating such categories helps to “reproduce the division between issues,” a division that does not exist at the street level.<sup>72</sup> Our

categories, then, are completely artificial. But they are useful to us here to the degree that they can help us to think systematically about displacement. We begin with political-rooted displacement.

The dynamic of local *political* leaders favouring development for higher-income households is nothing new, nor is it limited to particular societies. Displacement of low-income people is not an issue that keeps most real estate entrepreneurs and government leaders awake at night unless it means that they will be put out of business or voted out of office – this is the slant of a capitalist housing system. As John Logan and Harvey Molotch argued in articulating their “growth machine” idea, there is always an incentive for local government leaders to foster development projects by real estate interests.<sup>73</sup> Construction and other unions tend to support such projects for their job creation aspects even if the jobs are only short term. Such development also has the potential to raise tax revenue and create trophies for a leader’s legacy.

If leaders champion residential projects – houses, apartments, condominiums – it is usually in their best interest to champion projects for the middle and upper classes. For one, in many contexts middle-class voters have more political sway. Even more important, though, projects for higher-income people are more profitable; a real estate developer needs little incentive to develop such a property. Finally, middle-class homes bring in more tax revenue than affordable housing.

Political-rooted displacement absolutely exists in the era of gentrification because, indeed, it has always existed. But rather than calling political-rooted displacement of the poor for wealthier in-movers *one form* of displacement that occurs within contemporary gentrification, some thinkers have linked it and gentrification as if they are synonyms. For instance, in citing “earlier examples of gentrification,” Neil Smith points to the “wholesale displacement [that] took place” in the late seventeenth century when the “Edict of Nantes, signed by Henry IV [of France] in 1598 ... was revoked.”<sup>74</sup>

This event more than four centuries ago is certainly an example of political-rooted displacement. And when New York planner Robert Moses bulldozed neighbourhoods to “clear the slums” or

the estates of the rich to build Jones Beach, that was political-rooted urban displacement. The French planner Le Corbusier's (1971) rationalization of urban planning? Political-rooted displacement. Half-crazed growth schemes such as sports stadiums often involve political-rooted displacement. What we just discussed is happening in Istanbul? Yes. It is political-rooted displacement when whole communities are moved out due to fiat, which we also witnessed during the erecting of the World Trade Center towers from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. In the late 1980s, when residences were cleared for the office towers of international corporations in central Tokyo, that was political-rooted displacement. But while similar actions can be taken in the name of promoting gentrification, such actions are not the *same* as gentrification.

There is also *economic* change related to gentrification that precipitates displacement. On the supply side, rental properties may be converted for sale, leaving fewer potential units for any renters – much less affordable ones. Moreover, an increasing demand for a limited housing stock will drive up prices for both renters and purchasers. Existing renters may be forced out because of landlord “winkling”: intimidation, negligence, or abuse driven by a desire to turn over units for more profitable use. Existing homeowners may be unable to afford the rising property taxes. Residents who were once able to “make ends meet” in the neighbourhood may leave: they must search for other housing, due to an increase in their housing costs.

However, we must note that economic-rooted displacement related to housing appreciation is not unique to any income group. Obviously, its impact is *greater* the less income a household has. A potential tenant of any income level can always displace another tenant at a lower income level. Of course, urban and suburban neighbourhoods often transform from middle class to elite or from elite to very elite.

For instance, columnist Errol Lewis complained that his friends in Manhattan “have been gnashing their teeth for years, complaining about how rents have risen to insane levels, thanks in part to owners” like (coming full circle) Spike Lee – who paid \$16 million for his East 63rd Street home and put it on the market for \$32 million

– “flipping high-end properties.”<sup>75</sup> On the other end of the income spectrum, housing researchers Roland Atkinson and Maryann Wulff suggest that lower socio-economic groups “may have similar abilities to displace those with lower resources than themselves and, in this sense, there is a degree of relativity to the process of displacement.”<sup>76</sup> Local developers of affordable housing have noted to John how housing voucher recipients, for instance, may “displace” slumlord tenants when the landlord renovates to be up to voucher standards, putting the unit out of reach for those who will not receive such vouchers. In this sense, affordable housing providers can foster a lucrative transition period between slumlord housing and what may be the beginnings of gentrification. (In the United States, affordable housing developers also use tools such as the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, which offers them incentives in exchange for requiring affordability for a specified period.)

