JEREMIAH'S VANISHING NEW YORK

A.K.A. THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS:
A BITTERLY NOSTALGIC LOOK AT A CITY IN THE PROCESS OF GOING EXTINCT

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On Spike Lee & Hyper-Gentrification, the Monster That Ate New York

The following is part of a larger piece I've been working on to explain hyper-gentrification, today's form of gentrification. It's also a response to the Spike Lee brouhaha. It's rather lengthy. I hope you'll stick with it.

Motherfuckin' Christopher Columbus

Last week, filmmaker Spike Lee spoke to an audience of students at Brooklyn's Pratt Institute. During the Q&A, one student asked if he thought gentrification had its good sides. Spike launched into a powerful defense of his home neighborhood, Fort Greene, against the incursion of affluent white people. He recalled his childhood, when the garbage wasn't picked up every day and the police weren't out making the streets safe. He asked, "Why does it take an influx of white New Yorkers in the South Bronx, in Harlem, in Bed-Stuy, in Crown Heights for the facilities to get better?" An excellent and important question.

As the audience member tried to argue with him, interrupting to say, "Can I talk about something?" Spike turned up the heat, railing against what he called "the motherfuckin' Christopher Columbus Syndrome," in which newcomers, usually whites, believe they've "discovered" a new neighborhood, as if nothing and no one had been there before them, a common occurrence in the city today. Part of the syndrome includes complaining about the traditions of the people who preceded you. For example, as Lee pointed out, a group of African-American drummers have played in a circle in Harlem's Marcus Garvey Park every weekend since 1969. Their presence helped to keep the park safe. Then a luxury condo opened nearby. In 2008, the newcomers—"most of them young white professionals," according to the New York Times-- started complaining about the drums. They called the police and circulated racist e-mails "advocating violence against the musicians." The drummers agreed to move away from their traditional spot, and Marcus Garvey Park, named after the black nationalist in 1973, was rechristened by realtors and newcomers with its original nineteenth-

century name, Mount Morris Park. No one is quite sure who Mr. Morris was, but you can bet he was a white man.

Said Spike, "I'm for democracy and letting everybody live, but you gotta have some respect. You can't just come in when people have a culture that's been laid down for generations, and you come in and now shit gotta change because you're here? Get the fuck outta here. Can't do that!" He went on to cite the problems of sky-high rents, increased competition to get into good schools, and the real-estate industry's questionable habit of changing the names of neighborhoods to make them more marketable.

What Spike said is true, facts and observations that have been pointed out and discussed for years in major newspapers and in blogs like mine. In the 2000s, Brooklyn changed rapidly and dramatically. The Bloomberg administration rezoned the borough from top to bottom, giving taxpayer subsidies to developers so they could fill it with luxury towers and turn tenements into condominiums. Rents skyrocketed, pushing out long-time residents. Many white people moved in to neighborhoods that had been predominantly black for decades and more. Fort Greene boasted a thriving African-American community as early as the 1840s, and by 1870 the neighborhood was home to more than half of Brooklyn's black population. By 2000, 93% of Fort Greene was made up of people of color. That soon changed—and fast. A researcher from the Thomas B. Fordham Institute showed a huge influx of whites flooding into zip codes 11205 and 11206, which cover sections of Fort Greene, Clinton Hill, Bed-Stuy, and Williamsburg. Between the years 2000 and 2010, the white share of those areas increased by nearly 30%, qualifying them as some of the "fastest-gentrifying neighborhoods in the United States."

Many of those incoming whites, members of the middle and affluent classes, often celebrated their "discovery" of a "new" neighborhood in blogs and newspapers. Once moved in, some immediately started complaining about the people who had been there before them, regardless of race, but not regardless of class. In another example of the widespread trend, in Carroll Gardens the newcomers complained to the city about the smell of roasting coffee at D'Amico's, an Italian-American café that had been fragrantly roasting beans since 1948. Thanks to the complaints, the D'Amico family came under investigation by the city's DEP and, with the threat of closure, were forced to spend money on upgrades to their antique machinery. Said one local to Gothamist about the changing neighborhood demographic, "Saturday afternoon on Court Street now looks like a J. Crew runway. With strollers," a statement that conjures up an image of white privilege, affluence, and leisure, similar to Spike Lee's description of Fort Greene Park, "It's like the motherfuckin' Westminster Dog Show."

Spike was right on his main points, but many people didn't like it.

His speech had been recorded and disseminated on the Internet, where the backlash was immediate. People didn't like that he was angry and had used the word "fuck" several times in what was now being called his "rant." They called him "arrogant," a word that has "uppity" as one of its synonyms. They didn't like that he, like television's George and Louise Jefferson before him, had "moved on up" to the East Side, to a deluxe apartment in the sky, as the song goes. He was a wealthy hypocrite, people argued. He had too many multi-million-dollar properties. He had abandoned Brooklyn, and didn't deserve to defend it. In an op-ed for the Daily News, Errol Louis made some good points about Spike's own role in the gentrification of Fort Greene, including his flipping of several properties and the marketing of a rather tacky "Absolut Brooklyn" vodka. There were definitely some conflicts there that Spike did not address, and should have; however, that omission does not fully explain the violent backlash he received, and the fierce pro-gentrification cries that swirled around him. After all, plenty of other financially successful New York artists have railed against gentrification—David Byrne of Talking Heads, whose net worth is $45 million, even used the word "fuck" in his rant against the rich--and they didn't get such backlash. But they weren't black people expressing anger about white people.

As the online comment threads about Spike Lee lengthened, growing more contentious, the conversation began to crack. The neoliberal façade that hides the true face of today's brand of gentrification fell away like a veil. Several people began to make statements like (I'm paraphrasing here): "I'm white and I helped make the neighborhood nicer," and "White people were here first," and "Black people pushed out the white people and now the whites are just coming back," as well as, "I'm white and I'll live wherever I want." Said another (not paraphrasing), "Making a neighborhood that was once nice, nice again is not gentrification. It's restoration."

These statements, and so many others like them, reveal the hidden heart of what urban studies scholar and gentrification expert Neil Smith called the revanchist city. Revanche is French for revenge.

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The Revanchist City

In an interview I did with Smith in 2011, just before his untimely death, he explained what he called the "third wave" of gentrification, or "gentrification generalized," which is nothing like gentrification of the past. Starting in the 1990s, he said, "**Gentrification became a systematic attempt to remake the central city, to take it back from the working class, from minorities, from homeless people, from immigrants who, in the minds of those who decamped to the suburbs, had stolen the city from its rightful white middle-class owners.** What began as a seemingly quaint rediscovery of the drama and edginess of the new urban 'frontier' became in the 1990s broad-based market driven policy."

This policy is undeniably infused with racism and classism. A revanchist policy, bent on revenge, this "take back" of the city is an act of aggression, colonizing and terraforming as it goes, fabricating entire new environments on the bulldozed rubble of the old. And these new environments are not meant for everyone. They are expressly created for the city's newest and most deep-pocketed residents—the children and grandchildren of the white-flight suburbanites who have come back to reclaim and restore what they've been told is their birthright. After all, these neighborhoods once belonged to moneyed whites.

Smith continued, "Almost without exception, the new housing, new restaurants, new artistic venues, new entertainment locales--not to mention the new jobs on Wall Street--are all aimed at a social class quite different from those who populated the Lower East Side or the West Side, Harlem, or neighborhood Brooklyn in the 1960s. Bloomberg's rezoning of, at latest count, 104 neighborhoods has been the central weapon in this assault, but it was built on Giuliani's explicit revanchism--his revenge against the street--the public, cultural lever that wedged the systematic class retake into place."

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Gentrification's Defenders

Since the plutocrat Bloomberg left office at the end of 2013, and Bill de Blasio took over with promises to heal the vast economic gap in New York's "tale of two cities," something has shifted in the city's ongoing conversation about gentrification. More and more, journalists are offering up defensive essays in support of a process long considered a destroyer of social fabric. Likely born from post-Bloombergian anxiety, these increasing pro-gentrification arguments feel a lot like an indirect backlash against the new mayor's progressive rhetoric and his administration's harsh criticism of a system that favors the wealthy.

In the February 2, 2014, issue of New York magazine, Justin Davidson published a controversial and much debated piece entitled "Is Gentrification All Bad?" His answer was emphatically no, as he went on to list gentrification's virtues. A few weeks later, in response to the Spike Lee brouhaha (which was itself initiated by the New York piece), Josh Greenman in the Daily News published an op-ed called "Gentrifiers, Hold your Heads High." In that piece, he described himself as a white, college-educated, Brooklyn gentrifier, and called Spike's speech "ignorant" and "offensive." Greenman cited the history of changing New York neighborhoods, how one immigrant or ethnic group replaces another, describing the current-day shift as just another phase in the normal, ongoing rhythm of the city. "Everyone replaces someone," he wrote, explaining that "the phenomenon [Lee] decries is mostly innocuous, inevitable and, in a diverse and economically dynamic city, healthy."

Missed in arguments like these is the indisputable fact that today's gentrification is not the same as yesterday's. Many New Yorkers today, across racial and class lines, do wish for old-fashioned

gentrification, that slow, sporadic process with both positive and negative effects--making depressed and dangerous neighborhoods safer and more liveable, while displacing a portion of the working-class and poor residents. At its best, gentrification blended neighborhoods, creating a cultural mix. It put fresh fruits and vegetables in the corner grocer's crates. It gave people jobs and exposed them to different cultures. At its worst, gentrification destroyed networks of communities, tore families apart, and uprooted lives. Still, that was nothing compared to what we have today.

I want to make one thing clear: **Gentrification is over.** It's gone. And it's been gone since the dawn of the twenty-first century. **Gentrification itself has been gentrified, pushed out of the city and vanished.** I don't even like to call it gentrification, a word that obscures the truth of our current reality. I call it hyper-gentrification.

The History of "Gentrification"

The term "gentrification" was first coined, somewhat tongue in cheek, by Ruth Glass, a British sociologist who wrote about the phenomenon in the early 1960s. "One by one," she explained, "many of the working class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle class—upper and lower." The invaders busily took over modest houses and turned them into "elegant, expensive residences," while refurbishing larger Victorians that had fallen into disrepair. "Once this process of 'gentrification' starts in a district," said Glass, "it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed." In this very first definition of gentrification we find all the salient elements: Members of an upper class invade a lower class neighborhood (note the aggression in the word invade, an act motivated by hostile intent),

they purchase and upscale the houses, displace the people, and completely change the neighborhood's character in a short period of time.

Gentrification, as a noted concept and a term, came to New York City in the early 1970s, but it was all about elsewhere. The New York Times first mentioned the phenomenon in a 1972 story about London, defining it as "the expulsion of the working class from their traditional territory." In 1977, the Times called it an "Incursion by the Gentry," and included the still unfamiliar word in their Weekly News Quiz, wedged between questions about Jackie Onassis and Chinese military leader Wang Tung-hsing. The question: "Working-class people in London are resisting a process they refer to as 'gentrification.' What is gentrification?" The answer: "Gentrification is a term applied by working-class people in London to characterize the movement of relatively well-to-do persons into areas where they live." Still, it remained a mostly foreign word to New Yorkers, though there was nothing foreign about the process, certainly not for those afflicted by the "Brownstone Fever" that swept South Brooklyn at the time—a fever so viral it became the subject of an entire conference called "Back to the City." Organized by the Brooklyn Revival Committee and held at the Waldorf-Astoria, the conference offered workshops and panels that provided proven techniques for "unslumming" a neighborhood. In media reports, however, gentrification continued to be an offshore peculiarity that happened over there, first in London and then spreading across Europe, to cities like Amsterdam and Paris, where Ada-Louise Huxtable described the upscaling of the Parisian slums, including La Marais, "reclaimed as fashionable historic districts, with that curious side effect, 'gentrification,' or the driving out of the poor and working class for an influx of chic residents, restaurants and boutiques." By 1978, local public radio station WNYC broadcast a discussion entitled "What Can Be Done to Stop Gentrification?"

When the New York Times magazine published a 1979 story called "The New Elite and an Urban Renaissance," they gave gentrification its big debut, celebrating its arrival with splashy photographs showing boutiques and bistros--with expensive sports cars on (gasp!) Columbus Avenue, and tins of paté at Zabar's. Who were the new urban settlers enjoying all these luxuries? With an average age of 35 and annual incomes over $20,000, "The young gentry," said the Times, were those who had fled the suburbs to "gladly endure the urban indignities their parents ran away from. This new breed of professionals is willing to put up with smaller apartments, dirty streets, and crime in order to live in chic neighborhoods." The only noted downside to this process was that the poor and working class were being pushed out, making the city less colorful for the gentrifiers. "Ironically," said the Times, "the ethnic diversity that is drawing the gentry back to the city, the cultural heterogeneity that has always been the source of so much of New York's character and energy, may

become lost in a forest of homogenized high-rises and rows of renovated brownstones." On the Upper West Side, one young lawyer complained, "This neighborhood is becoming as sterile as the East Side."

