

Flatbush's Gentrification Change Over The Years

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Criminal Justice and the Urban Community

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Introduction

Home

Flatbush, the heart of Brooklyn, it's all I've ever known from birth. It's where my family established when they came from Honduras in the late 1990's and it's where I was brought up. The Historical District Council says the Flatbush was not always called 'Flatbush', during the 20th century they often referred to it as 'Midwout' meaning middle. Flatbush runs from Downtown Brooklyn straight down to reaching the Belt Parkway Highway, but my home is Flatbush Junction- also known as 'Midwood'. Like many people, my parents decided to settle here because there were familiar faces and it made them feel comfortable to start a new family. Flatbush was never a luxury but to my parents it had everything they needed. Communities of the same culture, was very centric for traveling and grocery shopping, schools are less than a 15 minute walk, and rent was affordable. My family and I were accustomed to the nuances of Flatbush, we liked it because we were comfortable in our space. Over the course of the years Flatbush has not been the same Flatbush that I grew up with, lots of new residents moving in, new buildings are being made creating a dislocation between neighborhoods, and it's created a whole new environment. The beauty of Flatbush is that it is home to many different cultures, diversity is a top factor. Being that we have such a beautiful and diverse community, politics want to take advantage of this and it is slowly deteriorating the community.

Gentrification

From the 'Gentrification Debates: A Reader' we can define gentrification as an economic and social process in which private owners reinvest money into neighborhoods by which they construct new housing stock, which ultimately redesigns a neighborhood by bringing in 'upscale clientele' through expensive property taxes and rent prices (Taylor & Francis Group, 2010, p12-13). Home to 96,332 people as of 2020 (Point2Homes), Flatbush has room for expansion and new ideas but when politics think about these new ideas they take into consideration their residents. Gentrification builds a new space from people with higher income status to move into these lower class neighborhoods and create dislocation with the

community, the new residents who are moving in are predominantly White. Although, we know that Flatbush is an area that enough room for diversity seeing a large amount of ‘White’ people is not common. From the Population FactFinder we can see that over time the population of White nonhispanic has grown over 75.7% over the course of 10 years (2010-2020). In 2010 Flatbush began to undergo minimal but effective gentrification within the communities and therefore it attracted new cultures. Brooklyn specifically ‘Black Brooklyn’ is where we focus on when it comes to gentrification, these neighborhoods that are predominantly Black and Hispanic are disappearing are we are now looking at these neighborhoods as the new ‘spot’.

Effects of Gentrification

Dislocation of Communities

Flatbush has an immense amount of history that follows it for celebrities, to traditions, and just being known for how much love there is within a community. Being a Flatbush native, I can honestly say that I couldn’t imagine growing up in another place. Everything is at the reach of my fingertips and I’ve felt so welcomed every time I’ve walked into my building but in recent years a lot has changed. There’s has been new residents in the buildings, in the area, new business owners, and store commercials bringing in new customers. Though the years segregation has been slowly decreasing but that is only for they ‘obvious’ for example signs with ‘Blacks only’ or ‘Whites Only’ but in present time there is still segregation. When Whites become more prominent in Black communities it has a domino affect that ultimately pushes the old community out and now it becomes predominantly White. This creates a racial segregation because the Black community travels as a whole and establishes in another predominantly Black community so it becomes a never ending cycle that keeps on disconnecting neighborhoods.

Cons

Overtime the people that settle into a neighborhood create a new family and they create a bond within the community. Personally, growing up during Halloween the kids of the building would all go trick-or-treating in our building and everyone knew each other- from all floors and both sides of the

building. Now, families have left and new families have moved in, and the building feels like a place where people just come in and out. From 'Gentrification: Culture and Capital in the Urban Core', we see that gentrification is something that has been always going but people just rolled with it. When the industrial age came around that was the very being of gentrification- it just never had a name, but folks looked at this as a positive impact on society because it would minimize hard labor but in reality this left so many civilians without jobs- specifically the lower class. This is the same idea that is happening in present times just different circumstances, lower income communities are being taken advantage. These new commercial buildings are being put in low income neighborhoods and bringing in new customers. As previously said, all of this is a domino affect, as more people begin to come in then taxes become higher and then landlords see that they can higher rent, then the low income residence have to find another place to live. And what does this mean for tenants? This is where the the neighborhood then becomes separated and what was known as the neighborhood family is now just a group of people living in a space. But where do these new residents live? Gentrification is happening all over the city and is going to be difficult for low income males to find an affordable housing, so tenants have to decided whether to stay in there homes paying outrageous amounts of rent or find a new home which can potentially be even more expensive. According to zumper.com, the current average rent price for a studio in Brooklyn is \$3,350 and have increased 18% over a yearly change. Low income residents will not be able to pay this price, and if neighborhoods continue being gentrified than prices will only go up.

The book '[The Mandibles](#)' is about a family who moves from home to a new settlement and as they go through these new experiences they live adopt a new lifestyle. White, C compares this to the change that is happening in Brooklyn. When we think of gentrification we often think of a narrative where White people move into a predominantly Black and Brown community and start to make modern buildings and high rent residential buildings creating a new lifestyle in the community. Over the course of 10 years, from the Population FactFinder, the amount of White Non-Hispanics in the Flatbush area has increased 78.9%. Black and Hispanics still dominate the area, the White community has increased tremendously as a result of gentrification going on. In the article the writer wants us to use the book '[The Mandibles](#)' to think of what gentrification really means. White mentions in his article "We can think of

gentrification as a *refiguring* of territory acquisition within the structure of the capitalist nation-state.' (White 2021) this meaning that gentrification is not only to make a community 'better' but in reality to show that property owners aren't thinking about the current communities rather the future communities. The idea that 'this is now going to be my property and I will make it into what I want'. White briefly brings up the idea of how connotations come along with gentrification, which also brings up the idea of dissociation within a community. A neighborhood that is becoming gentrified and modernized is associated with the 'civilized' so what that make non-gentrified neighborhoods? Uncivilized.