An experience of displacement can also be related to *sociocultural* change. While, to be sure, some homeowners are *pulled* out by the prospect of reaping huge rises in property values or huge returns in rents (by converting their homes to apartments), we must also allow that even some of these owners might have stayed – even with the economic pressure just discussed – had they not also been *pushed* out by the new sociocultural unfamiliarity of their neighbourhood. Similarly, even renters who might be tempted to remain in place due to the improving amenities, services, and safety may decide to leave as their block feels increasingly unfamiliar. Of course, as we outlined in our disclaimer above, while sociocultural change can seem to operate in isolation, as in our tidy examples, it is always experienced in combination with economic and political factors.

Critical urban-planning scholar Peter Marcuse terms these more indirect, sociocultural considerations *displacement pressure*. In practice, as Marcuse explains, this occurs when a household observes the fabric of their neighbourhood markedly transforming. Their friends are no longer in proximity, the familiar retail establishments they frequent – where they not only conduct business but also have both casual and deep social ties to the establishment

owners – are not there anymore, the fabric of the schools and parks are changing, and social service providers are no longer nearby.<sup>77</sup> Even changes that city leaders may objectively consider to be “improvements” can trample social dynamics of which they are unaware. One Houston resident mentioned to John how the semi-rural-looking blacktop-gravel-grass transition of her neighbourhood park had allowed residents to back in their cars so that they might barbeque and play music from their trunks, a much enjoyed tradition. Some believed that the park renovation involving curbs and other barriers intentionally precluded such activities.

In Jason’s years in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, there was competition over the cultural landscape by Hasidic Jews, Dominicans, and white hipsters. Nuevo Latino restaurants and diners serving fine wine coexisted with older Puerto Rican and Dominican men playing dominoes outside bodegas.<sup>78</sup> As such coexistence deteriorates, though, long-time homeowners may be motivated to cash in by selling their properties and moving out of the city or to another region. Their home just does not feel like home anymore.

In Williamsburg, a bodega frequented by Latinos became the restaurant Pies ‘n’ Thighs. “You wake up one morning and you see the corner bodega is now replaced by a fancy cafe or restaurant” and “all of a sudden you’ve lost your friends,” noted the head of a Latino-focused non-profit. “There’s not as much Latinos around here anymore,” said another resident. “All the kids used to play baseball in the streets. Now we don’t see that anymore.”<sup>79</sup> “When you see white mothers pushing their babies in strollers – three o’clock in the morning on 125th Street,” Spike Lee quipped about Harlem, “that must tell you something.” The fact that rollerbladers, cyclists, gays and lesbians, and white babies’ safety are ominous signs is an artefact of this historical moment. If artists, as feminist art historian Rosalyn Deutsche suggests, are the “shock troops” of gentrification intended to weaken and overwhelm inhabitants, white infants in strollers are perceived as the sustained occupiers, the tank patrols.<sup>80</sup>

We know that there is truth in this sentiment. But it is clear how we found ourselves in this peculiar place where these social

categories are a sign of loss. Again, the contradictions of gentrification are founded upon the perversities of injustice. The threat of the presence of white babies in strollers is rooted, of course, in the same perversity of the decades of demarcation that precipitated their absence.

Such indicators serve as signals of neighbourhood change to potential residents and investors; via social networks and new uses of space, other groups that had not in recent times been interested in the neighbourhood take note.<sup>81</sup> Each of us – and our families – has served as such a signal. Less flexible potential residents, the typical account goes, see the new residents and assume that the neighbourhood must be decreasing in “grit” and may even empirically observe some new threshold of convenience in the area – “less litter, more glitter,” as stated by one club-goer.<sup>82</sup>

Properties in a gentrified neighbourhood, Elijah Anderson suggests, have “attained a value that depends not simply on the racial make-up of the present residents, but on the racial and class attributes of *potential* residents, and thus on the future of the area.”<sup>83</sup> Eventually, as gentrification increases in intensity, such sociocultural change also *signals* to real estate capitalists that this land may be generating enough interest to warrant investment and even large-scale development of condominiums, chain businesses such as Starbucks, office condominiums, and art supply stores. Under these conditions, even some of the earlier gentrifiers can no longer afford the neighbourhood.