By the 1980s, gentrification in New York had a cheerleader in one Everett Ortner, noted brownstoner and president of Back to the City, Inc. Credited with the "revival" of Park Slope, Ortner told the Times, "I think the growing hue and cry about gentrification is exaggerated." He explained that the city needed to attract "new, young people who are educated and have the money" to preserve neighborhoods and provide a tax base for services. "I call it good," he declared. He was right about one thing—the cry of citywide gentrification was exaggerated.

A 1983 Quarterly Review by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York entitled "Are the Gentry Returning?" found little evidence to support the notion that the back-to-the-city movement had begun in earnest. Crunching the numbers, they concluded, **"The overall attractiveness of New York City to the 'gentry'…did not grow between 1970 and 1980."** In fact, the city's share of high-income households, college graduates, and other high-status groups dropped, including the number of whites, as they continued to flee to the homogeneous suburbs. However, while far from a citywide incursion, the first spores of gentrification had touched down in a handful of neighborhoods, on a handful of streets, setting in motion a long process that would continue and grow in the decades to come. In neighborhoods like Park Slope and Brooklyn Heights, and in parts of Lower Manhattan, the increase in college-educated residents spiked, but not their incomes—yet. All those freshly educated and underpaid young professionals had come to the city armed with the potential for future earnings, and where they gathered together in crappy apartments below 14th Street, the rents slowly increased with them.

Throughout the 1980s, as they grew wealthier, many of those young people would come to be known as yuppies, and in 1988, during the anti-gentrification riots in the East Village, the slogan "Die Yuppie Scum" was born. With the 1990s came the beginning of a new era for New York. To some, it would be a Gilded Age. For others, it would mean the death of a once wildly creative, chaotic, and welcoming city.

The Flowering of Hyper-Gentrification

It's difficult to remember exactly when it was that I first understood, when it really hit me, that the city I knew was vanishing at an alarming rate. I want to say 2005, but can't be sure. That year, my favorite East Village dive bar suddenly closed after 80 years in business. I was heartbroken. The delightfully sleazy Times Square Howard Johnson's shuttered, too, with plans for its demolition and replacement by a suburban-style shopping mall clothing store. More heartbreak. The following year, the Cedar Tavern, Gotham Book Mart, McHale's Bar, the Second Avenue Deli, and CBGBs—all legendary, long-lived spots--all vanished. It seemed impossible that so many fixtures of the city weren't actually permanent, and that so many could fall at once.

At the same time, the population of my neighborhood was palpably shifting. The streets were getting louder, more crowded with young people who didn't look or feel like the young East Villagers of the past several decades—they weren't punk, queer, creative, or crazy. They were "normals," young, white, traditional heterosexuals in button-down shirts and pleated pants, the boys high-fiving in wolf packs, the girls tottering down the sidewalks in designer high heels. They were the sort of people that an East Villager could always avoid simply by never venturing north of 14th Street. No more. A transformation was underway. I could not stop complaining about it. But no one listened. They kept telling me, **"New York always changes. This is nothing." Some of these deniers were native New Yorkers. "I've lived here my whole life," they said, "and this is just what happens. Get used to it."** The denials increased both my doubt and my conviction. Was I imagining things? I felt like a Cassandra, doomed to be disbelieved yet gripped in the compulsion to proclaim. Maybe I suffer from a sort of Cassandra Complex. Whatever the case, I put my preoccupation into a blog. Suddenly, people were listening—more than I had imagined—and they all had noticed the big changes, too.

What I and many New Yorkers had become aware of was not the birth

of a new process, but its full flowering. A new form of gentrification had been at work for years by that time--planted in the 1980s, tended and protected through the 1990s, it was now blossoming into a terrible, unstoppable garden of choking vines. Its presence, previously felt, was now unmistakably apparent. To mix metaphors, it was like we were witnessing the sudden, dramatic collapse of an ancient glacier after years of quiet, steady melting. All around us, the great city crumbled.

Within a month of starting "Vanishing New York," I was interviewed in New York Metro, a little free paper handed out to commuters at subway entrances. Paul Berger, who later interviewed me again for The New York Times, asked my take on how the city was changing. I answered, "**What's happening now is unnatural change. It's like the way people argue about climate change and say, 'Well, the climate's always changed throughout time.'** Yes, it has, but climate change is dramatic, it's overpowering, it's overwhelming, and it's certainly sped up. I think in New York we are seeing change on an unnatural scale." I didn't have a word for it then, but soon started using "hyper-gentrification" to refer to this new phenomenon, which I thought of then as gentrification accelerated—bigger, faster, and much more destructive. Hyper-gentrification had not yet made it into the mainstream consciousness, but urban scholars had been observing its effects for some time.

Super-Gentrification

In 2003, in the journal Urban Studies, British geographer Loretta Lees introduced the term "super-gentrification," defining it as the "Transformation of already gentrified, prosperous and solidly upper-middle-class neighbourhoods into much more exclusive and expensive enclaves." She saw this "intensified regentrification" happening in certain parts of cities like London and New York that had "become the focus of intense investment and conspicuous consumption." Lees focused her paper on the brownstone neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights, site of New York City's first wave of gentrification. This time, in

super-gentrification, it was the middle class being invaded by "a new generation of super-rich 'financifiers' fed by fortunes from the global finance and corporate service industries."

The phenomenon was parodied by The Onion in a 2008 article entitled **"Nation's Gentrified Neighborhoods Threatened By Aristocratization."** The accompanying photo showed a multibillion-dollar medieval castle jammed between two well-appointed Brooklyn brownstones, with a horse-drawn carriage parked on the street alongside SUVs and mini-vans. Said the report, "the enormous treasure-based wealth of the aristocracy makes it impossible for those living on modest trust funds to hold onto their co-ops and converted factory loft spaces."

While I see Lees' super-gentrification as an aspect of hyper-gentrification, the two are not the same. Hyper-gentrification is much more widespread. Unlike first-generation gentrification, it doesn't target only faded neighborhoods with architecture that inspires rehabilitation, it infects the city as a whole, invading previously gentrified neighborhoods as well as poor, working class, industrial, and already bustling commercial districts. Utterly unflinching, it eagerly spreads into the most repellent parts of town, diving into toxic waste dumps, snuggling up to slaughter houses, planting luxury condo towers in sections that border on noisy highways, traffic tunnels, and train tracks. No part of the city is safe from the multi-pronged, ever-spreading reach of hyper-gentrification. It's big and it's fast. It moves at hyper-speed, packed with the power to completely and dramatically transform an entire neighborhood in no time. What might have taken ten to twenty years under gentrification, now takes only three to five. And everything in its way is expelled, by one method or another.

The Third Wave of Gentrification

Neil Smith spent much of his career researching and writing about gentrification. As noted earlier, what I call hyper-gentrification he

termed "gentrification generalized," or "third-wave gentrification," and his explanation of the phenomenon and its history—first published in 2002--is essential to understanding exactly how today's gentrification differs from the past and has evolved into, in my opinion, a very different beast. I will attempt to distill Smith's central ideas here, simplifying them in the process.

Gentrification generalized, according to Smith, is a product of globalization and neoliberal urban policies, a return to the 18th-century brand of laissez-faire liberalism that assumed "the free and democratic exercise of individual self-interest led to the optimal collective social good" and that "the market knows best."

The generalization of gentrification began in the 1990s and was preceded by two previous waves of gentrification. In the first wave, as described in the 1960s by Ruth Glass, the agents of change were members of the middle- and upper-middle class; for example, men and women working as lawyers, editors, and small business owners, who purchased run-down brownstones in poor or working-class neighborhoods and fixed them up using their own "sweat equity." Thanks to the powerful socioeconomic sway of their class (and race, usually white), they brought some real benefits to the existing community, like safer streets and improved schools. (Justin Davidson was right, old-fashioned gentrification was not "all bad.") Many of the first brownstoners, as they were called, were socially liberal, even radical, and a bit utopian, wishing to live in harmony with other cultures. Unfortunately, their presence also caused the displacement of their less powerful neighbors. But the damage was limited. First-wave gentrification was sporadic and marginal, without the powerful government and corporate backing needed to change the city as a whole. In the second wave of gentrification, through the 1970s and 1980s, the process took root, becoming "increasingly entwined with wider processes of urban and economic restructuring," says Smith. As it grew, opposition forces emerged to fight against it. This was the time when anti-gentrification protests flared and were quashed by a city government now deeply invested in "making the city safe for gentrification." In late 1980s New York, for example, the Tompkins Square Park riots ignited when the city tried to push the homeless from the park, and protestors pushed back, getting their skulls bashed by the NYPD.

Aside from just being bigger, what makes hyper-gentrification different from the old-fashioned kind? Smith posits five characteristics that distinguish third-wave gentrification from its predecessors. (1.) Intensified partnerships between the city government and private capital, "resulting in larger, more expensive, and more symbolic" real-estate developments. (2.) A "new influx of global capital into large megadevelopments," as well as smaller neighborhood developments like luxury condos on the Lower East

Side, in which, for example, Israeli developers are sponsored by European banks. (3.) Authoritarian city politicians and police working to crush anti-gentrification opposition. (4.) Outward diffusion--as prices rise at the city's center, generalized gentrification spreads out to more distant neighborhoods. (5.) Finally, this third wave is unregulated, free-market gentrification, independent of public financing and therefore unaccountable to larger social needs. It is the first brand of gentrification to enjoy "the full weight of private-market finance." It's gentrification that says (in my words), "I can live wherever I want and do whatever I want, because I have the money to do it."

In my 2011 interview with Smith, he described exactly what the difference between gentrification to hyper-gentrification looks like, saying, "If the rehabilitation of a brownstone in the West Village or Park Slope typified gentrification in the 1970s, by the 1990s and 2000s it was the disneyfication of Times Square, the condominium frenzy on the Bowery, and a corporate fill-in of the previously low-rent spaces feeding out from Manhattan--Williamsburg, Fort Greene, Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, etc., and now the superfunded Gowanus."

A Sociopathic Process

Hyper-gentrification is everything that Smith described, and much more. Constructed and driven by people, it has a personality--though it may be more accurate to say it has a personality disorder. Through the people who celebrate it, we can hear the voice of hyper-gentrification.

After the Spike Lee episode, the Daily News interviewed a few residents of Fort Greene under the headline "Brooklyn Residents Don't Appreciate Spike Lee's Rants on Gentrification." They talked to one 25-year-old woman out walking her English springer spaniel, a dog she'd named Hudson, presumably after the river. A farm-to-table restaurant owner with a history in interior design and fashion, she had moved to Fort Greene from the Hamptons just a month earlier. She told the paper, "I don't see a negative to cleaning up a neighborhood… I

think it's a creative bunch of people doing interesting things. It's all good intentions." Had she never heard about the road to Hell and its paving stones? Another young woman out walking her miniature poodle said, "people have the right to live wherever they want to live." And a third young woman (none of the neighborhood people quoted were men, long-term residents, people over 34, or, apparently, African-American), a jewelry designer and dog walker from Toronto, agreed that the perks of gentrification far outweigh the drawbacks. "I benefit from it," she said. "I can have a decent cup of coffee."

To be fair, these are brief quotes from people out walking dogs, and newspaper quotes get edited, so we can't take them as an infallible indication of the broader sentiment towards gentrification among young newcomers to Fort Greene, or gentrified Brooklyn as a whole. But it is striking that each of the three quotes come off as laced with self-centeredness, remorselessness, and what appears to be total disregard for the larger issue and how it negatively impacts the lives of their neighbors. I wonder if it's defensiveness, borne from guilt, or if there's no contrition there at all. Statements such as these are not limited to one newspaper article. Far from being outliers, they are voices in a larger chorus. As a blogger, I've been hearing them for years, in reader comments on my own blog, on other New York blogs, and in countless newspaper and magazine articles. "Bulldoze the housing projects and dump the poor in the river," they say. Here's another one: "If you want affordable housing, move to Bronx. Move to Staten Island, hell move to Kentucky. The sooner these poor bottom-barrel leeches are banished from Manhattan, the better." And one more: "Ew, NYC was gross back then. The natives nearly destroyed the city. Now, thanks to the influx of cleaner people, the city is glamorous again!"