When new commercial businesses are out into these communities owners try to incorporate as much culture as they can not knowing what this means for the culture. Trinch, S. & Snajdr, fabricate the idea of 'signage' relating to gentrification. Tying into the topic of gentrification specifically touching on the placement and signs that come with commercial stores. In the article, it mentions that Brooklyn is turning into a place where everyone is looking to come form tourist to Manhattan residents because they like that urban ambience of Brooklyn. But what does this do for Brooklyn residents? The placement of new commercials and it's meaning in places like Crown Heights, the article mentions that when a new commercial is placed in predominantly Black and Brown communities -or what you would think a 'Brooklyn neighborhood' would look like- but new businesses are put into place to attract a specific type of audience, which can then lead into a process of gentrification because this new group of people will be seen more often. An example from the article 'What the Signs Say: Language, Gentrification, and Place-Making in Brooklyn', they mention a new commercial store that left some bullet holes in the walls for an aesthetic purpose but as a result they had to shut it down because to wasn't pleasing to the existing community. The owners were looking to bring a new type of audience to the area but they weren't thinking about the residents already living there and how traumatic it would be for them to see bullet holes every time they stepped into the store. Business owners are only considerate when it comes to the benefits of their stores but in reality they are stepping into a community that cannot fight against gentrification so they are taken advantage of.

Pros

Crime is something that is persistent all over the world and seen in all neighborhoods. It is inevitable but it is definitely controllable. Growing up in Flatbush crime was something that was always there but you eventually you get accustomed to it and it becomes part of your daily routine. The way a neighborhood looks can be perceived and associated with many different things, such as dirty, poorly taken care of stores, this makes people uneasy and uncomfortable. When new high-rises are built in these neighborhood they give a good appearance which business owners want to keep up. When we think of these new buildings being put into place we just think about they negatively that our community won't be the same and these buildings don't belong here but thinking deeper into it they bring more to us than just being 'out of place'. New York as a whole is well known for their dirtiness but when these new structures are put into place it brings a new atmosphere to the neighborhood- plating trees, having workers clean up more often, placing more garbage cans, and just the modernization.

From 'Gentrification: Culture and Capital in the Urban Core. *Annual Review of Sociology*' we see the example of gentrification happening for positive benefits. Neighborhoods are never the same, overtime many things, like natural disasters. Hurricane Sandy hit NYC in 2012 and it was something that was never seen before in the area. Over 50,000 residents were affected (nyc.gov) and left with no home, streets were totally destroyed. The government supplied NYC with around \$4.2 billion through the The Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2013 to help reconstruct businesses and provide residents with a new home. These new establishments involved modernized buildings and more cleaner looking streets. As a result of Hurricane Sandy, NYC unintentionally opened a new opportunity for gentrification, since everything was already distorted there was nothing left but to reconstruct and have new designs. According to gothamist.com, 'NYPD says there were 1,061 crimes committed over the week, compared to 1,541 last year.' in the article titles 'Sandy NYC Death Toll Hits 41 As Post-Storm Crime Drops 31%'. We can relate this data as a benefit of gentrification because if we think to modernized buildings, we know that they have an updated camera system therefore making a safer and controlled neighborhood. In my neighborhood we have a couple of new businesses and buildings in the area and it does make a difference. From the NYPD ComStat, my neighborhood precinct has reported a -72.2% change from

week to day change, this to show that having a better camera system from these renovated buildings make a change.

To briefly mention, gentrification brings dislocation to the community but can it do the opposite? 'Gentrification: Culture and Capital in the Urban Core' briefly raises perspective to the LGBTQ+ community. When retailers look for a place to market they think of 'what can this be?'. NYC has approximately 756,000 members apart of the LGBTQ+ community (Leonhardt, 2015 NewYorkTimes.com), so this is a great opportunity for new communities to be built. Zukin (1987) defines gentrification as 'process of spatial and social differentiation' in other words, gentrification is all about the community and how it changes with new structures put into place. The article mentions that the LGBTQ+ community is being widely seen in new gentrified areas and this brings economic benefits because it creates a safe space created for the community, new entertainment and restaurant commercials are built. Zuni makes us view gentrification as a theory rather than an issue.

Conclusion

Gentrification comes with as much positives as it does negatives. Bringing in new building to bring in new communities is an amazing start to make society a better place but we need to make sure that everyone is integrated, existing communities have just as much right to call their home 'home' without having to worry about being kicked out of their living space. As a community we need to make sure that our streets are become safe and we pertain to our homes, we need to use our voice to let new retailers know that they can help make our community modernized and still keep our culture alive.

To conclude, I want to mention the the Flatbush are representative in the city council is Farah N. Louis, she is a Brooklyn native so she can speak on issues at hand with first hand knowledge about what is going on. When it comes to gentrification, having a people to speak up for us- as a whole- who have first hand knowledge about the community is vital because we know that they are fighting for the best interest of the neighborhood. 'Equality for Flatbush', is an organization that brings awareness to stopping the negative impacts of gentrification in our Black and Brown Communities. They specialize in anti-gentrification, police/ICE accountability work, and affordable housing

(<http://www.equalityforflatbush.org/>). Gentrification is something that overtime will become inevitable, we just have to make sure that the the gentrification happening is beneficial for all but most importantly existing community residents.

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