### *The Theoretical Link between Gentrification and Displacement*

The genesis of the theoretical link between gentrification and displacement goes back to the genesis of the term itself, when Ruth Glass argued that “most of the original working-class occupiers” in Central London would be displaced.<sup>84</sup> Neil Smith premised his idea of the rent gap on future, currently untapped, *potential* value. Yet *any* parcel in a capitalist land market is conceivably undervalued when compared with some potential higher-value future. Therefore, using the rent gap to predict where people will be displaced imposes a geographical determinism on cities and neighbourhoods. As

Damaris Rose explained, in such a formulation gentrification – and we would add, by association, *displacement* – “appears as the *only possible end state* for such neighbourhoods,” due to the “immutable” and “inexorable” laws at work in the local built environment.<sup>85</sup>

The result is a logic that will tie one’s brain in knots. If there is displacement, then the cause *must* be gentrification. And, conversely, it is not gentrification if there is no displacement. Gentrification is treated as a sufficient cause, and the outcome is middle-class people coming in, prices rising, and long-time residents being displaced.

The way to stop gentrification from being gentrification, then, is to stop the middle class from moving in, to somehow keep the neighbourhood a “below-middle-class” neighbourhood. There is no alternative. This tension is playing out in discussions and debates around the globe: where does protecting a neighbourhood intersect with ensuring segregation? Journalist Scott Beyer wrote that Miami’s neighbourhood geography had successfully “contained the influx of the wealthy to certain areas and helped to preserve others,” while in a separate account urban theorist Richard Florida looked at the same city at the same time and observed a “class divide ... overlaid by a long-standing racial divide.”<sup>86</sup>

Similarly, while some celebrate that neighbourhoods like Bronzeville have “resisted” gentrification (as measured in recent projects by urban planning scholar Janet Smith and urban sociologist Robert Sampson), resident and Chicago native Natalie Moore does not interpret it this way. She explained that some neighbourhood boosters in her cohort of Black, middle-class in-movers “defected or I should say moved – they gave up.” “It’s hard to stay somewhere where you have absolutely no value in your housing,” she added as she described the neighbourhood’s stalled gentrification. Explaining the lack of momentum in the neighbourhood, Moore noted the fact that the community has a new Walmart grocery store, but that it is not the type of business she and her cohort were looking for. “Walmart goes to poor neighbourhoods,” she said, pointing out that, despite a strong Black middle class, the area is still being redlined by retail. “So gentrification isn’t the word today. I think several years ago it was. But today it’s ‘How can we get

businesses?’ How can we be on the upswing?’ What can we do?’ That’s the conversation right now.”<sup>87</sup> Of course, it is likely that if there *were* businesses and the neighbourhood *was* on the upswing, the conversation *would* be about gentrification.

To parallel economist Joan Violet Robinson, within capitalism the only thing worse than investment is disinvestment. Robert Sampson’s massive study on Chicago showed that between 1960 and 2000 neighbourhood upheaval in Chicago was hardly the norm.<sup>88</sup> Janet Smith’s Chicago research from 1960 to 2010 revealed that “recent years illustrate growing polarization in Chicago, where upper class residents are increasingly concentrated in a handful of neighborhoods while a growing number of neighborhoods are becoming poorer” and “neighborhood decline has been more prevalent than upgrading.”<sup>89</sup>

## The Displacement Thesis versus the Old School Political Economy Thesis

Let us continue our conversation about displacement by reminding the reader of what we hope is now obvious: “clearly what makes the gentrification debate so difficult and so interesting is the interaction between our own political standpoint and the phenomenon.”<sup>90</sup> Because gentrification is so qualitatively real at the neighbourhood and street levels, people’s tendency is to employ it as an *explanation* for urban changes that are actually linked to meso- and macro-level urban changes. In so doing we have not only divorced our biography from our ideas of the process, but we have let gentrification become the explanatory factor in understanding urban change rather than interpreting gentrification within broader changes.

In this section we refer to what Jason has termed the *displacement thesis*. In its simplest formulation the displacement thesis argues that displacement is an inherent and definitional component of gentrification. It assumes, first, that gentrification must be accompanied by displacement. But, second, it also often implies that, when displacement of lower-income residents occurs, it is the



result of gentrification. In our view the danger of the displacement thesis is that it displaces our focus from a progressive urban agenda, such as cross-class alliances.<sup>91</sup> In the displacement thesis, the best solution is for the gentrifier to stop the practice of gentrifying. To go “home” where they “belong.”