As gentrification has changed, as the city has changed, so have the people doing the gentrifying. Thinking back to the first bunch in the 1960s, those early brownstoners, I wonder: Is this how they talked? Is this how they felt? New York magazine interviewed several of them in 1969. They were middle-class whites, mostly, and certainly had some sense of entitlement, but it wasn't expressed with callousness. When asked about their feelings for their new neighborhood, whether in Brooklyn or Manhattan, they talked about how much they enjoyed the cultural mix. No one mentioned a wish for decent coffee. No one proclaimed a right to live there. One woman said she was proud to live on a block that was "half black-owned and half white-owned and hoping it stays that way." They talked of melting pots and not wanting to live in a "white, middle-class ghetto." One brownstoner in the decrepit old East Village said he didn't want the neighborhood to get fixed up too much, or else it would become "a big whitewashed playpen of young people." He explained, "People are still living side by side. For us, that's what this brownstone thing is all about."

Of course, in part thanks to people like this, the East Village did become a whitewashed playpen for young people, brownstone Brooklyn did get so fixed up it turned into a white middle-class ghetto, and people of different classes and ethnicities did not live side by side forever. I don't think of the early brownstoners as heroes, and their sentiments are problematic in their own way, but they do seem more humane, more empathic, than their counterparts today.

Hyper-gentrification, born from gentrification, is bigger, faster, and meaner than its parent. It's also sicker, a sociopathic system with no compassion. **If hyper-gentrification were a person, it would be a malevolent psychopath**--aggressive and remorseless, with a reckless disregard for others and an aptitude for deception. It exploits people, uses cruelty to gain power, and exhibits poor impulse control. It's no big leap to imagine that the real human beings, the power players pulling the strings of hyper-gentrification might suffer from psychopathy and other failures of empathy. The politicians, developers, bankers, and corporate CEOs who have banded together to create the new New York are all in Machiavellian professions that generally score high on scales of narcissism and sociopathy. What kind of psychic environment have they created for the city?

Choose Your Monster: The False Dichotomy

Part of the hyper-gentrifiers' strategy has been to foster an environment of fear, frightening New Yorkers into accepting hyper-gentrification as a social good, a necessity if we want to stay safe and avoid the descent into 1970s-style urban decay. The bad old days, they tell us, are right around the corner. Republican mayoral candidate Joe Lhota didn't even try to sugarcoat it when he aired a controversial television commercial in the fall of 2013 that threatened, "Bill de Blasio's recklessly dangerous agenda on crime will take us back to this…" followed by images of 1970s and 80s New York: graffiti-covered subways, rioters throwing Molotov cocktails, XXX movie theaters, dead homeless people, police cars flipped upside-down like stranded turtles.

Lhota's scare tactic didn't work to sway the voters, but **many New Yorkers remain duped into believing the false dichotomy that we have only two choices: unfettered gentrification or rampant crime.** We do have other options.

What if gentrification had been left alone, never adopted by the government and its corporate cronies, not shot up with steroids, allowed to develop at its own pace, in its own way? It's hard to imagine that brand of gentrification—still regulated, not infused with global capital, not juiced on a revanchist rage to take back the city—and maybe it's too idealistic to try. I suspect we would still have gentrification and the problems that come with it, but without government-corporate partnerships directing its growth, it would surely be a smaller, more manageable beast.

In order to even begin exploring the city's other options, New Yorkers first have to stop deluding themselves into believing that today's hyper-gentrification is the same old thing. **We all have to stop saying, "New York always changes, so this is normal." This is not normal. This is state sponsored, corporate driven, turbo charged, far flung, and impossible to stop in its current form.** Hyper-gentrification is the Thing That Ate New York, the Blob, the choose your monster-movie metaphor, an ever-growing, ever-devouring beast that will not be satisfied until there's nothing left.

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POSTED BY JEREMIAH MOSS AT 8:10 AM

LABELS: HYPER-GENTRIFICATION, HYPERGENTRIFICATION

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99 COMMENTS:

M. Heinz said...

An often overlooked fact, in the story of "gentrification",is that,while lamenting the loss of the "original" working class dwellers, in NYC there WERE no "original" working class dwellers in these Italianate Townhouses. Town homes in NYC

were built for a wealthy merchant class, and lived in by these wealthy merchant families for nearly 100 years. It was a mere *blip* in history during the 1960s an 70s when suburban migration left real estate plentiful and cheap in Manhattan. Former mansions were chopped up and rented to working class people. These are NOT the "original" neighborhood people being displaced. They were temporary pawns in a game of valuable real estate, in a city where land is always worth more than people. The landed-gentry have decided to move back to town.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 9:13 AM

Anonymous said...

Ahh of course there has always been money here even during the 60s and 70s ! But there was always a place for the working class..

And btw most of those converted homes were chopped up during the depression .

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 10:03 AM

Elwood D Pennypacker said...

The D'amico coffee example is complicated. There was never any proof that the complainer was a snotty newcomer. In fact, it had some of the hallmarks of an old time resident curmudgeon.

As for the crux of the biscuit, this was very well reasoned and thought out. And at heart I agree with the sentiment like I always have over the years. And I understand Spike Lee to a great extent.

But I'm also defeated. I have given up on stemming the tide of the bad parts of the recent changes to NYC. I feel no choice but to take the bad with the good. And also I got a little tired of myself for being constantly cranky at the changes when I knew I was taking advantage of a lot of the good.

At this point, all I'm looking for is a grand bargain, a deal for the city to hash out with itself. Can the noveau riche remake the rundown parts of our city without stripping it of its culture? Can they please not be so corporate and self-congratulatory just for living here? Most importantly, can they stop uptalking?!?!?!

Can the lower orders accept the changes and make changes themselves?

Can we get some affordable housing in places that retain the old flavors that made city an appealing to so many?

Probably not. But a fella can dream. Or keep his head down while getting a pastrami on rye before catching a nice little rock n roll gig.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 10:23 AM

John Friedman said...

Jeremiah, as usual, you've hit the mark. I'm a native New Yorker, born in Manhattan over 50 years ago. I've seen quite a bit of change in my life in the city but what's happened, esp. since the mid '90s, is epic, disturbing, disruptive in an almost completely negative way. For those who doubt that the change we're experiencing now is the same as what's been going on for the last 2 centuries, consider this: when old NY was replaced with "new" NY in the past, 1 mom-and-pop replaced another; a bar replaced a lunch room, a clothing shop morphed into a shoe store, and the groceries became bodegas. Today, in contrast, when a mom-and-pop shutters, it's replaced by a national chain. A neighborhood newsstand becomes a national yogurt outlet, a shoe repair shop becomes yet another Bank of America branch, and 2 families are reduced from business owners to wage serfs. This is not the NYC my ancestors came to. Indeed, if my grandparents could see it now, they run from the boroughs howling.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 10:27 AM

Anonymous said...

When know the problem. What is your solution?

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 10:29 AM

Jeremiah Moss said...

Elwood, thanks for the note about D'Amico. Is there a way to be sure--anyone know? I'm looking for more examples of this complaining about what went before thing. Of course, San Gennaro is a big one.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 11:03 AM

Anonymous said...

"In an interview I did with Smith in 2011, just before his untimely death, he explained what he called the "third wave" of gentrification, or 'gentrification generalized,' which is nothing like gentrification of the past. Starting in the 1990s, he said, 'Gentrification became a systematic attempt to remake the central city, to take it back from the working class, from minorities, from homeless people, from immigrants who, in the minds of those who decamped to the suburbs, had stolen the

city from its rightful white middle-class owners. What began as a seemingly quaint rediscovery of the drama and edginess of the new urban 'frontier' became in the 1990s broad-based market driven policy.'

This policy is undeniably infused with racism and classism. A revanchist policy, bent on revenge, this "take back" of the city is an act of aggression, colonizing and terraforming as it goes, fabricating entire new environments on the bulldozed rubble of the old. And these new environments are not meant for everyone. They are expressly created for the city's newest and most deep-pocketed residents—the children and grandchildren of the white-flight suburbanites who have come back to reclaim and restore what they've been told is their birthright. After all, these neighborhoods once belonged to moneyed whites."

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 11:21 AM

tensacross said...

The only thing I wish is you called it "corporatization" instead of "hyper-gentrification".
Because then its crystal clear who the enemy is who we all have to team up and fight!!

otherwise I'm soo grateful to you because for the longest time I thought I was the only one who saw and understood that the city was being totally destroyed!

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 11:22 AM

olympiasepiriot said...

Hey. Thanks for this. You've carefully spelled out something I've been stumbling over ... trying to make concise ... in so many conversations over the last 10 years. I work in design & construction and have been seeing much of this from the front of a project. I've also been wanting to be somewhere else for a long time now, but so many places I've liked or have started to like seem to be going through this, too. I feel like there's something I'm missing because I can't understand where the people are who have this money to occupy these hyper-gentrified neighborhoods and where all the rest of the population is going. There don't seem to be lots of jobs to support the rich, our economy is **still** in the crapper, and the jobs to support the middle class are continuing to dwindle...but places for the poor to live are being squeezed. There's something here that is totally non-intuitive for me.

Yet this city (and many, many others) keep changing into these Dubais and Singapores. What gives?

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 11:34 AM

Caleo said...

Spike Lee is an insufferable hypocrite, and using his rant as a jumping off point for an otherwise well thought out piece weakens the whole thing. And don't lay on this crap that white people can't criticize Spike, or that the criticism was borderline racist. That's weak Jeremiah. Spike Lee opened his mouth in a public setting, and people are allowed to respond. No one is jealous that Spike is a successful black man, and calling him arrogant is not remotely racist, it's a simple statement of fact. Black people can be criticized in strong terms Jeremiah. It's OK.
Spike doesn't care about the Italians that were displaced by Blacks from large swaths of Brooklyn during the 60's and 70's, in a process that was frequently unpleasant and occasionally violent.
Does he complain about the loss of their culture ?
No.
Where are their stories being told ?
Nowhere.
The issue of hypergentrification is important, but Spike isn't the one to address it, seeing as how he blatantly contributed to it and gained financially from doing so, repeatedly. He lives in the wealthiest zip code in the city, and his kids go to private schools. He's a hypocrite.
M.Heinz also brought up an interesting point about gentrification that almost never gets addressed and should be explored in greater depth.
It's your blog, and you can present issues in any way you see fit, but injecting the skewed perspective of a privileged multi millionaire like Spike greatly diminishes the impact of the issues you're focusing on.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 11:38 AM

QuentinC said...

Another one was/is the slaughterhouse on Greenpoint Avenue.

http://gothamist.com/2011/06
/11/chickens_divide_old_greenpoint_vs_n.php

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 11:39 AM

olympiasepiriot said...

Adding, yes, what John Friedman said. The way I've been putting it lately is "The Syrian store back in the 1900's got replaced by an Italian shop, which eventually was sold to a Puerto Rican family who ran it until the family from Manilla

wanted to open a grocery store that sold bagoong and saba at the same time the Puerto Ricans were thinking of retiring and their kids had gone into other lines of work and weren't going to run the store. Now the stationary/convenience/copy shop/notary/o-t-c drug store run by another immigrant family has turned into a bar, a fancy restaurant or a bank branch that always seems to be empty."

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 11:42 AM

Andrew F.L. said...

I don't buy, in full, this idea that changes the city is undergoing now are something totally different than the past.

While there are some elements that make the nature of present change wave different, there is also the impact of what I'd call an escapist mentality.

Many neighborhoods experienced drastic and sudden changes in the past, including wholesome ethnic changeover in the space of 30 years, sometimes with something much worse than being priced out - being kicked out by some new ethnic mafia's threats.

The general feel I get is that many people are truly horrified because, this time, changes are more about bringing things related to American mainstream culture (in all senses) into New York, which appears to the anathema and the ultimate evil for many for which New York would be a sort-of "cultural refugee" space from the rest of the country.

Some of the trends affecting New York are national, such as the take-over of whole sectors of economy by chains, the effects of online commerce in some sectors, a highly nuisance-averse citizenry that will fill complaints about things they don't like regardless of whatever 'social contract' is in place if they have money for lawyer's fees, a rearrangement of real-life social networks where people increasingly search for places and people they want to as expense of being concerned about their immediate neighborhood etc.

All these are trends that, for some historical quirks, took a little longer to move over the Hudson, but now they are in full force, and they are in place to stay.

Whether the "Americanization" of New York is a positive or negative thing, then it is for each one to have his/her own opinion on it. It probably feels better when changing jobs to New York or moving to the city for work no longer implies

having your way of life disrupted that much. It probably spells doom for people who moved to New York (or stayed there) because they wanted to 'escape maisntream America'. The jury is out on how these perceptions balance out, though the demographic re-do is also probably here to stay, which will validate the first camp.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 12:06 PM

John Friedman said...

Another example of newcomers complaining leading to the relocation of a neighborhood institution is, I believe, the story of Marijuana Day in Greenwich Village. It was forced to relocate (perhaps only temporarily but I don't think so) to Battery Park City because NYU hired a new prof who moved into one of the too many buildings that culture-sink owns on Washington Square. When he found out that dirty hippies were going to be smoking joints on his doorstep he raised a fuss. Giuliani to the rescue: dope smokers out; yuppies in.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 12:19 PM

Brendan said...

Hit it out of the park. I'd add a couple of things, both of which I think you alluded to indirectly:

1) One of the big changes that made hypergentrification possible was the loss of manufacturing jobs and the collapse of organized labor. This made the working class far, far more vulnerable than they ever were before.

2) Another one is the loss of rent regulation, which the state and city have been deliberately phasing out since 1994 with the creation of "luxury decontrol." I don't think people always appreciate how huge a change that was for the city.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 12:26 PM

Little Earthquake said...

A city government that can barely plow the streets conspired toward and executed all of this. Look on the bright side - that's true public sector efficiency!

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 12:40 PM

Astrida Valigorsky said...

Has anyone noticed what GENTRIFICATION has done to Harlem? If you pay any attention to the real estate market in Harlem, you notice there are LOTS of empty buildings, and everything that is for sale is expensive.

The banks, and owners of buildings are SITTING on them. They're leaving them vacant, waiting for rich people to want to buy them. Its disgusting.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 12:50 PM

Anonymous said...

Would those concerts in Williamsburg count as an example of something that made the neighborhood cool in the first place, and then the new neighbors find them a nuisance?

http://gothamist.com/2012/04 /06/williamsburg_residents_still_compla.php

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 1:42 PM

Anonymous said...

One of the reasons its different this time is the growing sense that suburbs aren't sustainable (as Kunstler would say, a living arrangement without a future) and NYC is one of the very few urban areas in the USA where its possible to make it without a car.

Or used to be: among HyperGs other symptoms is the increasing expectation of having quick access to a private automobile as part of living here, and if Spike (and anyone else) wants to truly walk the walk, they'd kill their cars before their televisions...

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 2:00 PM

Jeremiah Moss said...

Absolutely--the trend is not just national, it's global.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 2:10 PM

Anonymous said...

Have you ever considered writing a book? Many know the problem, the history and effects but few have managed to address it so painstakingly from beginning to end. As much as you have written, there is so much more. Go find the sources others overlooked.

I think you should examine the problem on a wider scale throughout. Your closing statement was so sharp- this is NOT normal gentrification, this is gov't sponsored, etc. It suggests that there are alternatives, solutions- tell us! Show us! THAT is the lens through which to look, rather than devolving your analysis into yet another article on white assholes taking New

York from blacks.

I agree there is a depressing population of entitled pricks who perfectly fit the face of gentrification- but they are a distraction from the real culprit. As many trust funder, poodle walking newcomers as there are in BK, there is an equal number of newcomers who appreciate/take part in the culture, the neighbors and the dynamic they have landed among.

So who is the problem? Is it a group of people, or a principle in question? Who deserves to live in New York? Who doesn't? Does New York owe anything to anyone?

There is a bigger picture, which is that what happens in New York tends to forecast on a grand, 'hyper-ized' scale what will become of America.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 2:13 PM

Anonymous said...

Even though Iam not a fan of Spike Lee as I used to live in Fort Greene in the 80"s and let me tell you Spike was already a arrogant racist jerk!

But regardless he brings up some good points that are needed to be heard.

But Spike Lee maybe its not the right candidate to bring this up.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 2:23 PM

Anonymous said...

Great article, Jeremiah! I'm sure you've already seen the New Yorker editorial efending gentrification…

http://nymag.com/news/features/gentrification-2014-2/

And the Observer's brilliant rebuttal…

http://observer.com/2014/02/its-not-about-yuppies-anymore-gentrification-has-changed-and-so-has-new-york/

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 2:52 PM

Anonymous said...

This is a very thorough and well thought out piece (and I include Spike Lee's comments about "Respect"). I often find myself bighting my lip when I see some of the "Urban Pioneers" in this city. The fact is, many of the purchase these

high priced homes and condos and consider that to be a right of privilege that fosters this warped sense of entitlement. These people come into a neighborhood and have this utopian vision that belongs to them. They are blinded to others, by choice or not, that have been established in these neighborhoods for generations. They develop this "protectionist" mentality, protecting their "investment" and show blatant disregard for anything that sways (established customs) from their personal vision of community. Thiers is a vision of conformity or suburban white picket fences and well manicured lawns (metaphorically speaking, of course). Same, same, same... Gap, Baby Gap, Gap Men, Gap Women, Gap Fetus... This is a fear that is based on money and possessions. Anything standing between a potential threat to the high priced homes must go, even if it means people and cultures. I have said it before, NYC was made great by diversity. A diversity of cultures that has carried this city for centuries. That diversity is being put in jeopardy by a vacant sense of values where one is judged not by who they are but by what they own. I will be curious to see where these "Urban Pioneers" are when their kids hit high school and they are starting to look at colleges... My guess is, right back to the suburb that spawned them.

That being said, we have this new, what you call, "Hyper Gentrification". I would take it one step further to dub it "False Gentrification". The High Rises that are threatening the spirit of a neighborhood. These vertical subdivisions are nothing more than a "cul de sac in the sky". They are fortresses of isolationism, so imposing that it is a wonder anyone could meet another person, short of a 40 second elevator ride. Any chance for a true community to form is highly doubtful as it takes physical and intellectual interaction to form one of those. But they can like their building on Facebook and that makes them community minded.

I am not so sure it is a race issue (though in some neighborhoods that may be the case) as it is an opportunity and economic gap issue, however. Gentrification issues are facing neighborhoods all over Manhattan, Brooklyn and now The Bronx and Queens. The Bloomberg era opened up an exponential, viral, explosion of high priced development around neighborhoods with easy access to transportation. It appeased and wetted the appetite for the very rich and moderately rich in the financial, medical and creative class (Richard Florida will probably have a stroke if he reads this article, that is good) It paid little or no attention to the service economy. Not until a potential disruption or threat to the service consumers (wealthy) did the Bloomberg era consider Affordable Housing as an issue. But even then, Affordable Housing gets pushed to

places where transportation services are fringe, at best.

But I agree that respect for cultures is in jeopardy. I agree that this is an epidemic. I agree not to accept the NY is Changing/Always has line of crap. I agree that the temporary homogenous high rises are ruining our sense of community. I agree that there is no regard to culture and history and what made NYC the greatest city on Earth. I agree this age of gentrification is different and much meaner and more self centered. Where I am confused is how it came to be. Is it the size of the investment that causes this or is it a societal issue of self entitlement? Is this the first generation to come back to the city from two or three generations who fled? Is this the suburbanization of the city? Sadly for me, I may never know the answers to these questions.

Jeremiah, kudos to you for an excellent and well thought out piece. Thank you!

Tim Schreier
New York NY

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 2:59 PM

Anonymous said...

The concerts in Williamsburg were not there in the early parts of the 2000s. The concerts in East River State Park only happened once the neighborhood was gentrified enough for people to not be afraid to come there. The people complaining about the concerts are original residents and people who have been there for 20 years. I've only been here for 8 years and *I* complain about them because they're set up with zero thought for the people who live around the park who aren't in their 20s and trust fund and have to go to work in the morning.

God, you people act like outdoor concerts are some kind of god given right.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 3:03 PM

onemorefoldedsunset said...

I'm just amazed at the speed and rapacity with which property is changing hands right now, and how openly brazen developers & buyers have become. It's an absolute feeding frenzy in neighborhoods like Crown Heights & Bed Stuy, with hundreds of buyers linking up, all-cash offers ready, for open houses,and now the big brokers are dipping their toes into Ocean Hill/Brownsville. I feel like I'm living inside some sick satirical novel. Go & check out some of the incredibly heartless comments on Brownstoner (the shiftless poor don't deserve to

stay in gentrifying neighborhoods)or the-hunt-is-on tone of this more recent blog, Brooklyn to the Fullest:

On line at Barclays last night, we overheard someone saying, "I was looking for comps to justify my offer price..." Because, while property prices are negotiated today, much of the data won't be out for months to come. So how is one to stay ahead of the curve? You can't play time traveler with the comps like many try to. Heck, even appraisers calls us asking for the contract prices of houses that have yet to close, just to stay up to date for their appraisals. But amidst the bullishness, many murmur the tide is shifting … If your channel check data point for the cooling off in the red-hot Brooklyn real estate market is a dinky 3 story at Albany Avenue for $1.1M with little action at the open house, you may wanna take a step back and see how far we've come. Pretty ridiculously high prices keep on coming in. And there's no denying reality. Kanye says, "You just look stupid to be ignorin' the DeLorean parked in front of Armani Emporium."

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 3:41 PM

Anonymous said...

All valid points raised. But there is one overwhelming fact ignored. Gentrification of these neighborhoods mentioned made them safer. Sure, cultures have been largely ignored but let us look at some of that. Rampant drug use, crime garbage strewn streets... It was not paradise. Many folks were afraid to leave their homes after dark. If it takes middle class white people to take a chance and move into these neighborhoods in order to change that, is all of the change wrong? And not all people suffered either. there were actual homeowners who either profited from the increase in real estate or stayed in what for them became a far better neighborhood. I don't know what the real answer is, but I think it starts with an aggressive campaign bu government to lock up the savages that run these neighborhoods so that lawful people can live in a decent place... white, black or whatever color they are.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 4:28 PM

Anonymous said...

This ia a world wide phenomenon. London, Paris, Philly, Chicago, Moscow.. the list goes on. Until there is an easier way to get from point A to point B, the suburbs are going to continually be unattractive and city centers the point of where people want to live. Then add the global corporate brands of

stores that can afford the high rents that these corporate brands themselves have fueled and you have a recipe for a city for the rich. However what SHOULD be happening is the government should see this demand, this change in our cities and be expanding them through transportation expansion. The reason why things have been hyper-fueled is when you cannot expand outward anymore, limited development and inventory fuels hyper development and change. Alas, our government wont be expanding transportation where it is needed (to lower density neighborhoods) to allow for other types of economic housing expansion.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 4:52 PM

Anonymous said...

FWIW I believe federal monetary policy has played a role in this as well.

Firstly with financial deregulation in the mid-90s that lead to aggressive investment in RE all over the country that, in NYC, provided a double-wealth effect: it both pumped local RE values and enriched Wall St thru the various mortgage debt ponzis that eventually popped with Bear Stearns... and then the Feds begin printing $$$, which kept Wall St flush and, lately, has created pools of cash that see NYC RE as one of the few investments worth making: hence, huge institutional investors are again pouring big cash directly into local RE.

That cash spigot is ultimately the cause of HyperG, and it works like the pressure contours of a bomb, pushing up the rents and geographically displacing everyone to wherever their affordability contour ends up.

And, of course, many of those cash spigots can trace their plumbing right back to our fair city.

We can talk about race, culture, displacement, etc but most can only choose to live where they can afford, and the rest of the talk, which comes off as entitled or Columbus-like, is often just a self-justifying mantra used to quell the disappointment that comes not being able to live where they really wanted to because they don't have the cash. So for every pioneer who's intentionally landed in Bushwick are a dozen people who dreamed of Manhattan and found that's the closest they can get and have to make do.

When the RE market crashes again there will be a great resetting of all these decisions, and it will be interesting to see how those cultural shifts are regarded...

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 4:58 PM

Anonymous said...

I think this is a fantastic article, a fresh take on a problem that gets a lot of ink and handwringing, but little original thought.

However, I'm also curious if you have any solutions in mind.

Additionally, it seems like your point of view is that the culpability extends from the developers to the hyper-gentrifiers...and beyond - even to the original, first wave gentrifiers. Your beloved queer, punk, creative class of the (former) East Village were gentrifiers as well...as were the patrons of the original CBGB, the artists who moved into Soho lofts in the 60s/70s, etc.

If the people who gave NYC its vibrancy, the stuff that we're lamenting losing, are culpable in initiating this process of hyper-gentrification, isn't the whole premise of a solution flawed?

Is the ultimate solution a city without people? Should young white people be forbidden to move to the city? Or required to live in designated bland white people neighborhoods, at the risk of spreading the virus of hyper-gentrification? What's the end game?

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 4:59 PM

Anonymous said...

Spike Lee has Christopher Columbus Syndrome. Fort Greene has been primarily African American for only the last 50 years. My inlaws grew up there before that.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 5:18 PM

Anonymous said...