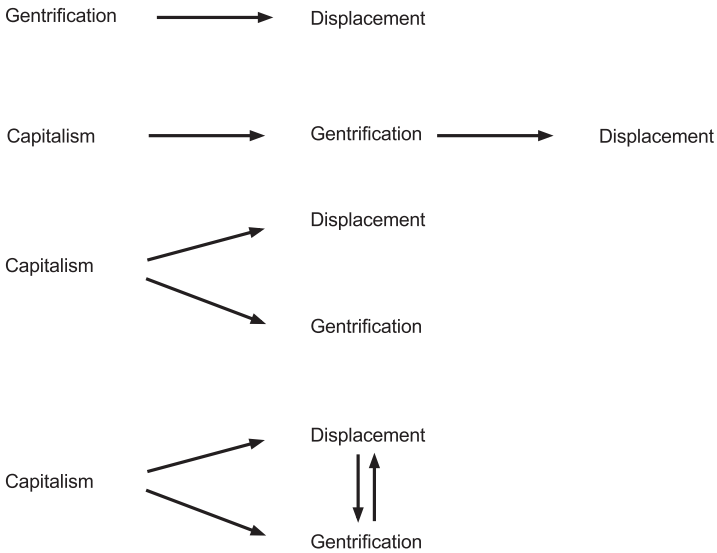
In such a view, “managing” gentrification is as naïve as “managing” weeds in a garden. “We don’t want to manage gentrification,” the sentiment says, “we want to eradicate it.” In one representative example, Loretta Lees et al. quipped, “one could argue that apartheid in South Africa had ‘positive benefits’ in terms of economic growth – but did the African National Congress wish to manage that process?”<sup>92</sup>

We juxtapose such a view against what Jason has termed the *old-school political economy thesis*. By this we mean, first, that there are political, economic, and social causes for gentrification *and* displacement. Adhering to this view, we see that gentrification can certainly correlate with displacement, but three acknowledgments must be made. First, and most basically, gentrification and displacement are not synonyms. Second, gentrification must not be the assumed cause of any observed displacement. Third, not all low-income residential movement is displacement.

The first model in figure 3 captures the bluntness of the way some deploy the displacement thesis in practice: it equates gentrification with displacement and misses broader causal flows. The second model presents a more reasonable causality in which capitalism’s current global restructuring is causing gentrification and gentrification is causing displacement. Two more plausible flows are considered. In the third model, capitalism’s current global restructuring is causing both gentrification and displacement and the latter two are independent of one another.

In the fourth model, which we find most useful, capitalism causes both gentrification and displacement and these two phenomena have interactive effects. In such a view there is an acknowledgment that capitalism rewards many growth strategies. *One* relevant strategy is the exploitation of the “rent gap” by individuals, real estate developers, and local governments, which causes gentrification and, in some cases, displacement. But this is

Figure 3: Displacement and Causality



only one strategy. All growth strategy is not now subsumed under gentrification. And not all displacement is due to gentrification.

Our concern is that, because researchers are suggesting that they have found examples of “gentrification” in cities, suburbs, and small towns, the search for gentrification-related displacement has become a cat-and-mouse empirical game where people are forever being displaced and gentrification comes to explain all movement. Let us consider three types of residential moves that displacement researchers can and often do interpret as displacement.

First, let us think about movement that is intra-city and inter-neighbourhood. Spike Lee overviewed the escalation of real estate prices in Brooklyn neighbourhoods in the order of their distance from Manhattan: “Brooklyn Heights is the most expensive neighborhood. Then you got Park Slope, Fort Greene, Cobble Hill, Clinton Hill.” “And the reality is, after the sand on Coney Island,” he concluded, “it’s the Atlantic Ocean. So, where you gonna go? Where you gonna go?” Some have argued that there is such a

cascading effect across neighbourhoods, in which people move in after being “displaced from their previous homes.”<sup>93</sup>

This sense of a movement of residents from one neighbourhood to another neighbourhood in the same city as a result of gentrification is central to displacement research. And the results have been consistent. The most recent national studies, performed by urban planner Lance Freeman in 2005, economist Terra McKinnish and her colleagues in 2010, and economists Ingrid Gould and Katherine O’Regan in 2011, found that more vulnerable individuals are *not* more likely to move from a gentrifying neighbourhood than they are to move from a non-gentrifying neighbourhood.<sup>94</sup> Policy expert Lei Ding and his colleagues found this to be true for Philadelphia in 2015, Lance Freeman and his colleagues found the same thing in England and Wales in the same year, Newman and Wyly found it to be the case in New York City in 2006, and policy scholar Jacob Vigdor found the same result in Boston in 2002.<sup>95</sup> However, as Newman and Wyly found in their study and Ding and colleagues found in Philadelphia in 2015, when more vulnerable people *do* move, they have a higher risk of moving to a more disadvantaged neighbourhood (i.e., having lower incomes, poorer school performance, and higher unemployment and crime rates), perhaps because the more attractive neighbourhoods are also gentrifying.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, this is in line with a sentiment being expressed by social analysts all over the world: it is the most excluded who are becoming more excluded. And this is as much of a gross injustice as widespread displacement.

Second, some gentrification critics lament a demographic movement of residents out of the city, but within the same metropolitan region. For instance, after Newman and Wyly found very little displacement in their painstaking quantitative analysis of New York City, they conducted thirty-three qualitative interviews across seven neighbourhoods and surmised that more vulnerable residents must be being displaced to the broader metropolitan area.<sup>97</sup> It can be difficult, however, to distinguish such movement from the past half-century of suburbanization in the United States. As we will revisit in chapter 5, during the height of suburbanization,

the understanding of the “problem” was that suburbs were becoming a showpiece of middle-class life that excluded others with worse economic prospects who were “trapped” in deteriorating neighbourhoods.<sup>98</sup>

In some circles, from the 1980s to the present day, the movement supposed by Newman and Wyly, then, would be considered a policy solution: lower-income movers are seen as moving to opportunity: to better schools, better infrastructure, unskilled and semi-skilled employment, and safer neighbourhoods. The sense of the *problem* at that time was described as a spatial mismatch: the unemployed factory worker did not live near the unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in the suburban ring and it was nearly impossible to get there. Moving to the suburbs or driving there was seen as the answer. Today, it is certain that not all suburban contexts are promising for lower-income movers, but neither is a move to the suburbs a sign of defeat.

A third type of move discussed by displacement researchers is one completely out of the urban region altogether. In the 1980s conservative leaders such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher urged residents to consider relocation to newer manufacturing regions that had affordable housing. Many residents balked, of course, suggesting that low-income people cannot just pick up and move. “He suggested that maybe some of us could find better jobs elsewhere like in Texas, or in the southern states,” said one Michigan resident after speaking with President Reagan at an event. “That’s when I spoke up because I have a son, a home. I’m trying to do it by myself. I can’t just pull up stakes and take off by myself.”<sup>99</sup> If today households are indeed evidencing the ability to move to cheaper areas closer to suitable employment, we must be careful of uniformly interpreting current geographic mobility as being as heinous as yesterday’s immobility.

For instance, we ask, after they have lived in cities like Chicago and New York for decades, is it *really* gentrification-related displacement that explains the “reverse migration” of “many” Black residents “returning to their communities of origin in the South” as Newman and Wyly suggest?<sup>100</sup> Such language makes Black movers sound like young adults who couldn’t cut it in two years

in the big city and are returning home to sleep on mom's couch. In reality, these are second- and third-generation residents who are, *of course*, returning not to anything even approximating their communities of origin (even if they do return to the same place that their grandparents grew up in), but to globally important cities such as Atlanta and Charlotte.

As Spike Lee lamented this "displacement," he seemed troubled that homeowners expressed the fact that "their money goes a lot further down south. Black people by droves in New York City – it's called reverse migration – they're moving to Atlanta, they're moving to North Carolina. They got a house, they got a lawn, they got a backyard, they have less taxes." From their experience of witnessing more than a dozen Black friends of various class backgrounds move to Atlanta from Brooklyn in the early 2000s, John and Monique might also add that it is warmer and less stressful. Of course, beyond such calculations, in any individual family there are myriad ideographic factors overlaid on these simple pushes and pulls – relatives in a place, considerations involving children, cultural preferences, health, and so on. Even while his words seem to actually paint a positive image of such a move, it is important to note that Lee's understanding of the move is still in the context of the negative *push* of displacement situated within the negative trend of gentrification.

Scholar Zandria Robinson, on the other hand, suggests that cities such as "Dallas, Atlanta, and Charlotte" have a "perception of Black power and soul cultures" that "*pull[s]* Black populations southward to the newly designated capital of Black America."<sup>101</sup> In Robinson's account, there is an element of consumer preference – a "consumption" side pull – that is enticing Black households to exercise a degree of agency. They are not the refugees they are in Lee's account, which seems to portray Black households as making the best out of being expelled from a "homeland." As is the case with most arguments in gentrification, *both* sides are true. The problem with much of the "displacement" dialogue, however, is that it assumes the former (i.e., the expulsion of the household) and – apparently in the name of progressivism – dismisses the latter (i.e., an informed choice to depart, leaving an empty housing unit) as Pollyannaish.