Caleo, you clearly misunderstood the message because of your apparent problems with the messenger. Who cares if it was Spike Lee saying those things, the fact is they're correct:

Why did it take white people moving to Fort Greene (or many other neighborhoods) to get regular trash pick up, increased police presence, better schools, etc? Why is it ok to ignore or suffocate the culture that was already there, for instance the drum circles in Marcus Garvey Park (whitewashed now as Mt. Morris Park), or not letting the Michael Jackson memorial take place there?

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 5:18 PM

lichtstrom said...

I remember seeing this when I was going to Harlem in the early 90s - I was surprised to see a Body Shop opening there. 20 years later, in 2012, I was living in Prospect Park South, happy with the yam bodega and the Flatbush Caton Market, when about 6 months into my time here I discovered another white person had called 911 over kids laughing in the street for laughing. Not over the gunshot heard 3 weeks back, oh no. Kids laughing. So I think there is no contrition, no understanding of what they are doing to the people who lived there before. There is an assumption that they, too, can have that "decent cup of coffee" without an issue, vs thinking that the bodega on the corner has just fine coffee, thank you, and for much less.

I still choose diversity, but now I will not be part of the generic white sea of faces that allow less conscious people think that the culture of the location is other than it is.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 5:40 PM

Anonymous said...

There are so many important issues here that get lost in a very biased portrayal.

You are correct that we would all likely be better off if newcomers to an area treated long-time residents and their history with respect. Why not lead with that?

Instead, you lead with a mention of "affluent white" newcomers and then move on to Spike's assertion that services improve when "white people" move in? Do you see what you did there? It's not even that it's an unfair elision of "affluent", it's far worse than that. You dropped the important part and left the unimportant part. Do you really believe that services would improve if poor white trash moved into the area? That's just preposterous. The issue about gentrification, while yes, partially race-based and partially class-based, is *overwhelmingly* class-based. Services improve when *affluent* people move in. Not "white" people. You just lose all credibility with how you have framed and distorted this issue.

And anyway, almost all assets (except a few inalienable ones, at least per common and statutory law, though not de facto) are subject to market forces, and the person with the most financial power gets those assets. Why should it be different in housing? Why don't you make that explicit rather than making some poorly argued emotional plea? Yes, people are harmed by gentrification. Guess what, some people are harmed by literally

every force in the universe. It doesn't make the alternative better necessarily.

And if you really think you're advancing your cause by listing "uppity" as a synonym, you really have an odd sense of what is effective rhetoric. All you've shown is that the connotation of uppity is unfair and idiotic, not that the users of the term "arrogant" are necessarily racist, as you clearly, clearly imply. I guess certain people can never be arrogant because of the color of their skin? I don't know. I don't even what to say.

I'm not making this comment because I think you shouldn't speak out about gentrification and its effects. On the contrary, I think you should. I think the issue's important. I just think you are doing more harm than good with painfully bad and biased arguments.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 5:53 PM

Anonymous said...

Anon at 4:52 has hit the nail on the head. And the deluge of capital is not just local, but global, as many other posters mentioned. Big cities all over the world are experiencing these problems with hyper development,sky rocketing real estate prices, income inequality etc.

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 8:51 PM

Jeremiah Moss said...

Thanks for all the great, thoughtful, detailed comments.

I like the idea of a different word for this phenomenon, one that doesn't use "gentrification," but I wonder if it would be recognizable without the G-word.

Solutions--good question. What do people think? I'm for stronger rent regulations, and extended to small businesses, especially those that have stood the test of time. I'm for major control of national chain businesses. What about subsidies to local businesses and investors, and not to foreign investors and big business?

MARCH 3, 2014 AT 9:29 PM

laura r. said...

its not about race spike. its about money. when an area starts to take off a bit, the commerical streets start to change. then the developers do the heavy marketing thing. in order to move

many units & homes the streets have to be clean. so, the developers appeal to the city, pay them off. spike dont be niave. there are many upwardly mobile blks who live in brooklyn, like the girl who likes good coffee. more will come. as to the brownstoners of yesteryear: those days (70s) coffee wasnt such a big trend. the younger people just have different tastes. the poster "heinze" has a good point, many of those buildings were built for the merchantile class. white business people. maybe it is the "right of return". some were worker housing as well. harlem was jewish, east harlem as italian. blacks were the interlopers. people fled to the suburbs because of the crime. spike stop playing the race card. you are in the east 60s, are you "blockbusting"? @one time you're neighbors would have fled. they accept you, regardless of what you look like. you made some valid points- but this gentrifcation monster is the corporations, not white folks. dont blame them, blame to global greed, who mow down buildings & drive out businesses faster then anyone has asked them too. im sure some of the new white people in brooklyn enjoy the melting pot. they are back, they dont want to be in the suburbs like their parents. how often do you visit? what are you doing to help people relocate? you have the bucks & the power, now put your$ where your mouth is. & for god sakes, stop complaining about tyler perry.

MARCH 4, 2014 AT 12:33 AM

Anonymous said...

Although white, I was born in Brooklyn in the late 1940's. I was an elementary school teacher for a number of years in a school tat was on the hyphen between Bedford and Stuyvesant on the NYC subway map! My mother lived there until her death in 2008, and I visited often.

I early on lost patience with the new "Brooklynites" who moved there from other parts of US, staked claims and thought they "discovered" Brooklyn. Not only that, but they called 2 or 3 zips codes Brooklyn and ignored the rest of the boro, including the cultural and historic diversity. How narrow minded, narcissistic and disrespectful.

MARCH 4, 2014 AT 12:52 AM

Stephen lavalle said...

Caleo,

You

are a perfect example

of cluelessness.

Tim Schreier said...

Today's NY Times 3/3/14

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/us/cities-helping-residents-resist-the-new-gentry.html?hpw&rref=us

Tim Schreier
New York, NY

Anonymous said...

Caleo, I've seen your argument before. The difference between the Italian-American situation of years ago and the one Spike Lee addresses is this: white Italian-Americans weren't displaced; they fled to the suburbs, like many other working-class and newly middle-class whites. They weren't priced out of their neighborhoods; they were afraid of brown people, especially because when brown people moved in, city services tended to go down, too. In some cases, this process was exacerbated by organized crime, corrupt city officials, and unscrupulous real estate profiteers. So the phenomenon of white flight from the cities left beautiful neighborhoods to rot.

And I want to add that I lived in NYC in the 1980s and through the early 2000s. I had a ringside seat for all of this. Gentrification chased me (and I'm white middle-class, just not rich) from Park Slope to the Lower East Side, to Cobble Hill (where the smell of D'Amico's roasting coffee perfumed the air) and to the Bronx. It's not just the working class that can't afford NYC anymore -- it's also those of us in the middle class who aren't making 6-figure incomes. I was born in Brooklyn and have thought about returning (I moved out of state to find an affordable alternative with some semblance of the culture of NYC). But there's no way I can afford to. And there are many out here like me, who long to return and cannot. Don't think that Spike Lee -- or at least those he feels he represents -- is the only angry voice out there, or that those angry voices only belong to African Americans.

Anonymous said...

Jeremiah, in re the "Mount Morris Park" Morrises: Likely this was named for "the Morris family of New York, descended from Welsh soldiers, [who] represented the closest thing to an

aristocracy that could be found in colonial America."
Gouverneur Morris, of that family, wrote much of the U.S.
Constitution. (Quote is from this website:
http://www.history.army.mil/books/RevWar/ss/morrisg.htm.)

MARCH 4, 2014 AT 8:10 AM

Anonymous said...

This is not about NYC or black and white. This is a global
phenomenon and related to increasing wealth disparity.

MARCH 4, 2014 AT 10:36 AM

Mr G said...

All these things are connected somehow, but not directly. And
to pin it all on 'the rich entitled white man' degrades this piece
to rant, preaching to the angry while explaining not much.

Just like before 2008: there is too much cheap money. Without
big money there no 'hyper-gentrification'.
The system that almost lead to a wordwide financial collapse
has not been changed or improved.
We all know that, we just forgot.

It's not that all aristocrats suddenly decided to leave their chalet
in the woods to steal your neighborhood.
For some reason there is a lot of excess money in this world,
and more people than ever have access to the pot. It trickles
down, just not to the bottom and the middle class.
The pot gets dumped on NYC and other inner cities because
money is hungry to be invested, and longtime homeowners are
happy to make a good profit. Buy and Sell.
Global money floats into NYC because people believe NYC is
a safe bet.
This is the underlying cause for the effects. So if there is any
racial component to it then it´s that white people seem to have
more Bank Jobs.

Another thing:
It's not that any Gentrifier appreciates the GAPification of their
newly occupied neighbourhood. Some GAP computer analyzes
that there is an area with a certain spending power where they
need to be present, because that's their business.
Blame the Gentrifiers for artisanal chocolate shops or
whatever, but I´m sure they like/dislike franchising chains at the
same rate as the average population.

MARCH 4, 2014 AT 11:35 AM

Rachel said...

I think the on going situation at the Chelsea Hotel does not get anywhere near enough coverage and is a perfect example of hyper gentrification. They are literally removing artists who have been there for decades to make room for the uber rich.

MARCH 4, 2014 AT 12:08 PM

Anonymous said...

Well put. You said what Spike Lee wasn't able to. Though I don't think Fort Greene qualifies as hyper-gentrification.

The reason Lee caused such a raucous was because he rant was based on bigotry and vilification of the other. It's simple.

MARCH 4, 2014 AT 12:44 PM

Caleo said...

Stephan lavalle- I'm clueless ? Care to elaborate, or just point and sputter ?

Anon. 8:02- Italians were displaced. They fled because the rate of violent crime skyrocketed in their once relatively safe neighborhoods. They were afraid of black people and the serious decline in living standards that accompanied the demographic shift. Their fears were quite real.
I'm Italian, and several native Brooklynites of Italian ancestry are close friends, and they won't hesitate to tell you what happened to their neighborhoods in the 70's. They won't hesitate to tell you the real violence they and other families experienced.
As I said, their stories have never been told. And I don't expect the holier- than- thou white progressives who commented to show any interest in those stories. Ask yourselves why.
I enjoy and appreciate Jeremiah's work here, and as I stated in the first comment I left, I felt the inclusion of choice bits of Spike's rant undermined the strength of the whole piece. Spike contributed to and profited from the gentrification that he rails against.In my eyes, he's a hypocrite.
I'm sure Spike would appreciate the commenters who think he can't handle strong criticism. He's a public figure and a grown man, and people have every right to respond to him. Spike doesn't need paternalistic progressives sticking up for him.
Finally, thanks to Jeremiah for his great work here and all the effort he puts into this blog.
Look forward to purchasing the book when it comes out.

MARCH 4, 2014 AT 1:20 PM

Goggla said...

Excellent post, Jeremiah.

MARCH 4, 2014 AT 1:49 PM

Chris said...

This is great piece, but it would've been better if you addressed your own role in the gentrification of the East Village. I understand you aren't a native New Yorker. We're all culpable, apparently, even those of us just looking for rent we can afford and a chance to pursue our dreams.

MARCH 4, 2014 AT 2:51 PM

Anonymous said...

Wonderful essay, Jeremiah. I just want to implore you (or anyone else) to suggest a word or phrase other than "hyper-gentrification". This is essential. "Gentrification" brings to mind what you described happened in the 1960s through the early 1990s --- individuals choosing to move to run-down neighborhoods to get more bang for their buck (whether renting or buying). "Hyper-gentrification" sounds like it's simply an accelerated, larger version of this same phenomenon. But it is not. It is not individuals who are driving this new phenomenon. As you and others have pointed out, it is driven by real estate developers, corporations, and global capital working in conjunction with city government. "If you build it, they will come." It wasn't that thousands of entitled Richie Riches moved to the LES, Williamsburg, Greenpoint, etc. and then they built soulless glass towers to house them all --- first, the developers worked in cahoots with government to build the Avalon Chrystie places (and their ilk), and then attracted the infuriating twerps to live there, and the Whole Foods (& banks, & Duane Reades, & Pinkberrys, & Starbucks) to set up shop. What can express the enormity of this, which has much more in common with the military-industrial-congressional complex than it does with doctors & lawyers buying inexpensive brownstones in poor neighborhoods? Something along the lines of: Developer Plutocrat Corporate Invasion. Needs to be more catchy. Perhaps you could ask your FB audience for suggestions. Keep up the great work!

MARCH 4, 2014 AT 4:28 PM

RobertB said...

Jeremiah, this was an outstanding post on hyper-gentrification. It was clear to me, though no one talked about it much, that the changes that occurred in the city during Bloomberg's tenure were not the product of mere happenstance. They were driven at the highest levels of politics and business and were part of an effort to remake NY as a city friendly to tourists and people of wealth. The influx of foreign money into this city has been

staggering. Thanks so much for writing this up. Robert

MARCH 4, 2014 AT 6:24 PM

Giovanni said...