The pressing policy issue today in most places is not that there is a diaspora of gentrification's displaced looking for housing, but that the middle-class and upper-class demand for attractive urban neighbourhoods displaces other needs from the agenda. What we do know for certain is that when – *for whatever reason* – a low-income “household vacates a housing unit” and “another similar household is prevented from moving in, the number of units available to that second household in that housing market is reduced,” so that the second household is “excluded from living where it would otherwise have lived.” As the more attractive affordable neighbourhoods are gentrified and the cost of living in them increases as a result, the affordable options available within the city for the more vulnerable household moving in can diminish. This common sense deduction is borne out by the research; it is what Peter Marcuse calls *exclusionary displacement*.<sup>102</sup>

### The Neighbourhood That Never Changes<sup>103</sup>

In her original formulation, Ruth Glass identified a “rapid” temporal aspect to the change she described in London, stating that “once this process of ‘gentrification’ starts in a district, it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced.” Glass argued that “all those who cannot hold their own in the sharp competition for space – the small enterprises, the lower ranks of people, the odd men out – are being pushed away.”<sup>104</sup> This is a question that must be asked in a local context. There are many examples, as Newman and Wyly show, of “neighborhoods, especially those with considerable disinvestment and de facto forms of housing abandonment [that] experience waves of gentrification for decades without extensive displacement.”<sup>105</sup> And many long-time residents – including renters – who are able to stay do reap positive results.<sup>106</sup>

Often in slower, “bottom-up” gentrification (and again, one could argue whether most top-down, state-sanctioned bulldozing is “gentrification” at all), many of the most visually stunning changes in a neighbourhood, such as new buildings and new

storefronts and the accompanying concerns about housing affordability, develop long after the demographic inflow of new residents.<sup>107</sup> The gentrification Jason observed in Williamsburg, started in the 1970s, but has only recently raised concern. John's former neighbourhood of Golden Hill, San Diego, has seen decades of in-mov-ing by the middle class. Even in 2013 a long-time community leader – a hippie-era *entrenched* gentrifier – stated that after forty-two years of living in the neighbourhood, he finds it has a consistent “vibe that has survived decades of change.”<sup>108</sup>

We think this relates to the case that some make about “hyper-gentrification” or what Neil Smith called the “third wave” of gentrification. Such a tsunami of change seems to be affecting global cities such as New York and London that are positioned at the locus of worldwide capitalist flows. Examining New York, Newman and Wily stated that “the renewed position of cities in the global economy has fueled gentrification’s expansion.”<sup>109</sup> Saskia Sassen and others noted that “from mid-2013 to mid-2014, corporate buying of existing properties exceeded \$600 billion in the top 100 recipient cities, and \$1 trillion a year later – and this figure includes only major acquisitions.”<sup>110</sup> In the New York case, “major” meant acquisitions above \$5 million. But is gentrification unfolding in the same way in less globally central cities, even those lower down on the same “top 100” list? It doesn’t seem so: even gentrification in Chicago is different from that in New York and London.

More foundationally, at which point in time is a community or set of households fixed? Obviously, never. The only true fixed neighbourhoods are elite havens and ghettos rigidly defined by the state with the support of powerful private interests – and even *they* are not static.<sup>111</sup> So then, we pose a hypothetical question: if a disinvested neighbourhood experiencing the in-movement of middle-class residents evolves slowly over twenty, thirty, or forty years and becomes progressively safer and progressively more sturdy in its infrastructure while rents increase only moderately, is this state of affairs acceptable?

If we indeed view it as unjust, then there are two options. First, infrastructure, safety, sanitation, and other services must become uniformly available in every neighbourhood and therefore cease to

be lucrative amenities. Absent this situation, a better offering is going to bring more demand, and more demand will raise prices and put a strain on scarce resources. That is, if there is indeed demand to begin with; some cities are still hoping for it.

Second, the alternative, is that the government must regulate housing so that, amid the improvements in neighbourhood infrastructure and the resulting increased costs of living (e.g., rent, property taxes), the most vulnerable households can remain. The US government in its 2015 Affirmative Furthering Fair Housing Rule promoted a both/and strategy – a strategy brimming with both potential and room for abuse.<sup>112</sup> It supposes a future metropolitan landscape in which everyone lives near opportunity – where affordable housing is built in higher-income neighbourhoods with existing excellent amenities, and middle-class housing and amenities are developed in lower-income neighbourhoods. Until the arrival of such a utopian equilibrium, however, developers will intensely target the most central, most marketable disinvested neighbourhoods, while other areas lie abandoned.

While acknowledging in a recent study that finding displacement remains difficult in quantitative analyses, Lance Freeman and colleagues noted that what remains unchanged is that “on the ground, the challenge for those concerned about equitable outcomes in the face of gentrification is to identify the circumstances under which displacement occurs and to take steps to prevent it.”<sup>113</sup> The key here, again, is “on the ground.” Local leaders, scholars, and activists need to develop practical mechanisms, identifying geographic areas in which they will be responsible for identifying cases of households that are moving against their will and addressing the cocktail of issues causing each *particular case*.

What John terms a “displacement registry,” for instance, entails an organization canvassing to (a) inform each household that if they ever feel that they are moving against their will, they should contact the organization and (b) obtain a phone or email contact for each household in its area so that their continued residency can be checked on each year. For organizations that are rooted in a particular geography such a registry can begin with a door-to-door campaign and go a long way towards building trust between the organization and the residents.



## The Ir/Relevance of the Gentrifier's Orientation

What are alternatives to these changes? In other words, if these macro-level and meso-level changes are indeed occurring, what else could be happening in response other than the realities that we are witnessing? When Marc, Jason, and John's current students (including the anti-gentrification activists) find good jobs and want to live in the city where they attended college or even move back to their home city as a newly minted, middle-income household, what tenable options do we provide for them? Indeed, as Freeman et al. conclude, "if the gentrifiers had not moved into the gentrifying neighborhoods, where would they have moved?"<sup>114</sup>

Regardless of where they move, if it is an urban neighbourhood, middle-class residents will likely enter a context with a very specific history exhibiting varying degrees of injustice. As discussed in chapter 2, in their move to Chicago, John's wife Monique chose a real estate broker, Clarence Thompson, with whom they could openly discuss their housing philosophies. Clarence was to show them North Kenwood-Oakland, a neighbourhood that would not have been affordable if it had not had such a history of injustice. Indeed, as the anecdote earlier in this chapter specifically highlighted, it *would* have been priced more like the elite Lakeview to the north.

Clarence came from a real estate perspective, to be sure, but also had lived in the Bronzeville area for more than three decades. He clearly respected the social fabric. As it turned out, John and Clarence had mutual acquaintances, which helped them to speak openly about his feelings in relation to gentrification. When John told Clarence that he was not comfortable with the mix of abandonment and speculation that appeared to be occurring in one particular area, his response intersected with a prickly dialogue on gentrification. "Yes," Clarence stated, "in this neighborhood, you would be a pioneer." Monique looked at John, knowing that the conversations of the afternoon were going to shift after Clarence's use of the "P" word.

Enter the gentrifier, the pioneer, the colonizer, excited about the seeming "sale price" on real estate. He is ignorant of the context. He is aloof from neighbours, detached from the fabric of the neighbourhood.

Or, for that matter, enter another kind of gentrifier. She knocks on doors to meet neighbours. She approaches the neighbourhood kids and jokes with them. She shows up when residents protest unjust police actions. While we may like her more as a person and wish more people were like her, the gentrifier's motives, manners, or behaviour may not matter much in the larger scheme.

As we have seen in this chapter, the context that he or she is walking into has largely been solidified. This idea that our actions are informed by extant social structures complicates our notion of individual gentrifiers. Like a soldier in a military invasion, individual gentrifiers are animated by a complicated web of ideological, political, and economic processes of which they may not be entirely cognizant.

This is not to understate the significance of human agency and the value of self-critique or the fact that some people are likely indifferent to the detrimental impact of gentrification on incumbent residents. However, as detailed above, gentrification is often implemented and normalized in ways that enable the "invasion" but also help produce those who become "invaders." It is important, therefore, to note the wide array of cultural orientations that gentrifiers can possess. Such distinctions in orientation capture some of the popular impressions of and opinions about middle-class urban residents. In an effort to further muddy the waters, then, we move to "Columbus," our penultimate chapter.