Based on Jeremiah's excellent analysis it seems that hyper-gentrification is a combination of different factors, both social and economic. It might be useful to break down the component parts in order to see if there is another term or expression for this phenomenon:

Condofication: The massive re-zoning of neighborhoods combined with massive increases in the cost of housing and a dwindling supply of affordable housing options. Long time residents are bought out, priced out or forced out by new residents who have "discovered" a hot new neighborhood, a/k/a the Christopher Columbus syndrome.

Bankification: The trend towards a massive number of bank branches opening in rapidly changing areas, especially where almost none existed before. These branches seem to be strategically located in order to participate in and help fund the spread of high end coop and condo apartments and retail stores.

Nicknamification: The renaming of neighborhoods by real estate developers (Spanish Harlem is SpaHa, the South Bronx is SoBra, RAMBO, is "Right Around The Manhattan Bridge Overpass) has also spread to parks, as Spike Lee illustrated with the renaming of Marcus Garvey Park. This helps to erase the history of an area and make it seem more welcoming to newest settlers, increasing marketability and property values.

Generification: Following the Disneyfication of Times Square and other areas, the explosion of chain stores like Starbucks, Walgreens and Chipotle fueled by corporate stock market money, turning neighborhoods with character into outdoor malls. Huge featureless buildings rise to erase the former skyline.new amenities designed for the wealthier residents sprout up.

Bistrofication: New high priced restaurants, bars and cafes help drive out long established businesses, attract tourists and weekend revelers, driving down the quality of life for residents who cannot afford the new places and limit their options for food, services and local entertainment.

Re-Colonization: The stripping away of old cultural traditions in favor of the new, such as the renovation of Washington Square

Park and subsequent attempts by the new Conservancy to evict longtime hotdog sellers in favor of gourmet ice cream sandwiches, groups condoning off large areas of public parks for their own catered private parties, and the general hipsterism of Williamsburg pushing aside other cultures.

Me-ification: What Spike Lee is really talking about, the extremely self-centered way that newer residents push aside and look down on the locals who came before them. Due to their affluence and rapid influx they can easily create a critical mass that can affect local services, decisions by community boards and politicians, unbothered by the waves they are creating since they are like the guy riding into the marina on the biggest yacht. This has less to do with race or class that it has to do with awareness and sensitivity to their neighborhood and it's traditions.

MARCH 4, 2014 AT 7:08 PM

Anonymous said...

News media such as the NY Times have played a disarmingly prodigious role in the gentrification process. Remember those "travel" articles when some brave soul from Manhattan ventured to the wilds of Greenpoint or declared that Crown Heights was the new Bushwick, which was the new Williamsburg, which was the East Village, etc etc.?? Not to mention the paper's marriage to real estate interests, that suddenly legitimizes BoCoCa and ProCro and BedWick as "neighborhoods" (it's worth noting that BoCoCa refers to Boerum Hill, Cobble Hill, and Carroll Gardens which of course were all made-up neighborhood names during the first brownstoner gentrification in the 60s-70s).

That said, while it's entertaining to make fun of $7 lattes and yoghurt chains and ignorant twentysomething transplants and their ridiculous dogs, it would be more efficient to focus our energies on practical solutions through economic tools that cities such as Philadelphia are already using. Consider the article that appeared in that very same newspaper, linked here. Homestead Exemption and LOOP focus on protecting longtime home-owners from ballooning property taxes. Sortof rewards for "sticking it out." And yet more needs to be done, particularly for renters.

The changing culture of neighborhoods in the city is difficult to stop or predict. The problem with gentrification comes down to a simple question of housing affordability. Everyone wants a livable, affordable neighborhood to call home. Those (without wealth/resources) that have already found it need protection

(e.g. property tax increase exemptions)- those who need it need assistance (e.g. higher affordable unit percentages in new developments). Instead of sensationalizing the process and feeding into yuppies' already negative views of grumbling townies, we need to mobilize our politicians to do more.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/us/cities-helping-residents-resist-the-new-gentry.html?_r=0

MARCH 4, 2014 AT 7:15 PM

Alexandre Mouravskiy said...

I'm terribly confused. I read this entire rather lengthy piece and am still not sure what the point is. You throw out a lot of terribly scary sounding words - "super-gentrification", "corporate-sponsored", "wholesale destruction" - but provide no actual facts to back up your assertions. It's almost as if you have very little actual understanding of the history of New York outside of your own brief time there and a few decades immediately preceding it.

The reason people tell you that New York is always changing and you should get used to it is because it is. This pace of change hasn't sped up any recently. Gentrification hasn't been sold to corporations - it has always largely belonged to corporations. Hell, Brooklyn was mostly private estates and manor-apartments until the 20s-40s, with rental properties built by wealthy developers. New York's affordable housing was almost entirely due to white flight in the 60s. It was never built to be an affordable city for blue-collar types. The working class had ALWAYS been marginalized in New York, pushed to the outskirts and the less desirable parts of town. This hasn't changed. It hasn't sped up. There might be more national chains around, sure, but only because there are more national chains around period. This isn't bad. You just think it's bad.

Ultimately, what your entire article comes down to is that you are upset that the things YOU like are being replaced with things OTHER people like. Other people whom you yourself don't like. Other people who are less creative, less intelligent, less worldly, and less interesting than you because they dare to "wear dockers". Who dare to question your deeply held belief that something has to be weird and different and disliked in order to be true. What your article boils down to, in other words, is a sad case of "How dare you like something I don't like?" In railing against what you see as the cultural hegemony of the "yuppies", you're trying to enforce your own cultural hegemony. And this makes you, and Spike Lee, colossal asses.

I guess the point of my slightly disjointed comment is put up or shut up. Surely it shouldn't be difficult to find out the percentage of properties held by "corporate interests" now vs. 20 or 30 years ago and then compare it to the rest of the nation. Surely it can't be difficult to find the square footage being used by commercial developers in recent years compared to the past. Bring some facts, because all you have now are blind assertions and prejudices.

And as an aside, CBGBs closed because management had spent the better part of the 90s running it into the ground. By the time I became a regular around 2000, it was already dead, mostly because the old punks were dead or had moved on, and management didn't book enough solid acts to attract a younger crowd. Seriously, the average age at most shows there through the early 00's was probably around 40. You can't run a music venue the same exact way for 30 years and expect it to stay profitable.

MARCH 4, 2014 AT 10:35 PM

Brendan said...

Alexandre,

There are too many factual errors in your comment to know where to begin refuting it. A couple things:

1) Townhouses in Brooklyn were built as family homes and were family-owned until very recently, when foreign investment firms began buying them. This has been reported on quite a bit. Here's a start: http://www.businessinsider.com/foreigners-up-cost-of-brooklyn-homes-2013-7 You can find out more by googling a little.

2) Huge swaths of the city were in fact built for the working class--basically any housing that could be described as "tenement." Are you actually familiar with the city at all?

3) The city is in fact uniquely expensive right now, compared to any other time in history. See this fact sheet, from someone in the real estate industry: http://www.millersamuel.com/files/2012/10/DE100yearsNYC.pdf You have to run those prices through an inflation calculator, but if you do, you will see. (There are better sources for this out there but I can't find them at the moment.)

Insofar as 2010 New York resembles any other period in its history, it's the late 19th century gilded age. I thought we

agreed that was bad?

MARCH 5, 2014 AT 10:57 AM

RWordplay said...

An important article, yes, and I'm grateful for Jeremiah Moss's good, if highly biased work.

But as someone who has been writing about the Branding of the City, since the late 90s, I've come to a single, very simple, conclusion and that is: From the time of New Amsterdam to the present day, there has never been a New York—even Brooklyn was formed by the consolidation of different villages/towns, and the City itself created by the amalgamation of the 5 boroughs.

What there has always been is an idea of New York. An idea predicated on personal experience. To my mind, the lifespan of the idea of New York is a little more than a generation. Which is to say, every New Yorker has his or her New York, and it is always equal parts reality and nostalgia.

I argued this in my Masters Thesis in Media Studies, which I am hoping to publish. Should the manuscript be published, it may take some heat out of this argument over the benefits and losses of gentrification, while replacing highly subjective responses with a more historical, social, economic and aesthetic reading of them.

MARCH 5, 2014 AT 1:11 PM

Anonymous said...

A lot of good knowledge and research here, and some good observations. In my experience (40+ years living in Manhattan and Brooklyn) it becomes a much more complex question when you get away from statistics and into people's lives. And, in that bigger picture, it's worth remembering that much of what's accelerated the predatory kind of gentrification you describe is the same inflated growth of market capitalism and its cultures that affect the whole country, urban and rural, and the world. Watching the increase in white faces coming out of my Clinton Hill subway stop over 10 years was certainly indicative, but getting to know my neighbors, ranging from a partner in a prestigious Wall Street law firm (who was black), to a retired teacher active in local politics for decades, who lived with her family in a brownstone bought in the 70s and worth over $1000,000 that she could barely afford to keep because of market-based property tax assessments, to a drug dealer who regularly railed in outrage at block association meetings about white influx, because he'd grown up on the block and others hadn't. This, and other experiences over the years, have taught

me that the story of gentrification in NY doesn't fit into a simple morality tale. Gentrification is real enough, and certainly a threat to much of what's great in this city, but the public dialogue about it could stand to get beyond the level of Spike Lee's grandstanding and the arguments of haters on Brownstoner.com. Thanks for helping move it in that direction.

MARCH 5, 2014 AT 4:23 PM

Caleo said...

Some more great comments have opened up this thread. As I stated earlier, M.Heinz made a great point, and Alexandre Mouravskiy made a similar point, that most of the brownstones in New York were never meant for the working classes, and that the upper classes are reclaiming the city for themselves. Brendan is correct in stating that there has always been a working/service class in this city. Alexandre is correct in that they were relegated to the less desirable parts of the city. A perfect storm of fiscal mismanagement and large scale demographic shifts in the 60's/early 70's created a vacuum into which a creative class seeking cheap rents moved in. The 70's through 90's were the best of times and the worst of times. High crime and social dysfunction next to an explosion of creativity in every field imaginable. Both Hip Hop and Punk and the multiple subcultures that grew out of those movements were birthed in NYC during that time. The grit and the grime and the danger spurred many to wild, creative heights. And anyone living here could be a part of it.
As the years go by, I have come to the conclusion that that creative Golden Age was a unique but fleeting moment in the city's history, and nothing like that will probably be seen here again. I moved to New york in 88 to be a part of that city. That city is now long gone.
In my opinion, Alexandre is right, Jeremiah is judging the new arrivals and looking for justifications to hate them. I'll go on the record and say I really don't like the new hipster/SWPL social class that has invaded and transformed the city, as well as hating the building boom replacing brick and mortar with glass and steel. I hate the replacement of mom and pop shops with national chains. Unfortunately, these changes are what a lot of young people want, or at the very least, will accept without complaint.
As RWordplay said, we all have our own New York, and as much as I would like someone to build a time machine that lets me go back to the late 80's, it's not gonna happen. All we have are memories and nostalgia. The forces changing this city are bigger than any of us. I don't think people should just roll over and die in the face of it, but the perfect storm that created the New York of the 70's through 90's has morphed

into another storm, global in scale, that has transformed this city, among many others, into Dubai on the Hudson.
If you lived here before the 2000's, at least be thankful you got to be a part of one of New York's greatest chapters.

MARCH 5, 2014 AT 5:16 PM

Chuck said...

The dominant culture will dominate.

MARCH 6, 2014 AT 8:29 AM

Anonymous said...

Great essay - thanks!
I am from Seattle, and work as a situated ethnographer as part of my social art practice, specifically focusing on urban issues. I recall a time where I worked in a 400 sq. ft. studio in the Odd Fellows building - a haven for artists of all stripes, small theaters, studios and the original home to Velocity Dance Center. I was evicted, as were all the artist residents because a developer from Bellevue - a far away place across Lake Washington - who had recently visited NYC for the first time, was inspired to make an offer on the building, some months before. The creative network was out, and new creatives, read: architects, graphic designers, etc. = those that can afford 10 x's the current rent, were in. (As it has been reported to me, during a visit to the Century Ballroom housed in the Odd Fellows building, Mrs. Developer was overheard telling Mr. Developer: Don't buy this building, there is an entire community here.)

As part of my work, I hosted a sort of Jane Jacobs 101 to many of the developers who at the time were gobbling up the pike pine corridor properties. The particular developer responsible for the displacement of so many relevant artists at the Odd Fellows did not attend. It was an interesting afternoon. One developer I knew in those days valued existing culture, although the cost of occupancy was prohibitive, making me feel like a ornament in my own neighborhood. Most in attendance were uninterested in the fallout from destabilizing an existing culture in favor of profit - huge profit.

I was back visiting my Seattle neighborhood last year, and it is exactly how you describe the East Village. (A friend who has lived there since the 70's pulled out and now lives in Japan.) I couldn't get over how both of these places share the same brand of people: not too interested in engaging with an existing culture with the interest of learning and supporting, but more curious about discovering and bending the locale to fit their self centered imaginary.

MARCH 6, 2014 AT 10:25 AM

Anonymous said...

We're undergoing the same process here in London, with prices and rents in our suburb up 30-40% in 18 months, since it has suddenly been discovered.

It's hilarious looking at people taking the existence of a single nice sandwich shop as a sign that a neighbourhood is 'up-and-coming'.

But on local forums, I read the disgust of the local newcomers at the 'too many fried chicken shops' - and their desire to turn it into a replica of the area they themselves complain about being driven out of.

The house prices now actually lead, rather than follow, the gentrification.

My historical experience is that it used to be a slow process - graduates looking for somewhere affordable move into an area, and slowly people open businesses to serve the changing community, and then comes a tipping point where the neighbourhood is 'attractive'.

Now it feels like areas are nominated for gentrification.

A key point I made on a local forum - about why there is more local resentment to rich incomers than East European immigrants - I think historically, the incomers to poorer neighbourhoods were themselves low income - arts graduates from lower-middle-class backgrounds without trust-fund wealth have pretty much working-class level income.

Their presence changes the area - people may not like the cultural changes - but it doesn't force people out.

But once the upper middle classes started looking at it as a lifestyle choice, or indeed a career, it became a whole different ball game.

MARCH 6, 2014 AT 8:52 PM

DrBOP said...

Thanks for taking this on Jeremiah. I look forward to your longer piece which you are no doubt continuing to construct. I was especially impressed with your attention to the use of language. I'm always disappointed when I see the various manifestations of the Language Of War in civil (and not so civil)

discussions/debates. Yes,I am just as guilty as the next person at this shortcoming.

Can't add much to the points you and others have made here : I can only reinforce that it is happening globally (I don't recognize downtown Toronto, Vancouver, etc. anymore) ; that it's based in a class structure that the great majority of people don't even want to admit exists : and it is fully-sourced in the failure of our governments to be '.....of the people....for the people....by the people..." (if they ever TRULY were). Until we get the dollar out of our election processes THROUGHOUT the world....it's going to be a rough road to hoe.

PS = Spike, my man, way to STIR the shit up......you got'em ALL ranting now :+)
It's the start of a public discussion that I thought would never happen.

MARCH 7, 2014 AT 1:20 PM

John K said...

The differences between earlier periods of gentrification and neighborhood transformation, and this current global supergentrification, are noteworthy, and Jeremiah's essay (jeremiad?) points to many of them. People have mentioned the economic and social transformations of neighborhoods, the dominance of chains, etc., but another aspect that we should not forget is how these current changes are the results of political policies, in terms of economics and zoning/real estates, that have occurred before and are now in hyperdrive once again.

Over the last 30 years we have had a steady movement in favor of the assets against labor, and in favor of *rentiers* against salary and wage earners. Someone mentioned the huge amounts of capital available today, but only a small group of people has access to them, especially after the 2008 global economic crisis, which was caused by the banks, investment firms, and terrible national and global economic policies. In the US we have monetary policies--needed in the wake of the economic crisis and the zero-bound status--that make capital acquisition for those at the top very cheap; we have fairly generous tax policies, only slightly tightened under Obama, that reward those at the top, people receiving capital gains, hedge fund managers, etc., at the expense of everyone else; national and local neoliberal policies that are disinvesting in public institutions and commons, in favor of often already wealthy private actors; a porous tax system for global corporations, and giveaways at the local level, which benefits not just real estate capital, but wealthy individuals who can

benefit from decade-long tax abatement at a time when most Americans can barely hold onto their homes, let alone buy a new one; and more.

We also had two successive mayors in New York, the second one, Bloomberg, in particular, who with the help of a compliant "liberal" City Council rezoned whole areas of the city in order to make them available to real estate interests, yet did not use his power to ensure affordable housing (which he could easily have done), but took a mostly laissez-faire approach. We see what this turned into.

Spike Lee's arguments on a local level may have some problems, but in a larger sense, the story of displacement of African Americans (and other people of color, including Native Americans), and disinvestment and neo-colonial style policing and surveillance of where they live has a LONG history in the US. In New York alone, multiple longstanding areas of black settlement were destroyed or claimed to build new neighborhoods, public infrastructure, etc. Seneca Village, where Central Park now stands, San Juan Hill for Lincoln Center, etc., have parallels ALL OVER THE US. So while we might talk about the shifts and changes in a particular neighborhood, as Caleo notes of Fort Greene, though it's also crucial to note how government policy and real estate interests drove white flight too (and, in the wake of disinvestment and policing strategies allowed crime to foster to enable and accelerate white flight), the reality is that Spike's argument at a larger historical scale is not inaccurate.

All of this has been written about by very able scholars and critics, so perhaps Jeremiah and others might consider posting a reading list for those who think this is just speculation or hypernostalgia (which may be part of the mix), and not at some level a truthful reading of some of the deleterious changes happening to parts of New York.

MARCH 7, 2014 AT 1:38 PM

Frank Scott said...

"Hyper-gentrification, born from gentrification, is bigger, faster, and meaner than its parent. It's also sicker, a sociopathic system with no compassion."

capitalism can be described with the same words..those who say that this g-process is nothing new are at least partly correct, even if often simplistic in their analysis..all thoughts about a "new" economy, indulged in by wannabe innovators and such, have little if any understanding of the old one which

still rules but operates in a much faster and far more socially destructive way...private profit always works best for some and much worse for those showing the loss that must exist to make the profit...those profits are bigger than ever, for less people, and the loss is much greater than ever and being borne by more people..

really enjoyed your extensive piece and don't mean this as disagreement but only wish to point out what i think we all need to understand, and take action to change: private profits sustained at public loss are the problem we must solve in order to not only end this one aspect of capitalism - neighborhood transformation by anti-democratic economic force - but all the others, like profitable climate change, profitable wars that murder millions and imprison almost as many, and other market "commodity" items that are making some few of us affluent while we are in process f destroying the very planet, let alone nation or neighborhood, we live in and on..thanks for this and check out my blog if you like:
legalienate

fs

MARCH 7, 2014 AT 3:39 PM

Fiona said...

I appreciate the time you took to make these points, it seems your blog is basically highlighting these problems as they happen - but no solutions are ever offered. Or is your goal just to complain about it? I'm just trying to understand what your point is.

MARCH 8, 2014 AT 4:39 PM

Anonymous said...

John K is right on the money.
Like most academics, RWordplay obfuscates the point.

MARCH 9, 2014 AT 2:36 PM

Anonymous said...

It's terrible how the quality of life is improving. And how the misery index seems to rise and fall with different classes of people ..just, ummmm ..."terrible ".

MARCH 9, 2014 AT 5:19 PM

Anonymous said...

New York Magazine... very different from the New Yorker

MARCH 10, 2014 AT 11:39 AM

Anonymous said...

The shock troops are the artists, true, who need what suburbia can't supply.
Another point: who sold the brownstones to the urban pioneers? Usually longtime residents (or their heirs) who could finally make a little money on their way earlier investment and had a chance to move somewhere else, like back to PR or to Florida... sometimes they sold with renters intact and sometimes the building was cleared for an easier sale. Those are the people who were displaced.

MARCH 10, 2014 AT 12:08 PM

Anonymous said...

A very astute summary of a very real problem. But what should we do if we're worried about *perpetrating it?*

I'm young white twenty-something who is nominally college-educated and grew up on Long Island, with the rest of my family dotted around Queens and Brooklyn. And now I'm about to get a wage where I can pay rent, food and utilities.

My father worked 30 years in Coney Island, and my grandmother lived in the Jewish enclave in Sea Gate, but Brooklyn already is off the table to me. Is there any way for me to *not* plant the seeds of this nightmare all over again if I were to start looking for sub-$1000/month rents in the Bronx?

Is there a way to minimize the damage? Or hit a reverse switch? I don't just want to be nodding my head along and sighing dejectedly while being a half-unwitting recon unit. Even if I'm not the virulent moneyed type already ripping Long Island City and Astoria to shreds, how do I not aid and abet them in whatever place I wind up?

(And how obnoxious is this hand-wringing before I even find somewhere that'll take a deposit, ha ha ha.)

MARCH 12, 2014 AT 12:32 PM

Anonymous said...

Fiona,
It's Jeremiah's job to bitch about it lol.
Actually it's up to NYC residents to do something about it. And you can start small. In my case, I mostly spend my money at mom and pop establishments. I avoid these stupid nail salons and cupcake shops in my neighborhood.

So many ways to do it and of course if there's a will there's a

way ;)

Anonymous said...

Anonymous at 10:42:

Wait, are the nail salons and cupcake shops "corporate" or "mom and pop?" Or are they, mentioned earlier, just something that someone else likes, but you don't? You've made a huge leap of logic there.

RWordplay said...

The notion of Mom & Pop stores are pleasant to consider from a romantic point of view, but remove the Potemkin facade, and one would no more celebrate them in 2014 than one would bless sharecropping and encourage our children to be tenant farmers.

Moms and Pops worked proverbial fingers to bone to make sure their sons and daughters could rise higher in the world, whether they understood the consequences of upward mobility or not.
What they could articulate was the long hours, the 100 hidden costs to body, mind and soul. They were a necessity of another time. Yes, I would prefer to always buy my meat from Pino's or my mozzarella from Joe's or my hot and fennel sausages from Faicco's, etc. but that requires a great amount of time and patience. And, although these businesses all have wholesale accounts, rising prices, unpaid mandates, etc. grow faster than income. (Something Mayor de Blasé doesn't understand, or if he does understand, is indifferent to.)

I live in the South Village exactly because I want to buy ravioli at Raffetto's but it, like the stores mentioned above, are less and less supported by the neighborhood, then remnants of the neighborhood, people returning to the neighborhood driven by nostalgia, or tourists, or the well-to-do, who worship the alter of authenticity, if not authenticity itself.
As a New Yorker, I despise the cupcake shops, but also the arrival of the Ladurées—why go to Paris, we have La Maison du Chocolat at Rock Center and East 78th Street? Why go to Italy—we have Eataly? There's nothing to be done. There's no going back, we are becoming another global generica—see final paragraph of my article on your left—http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/10/09/complaint-box-on-your-left/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0
This is our inheritance; we might as well squander it.

MARCH 21, 2014 AT 6:47 PM

Anonymous said...

Why would you despise cupcake shops?? What is not to like about cupcakes? Other than the fact that they represent something that's not you. Namely, it's the new wave, and you're not (that's a collective you, not you personally).

The sad, stupid logic seems to be that X represents "hispters," and I'm not a hipster, thus hipsters are dumb, and therefore X is also dumb. Logic which is itself rather dumb and boring.

I recently discovered this blog, and I am fascinated and irritated by it!

MARCH 24, 2014 AT 8:28 AM

laura r. said...

mar 24 8:28 am, i agree, it's absurdly overly symbolic. we had cupcakes @ home in the 1950s., especially @ my birtrday parties. a little cake, what is the problem? now there is an entire group of bloated people w/hanging old tattoos that dont realize that cupcakes were not invented for sexinthecity. magnolia was a lovely local place. i understand not liking ugly chain businesses. still dont know what a hipster is. @my age, its out of my realm. been asking that question here for years. way back in 1970 someone decribed me as "wears her boots over her pants" "wears store bought clothes" i said say what? (which may have meant newly manufactured clothes, not from thift shops. i was "symbolic"). are the characters from HBO "girls" hipsters? they live like 4 to an apt. was i a hipster? what did they call "hipsters" in 1970? or 1963? beatniks or hippys are supposed to be "cool" terms. what was a term for an UNcool pretentious person? agree that hyper gentrification is aweful. dont throw out the baby w/the bath water. try a nice cupcake w/your coffee. find a small privately owned bakery, & please dont tell them what to bake.

MARCH 24, 2014 AT 5:56 PM

Anonymous said...

@ John K. "
"All of this has been written about by very able scholars and critics, so perhaps Jeremiah and others might consider posting a reading list for those who think this is just speculation or hypernostalgia"

Here's one, although it's not just about NY but other cities undergoing hyper-gentrification as well.

Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution by Harvey, David

MARCH 25, 2014 AT 11:38 AM

Jeremiah Moss said...

thanks for that, Anon. led me to this:
http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/1155-why-aren-t-the-left-thinking-about-what-the-hell-s-going-on-david-harvey-meets-icon-magazine

MARCH 25, 2014 AT 11:57 AM

Anonymous said...

I lived in the East Village in the 80's (tho broke, I guess that being a white/performer/club goer made me part of that gentrification) and am still boggled that dinner for two on Ave. B costs as much or more as my rent back then. I was always afraid of being mugged, horrified by buildings hollowed out by fire and shooting galleries. Yet I -and so many others - thrived on the energy, the adventure, the sense of possibility, and think the determination it took to negotiate those times also helped drive people to achieve - and to try new things. I saw the same thing happen on South Beach, and am now watching the same process in Wynwood/the Design District. I don't know how you fight it, and it saddens and angers me deeply. Isn't there some way to balance quality of life for a wider range of people?
In New York I wonder - what happens to the workers who service the rich who are taking over the city? The coffee barista, the chain store salesperson, the waitress in the gourmet restaurant, even the dancers and actors and musicians and artists who provide their much valued/vaunted culture? Where do they live? How long will their subway rides get before they give up and go elsewhere? And then who will wait on the billionaires?

MARCH 26, 2014 AT 2:04 PM

Premshree said...

Thank you for taking the time to share your well-articulated thoughts on the topic.

I haven't lived in New York very long -- only a little over three years -- and even I sense that something's not quite right with the way the city is changing. As an outsider looking in, when I moved to New York, what attracted me was New York's diversity -- both social and ethnic. I thought New York could sustain such diversity, but clearly this is not the case. In the very short time that I have been here I witnessed the complete

transformation of Williamsburg from an already-gentrified yuppy neighborhood to a disneyland for the nouveau rich.

Recently I have been frequently visiting Crown Heights, and the gentrification there is very apparent. However, something about the process there strikes me more as the old-school gentrification -- anachronous with the hyper-gentrification sweeping most of the city. But then again it may just be the nascency of the process that deludes.

What makes an economically and ethnically diverse society in a city sustainable? Is it that there is always a certain amount of dynamism that makes a city sustainable (a city with a mix of middle-class and poor versus rich and even richer?) and that the specific components that make it diverse are constantly in flux? Is the world slowly becoming fairer somehow and hence creating a system of cycling through city dwellers?

MARCH 26, 2014 AT 7:10 PM

anniep said...

Wonderful. Have you pitched it to Adam Moss? Or the Voice? You should.

MARCH 29, 2014 AT 11:57 AM

Anonymous said...

*****WAR*****

APRIL 8, 2014 AT 5:13 PM

sgath92 said...

Not every city is going to become a corporatized city like NYC & London are turning into. There's a spectrum involved here, and on the opposite end of it you find cities like Detroit & Camden where the country's poorest are left to fend for themselves. The poor who have been displaced are ending up in cities that are on that lower end of the spectrum, moving to places like Newark, Philly, Buffalo, etc. where things are not well off, but not as far gone as the post apocalyptic dystopia known as Detroit. Crime & poverty are linked for obvious reasons, and a quick look at the police blotter in cities like Allentown & Philly in recent years will show you countless entries of "no known current address, formerly of New York City."

Another thing you have to remember is that as people are pushed into poverty, that money is going to someone higher up in the marketplace. The first years of this "great recession" were a boom to luxury sales. Rolls Royce sales went up 130%

as a direct result of the 2008 crash [not an exaggeration, you can google that statistic].

APRIL 9, 2014 AT 11:28 AM

sgath92 said...

"Why did it take white people moving to Fort Greene (or many other neighborhoods) to get regular trash pick up..."

The problem is revenue. Services like trash pickup have to be paid for using taxes, and when the incomes of a city's residents goes down [see: Detroit] there isn't enough money for the city to adequately fulfill these civic responsibilities and then a snowballing effect starts as budget problems get worse. Gentrification, regardless its morality problems, causes an increase in revenue. The polar opposite of massive gentrification is urban flight, which has the reverse effect on revenue.

Its not quite that simple however, once you start talking about education. If you look at education spending per student, many poorly performing urban districts spend more per student than what you'll find in some rural or suburban districts that perform better. Money alone is not a good fix for say, language barriers [like if you're dealing with an immigrant population], or lack of parental involvement. How many urban poor parents don't have time to make it to PTA meetings because they're trying to balance numerous part time jobs? How many think education isn't worth the effort, because it wasn't enough to make a difference in their own lives?

APRIL 9, 2014 AT 11:57 AM

sgath92 said...

The crime is not eliminated, only relocated. Former New Yorkers have moved to cities like Philly, and the resulting crime increases have triggered white flight there [just look at SW Philly]. So what it's really doing is making it someone else's problem.

If you really want to get rid of the crime instead of just moving it around you have to get rid of the economic inequality, and/or bring about a better approach to mental health treatment [addiction would fall under this IMHO].

APRIL 9, 2014 AT 12:08 PM

Anonymous said...

Concerning Spike Lee, people forget that with fame and fortune, come the psychos or people looking for a helping

hand. He had no choice but to move from Ft. Greene because everyone knew where he lived and people were ringing his door bell at odd hours of the night. He feared for the safety of his family as anyone would. So, he is by far a hypocrite, actually its nice to see he is still concerned about his old neighborhood though all of his remarks may not be on point.

APRIL 16, 2014 AT 10:03 AM

Anonymous said...

Can't believe I am weighing in on this. The point that is missed? Services got better and crime plummeted across the city, in neighborhoods that were primarily white, black, hispanic, etc. Because of that, people moved to less expensive areas that they wouldn't have otherwise moved to. So builders built more, prices went up, and around it goes. Happened in Greenpoint, a previously white, working class polish neighborhood just like it did in Fort Green.

APRIL 24, 2014 AT 12:27 PM

Anonymous said...

Spike Lee is a racist hypocrite. I'll bet he would be all for the proposed renaming of Sedgwick Avenue in the Bronx to "Hip Hop Boulevard" to honor it as the birthplace of Hip Hop. Meanwhile what about all the people who grew up on Sedgwick Avenue whose families lived there for decades before the Hip Hop crowd moved in and don't want their childhood street identified with a type of music that has in its time been associated with gangs, violence and drugs? I could quote him back to himself: "I'm for democracy and letting everybody live, but you gotta have some respect. You can't just come in when people have a culture that's been laid down for generations, and you come in and now shit gotta change because you're here? Get the &*!^ outta here. Can't do that!" Well, touché Spike, I could say that back to YOU. What about all the "respect" the people who moved into the Bronx in the 60s and 70s showed it when they turned it into nothing but a violent slum? How does he think the people who lived there felt about having to leave a place they loved and watch it be destroyed? If a white person said what he said about their neighborhood he would call them a racist. Well, I have news for him - HE is a racist hypocrite!

APRIL 29, 2014 AT 11:45 PM

Anonymous said...

Nice try but I don't buy it.

I grew up in Brooklyn, both my parents grew up in Brooklyn,

having been brought up there by my grandparents who immigrated from Ireland.

My mother grew up in Park Slope, which, during the fifties and sixties, was a predominantly working-class Irish neighborhood, and my dad grew up in East Flatbush, which, at the time, also during the fifties and sixties, was a largely Irish, Italian, and Jewish neighborhood. Today, both neighborhoods are strikingly different.

Shortly after I was born in the early eighties, my parents bought a Victorian house in Flatbush, Brooklyn. The house came with stained glass windows and bells on the floor to alert the maids. Our house, like many of the other Victorians and brownstones in Brooklyn, had been designed by prominent architects at the turn of the century for the wealthy people at the time. By the time my parents came to inhabit it, there was gunfire routinely heard outside our windows and my brothers routinely got jumped. Once, there was a police shooting in which there was so many shots fired you could smell the gun powder from the porch. Which was why a family like mine (9 people with only one parent working as a secretary), could afford to live in a home with a maid's room.

So yeah, the Bloomberg administration helped bring in the developers, but the developers only came because they knew that since the crime rates were now at a historically low point, WHITE PEOPLE WHO WEREN'T WHITE TRASH WOULD RENT/BUY THEM.

It's supply and demand, not a conspiracy.

MAY 31, 2014 AT 3:42 PM

Riffchorusriff said...

Jeremiah,

Long time reading, first time commenting....This is one of your finest posts. I liked the detail and thought you put into writing about such a complex subject. I think it's important to keep this conversation going, so we can all figure out what's really happening here in our city together.

JULY 21, 2014 AT 8:46 PM

Anonymous said...

New Yorkers have been advertising and selling New York for a long time. Technology just speeds things up. Sex in the City, Seinfeld, etc. You guys brought us here!

JULY 27, 2014 AT 10:56 PM

Anonymous said...

Finally read your blog! For many years, I felt that the tidal ,tsunami like changes going 'round my Brooklyn neighborhood were meant to be. The same things we worry about now were the same things that people 100 yrs. ago worried about.

I don't think there are any easy answers, but just like a wave, it will crest. The up and down cycle will continue and somewhere in the dim corners of this magnificent city, a new "underground" of similar minded people with empathy and passion and a "Do The Right Thing" mentality will take this city back from the power brokers!

AUGUST 3, 2014 AT 10:09 PM

Anonymous said...

Great post. I prefer the term UBER-GENTRIFICATION

DECEMBER 23, 2014 AT 3:21 PM

Mouse said...

I remember first visiting NYC as a kid in 1979. Koch was mayor and Gotham was in deep, deep guano. Remember then? I'll never forget walking through Alphabet City (I was a kid and had no idea how dangerous it was) and seeing a dead body fall from an upper window onto the sidewalk one block ahead of where I was standing.

People fear change because they don't understand it. When I read pieces like this one (anti-corporation, anti-white, anti-success, anti-this/that, hypocrisy's OK as long as a hypocrite's on my side), it's a pious plea for eventual taxpayer subsidization in some form or another. After all, if a small mom/pop business can't afford rent and refuses to change its business model and it's serving an ever-smaller market for whatever they're selling and people happen to prefer clean/shiny/new to old/dirty/smelly/grimy/surly, they deserve to be subsidized, right? Is it money you resent?

By the way, the best coffee's in Jersey and it has been that way for decades.

MARCH 16, 2015 AT 2:57 PM

isomorphismes said...

I read David Byrne's piece. I thought it was measured, despite the anger and use of the word "fuck".

Spike Lee is a hothead and David Byrne is not; I don't think it's a racial issue in this case.

MAY 3, 2015 AT 7:05 PM

Anonymous said...

This is happening in Beacon, NY right now. Brooklynites priced out of Brooklyn have moved up and transformed Main St that just last year had many diverse shops into baby shop after baby shop after baby shop. What used to be a fun pace to hang out on the weekends is now only fun if you have a stroller. I'm glad people are moving up, I did too...but really stop messing with the local flavors.

MAY 13, 2015 AT 7:52 AM

Bees Wax said...

Hyper-gentrification may be a reaction to the hyper-ghettoization that HUD created in the 60's and 70's.East New York, the Grand Concourse, etc... were once affluent white neighborhoods until nearby housing projects and rampant violent crime chased whites out. I'm definitely a fan of neither "hypers". Social mobility too, saw whites and blacks leave N.Y.. Now Chinese, Indian, Mexican, and eastern Europeans have become the new ethnic face of N.Y.. Uncharted greed and corruption is at the center of all of this. The money that has been passed through the hands of public servants,(and into their pockets)has twisted their ability to do what's best for the people they're supposed to be serving.

OCTOBER 28, 2015 AT 3:12 AM

Bees Wax said...

By the way, here's the solution to EVERYTHING. "Legalize" and let the government distribute drugs, take it out of the hands of drug dealers. I guarantee you crime will instantly be cut in half. Include rehab programs, clinics, counseling, etc...,

OCTOBER 28, 2015 AT 3:18 AM

twohusbands@gmail.com said...

Quite a change from 1940s, my earliest childhood days in cities. Also a radical departure from the federal plan of permanent "Dispersal" in 1950s+ to today's "$quillionaires Only." Video about federal impact of Dispersal on small city near NYC: https://youtu.be/_vlPTICkamw

APRIL 17, 2016 AT 6:02 PM

twohusbands@gmail.com said...

P.S. Even in Perth, Australia in 1970s, historic affordable
building were vanishing. Now the ones that were not
demolished are for $quillionaiares only! Watch ABCTV Video
interview of Hare's first book, Vanishing Ink, published in Perth,
Western Australia in 1974:
https://youtu.be/i-QSyIkNyQI

APRIL 17, 2016 AT 6:04 PM

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A NEW YORKER IS SOMEONE WHO LONGS FOR NEW YORK

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