GENTRIFICATION

WHEN DID YOU BECOME GAY?

APPROPRIATION VS. APPRECIATION

WELFARE

WHITE PRIDE

WHAT ARE YOU?

MODEL MINORITY

RACE CARD

CODE WORDS

FEMINISM

WHAT I HEAR
WHEN YOU SAY

VIEWING GUIDE

GENTRIFICATION

AN INTRODUCTION TO
WHAT I HEAR WHEN YOU SAY

Deeply ingrained in human nature is a tendency to organize, classify, and categorize our complex world. Often, this is a good thing. This ability helps us make sense of our environment and navigate unfamiliar landscapes while keeping us from being overwhelmed by the constant stream of new information and experiences.

When we apply this same impulse to social interactions, however, it can be, at best, reductive and, at worst, dangerous. Seeing each other through the lens of labels and stereotypes prevents us from making authentic connections and understanding each other's experiences.

Through the initiative, What I Hear When You Say (WIHWYS), we explore how words can both divide and unite us and learn more about the complex and everchanging ways that language shapes our expectations, opportunities, and social privilege. WIHWYS 's interactive multimedia resources challenge what we think we know about race, class, gender, and identity, and provide a dynamic digital space where we can raise difficult questions, discuss new ideas, and share fresh perspectives.

GENTRIFICATION

" There is always an internal struggle with gentrification, because on one end there has to be progress: you do want better food, you do want better options. Where do you lose the community?

Shukree Tilghman, Filmmaker

Gentrification has a complex and troubling legacy shaped by racial bias, economic opportunism, and conflicting perceptions of what makes a thriving and vibrant community. Join Filmmaker, Shukree Tilghman; Filmmaker, Kelly Anderson; and Journalist and Author, Desiree Cooper as they explore the challenges, the benefits, and the consequences of Gentrification in the 21st century.

▶ **View the full Gentrification episode**
http://pbs.org/what-i-hear/web-series/gentrification/

A QUICK LOOK AT THE HISTORY AND LANGUAGE OF GENTRIFICATION

- As of the mid-20th century, the language of the American frontier became increasingly associated with U.S. cities, including phrases like "urban wilderness", "urban cowboys", "urban jungle". The language of urban renewal and development has followed a similar trend with terms like "urban scouts", "urban pioneers", and "urban homesteaders" describing new residents and developers who

"discover" neighborhoods. As with the era of westward expansion across the American "frontier", the language of urban development suggests that these environments are not already inhabited.[1][2]

- Urban sociologist Ruth Glass coined the term, "gentrification" in her 1964 book, London: Aspects of Change, and used the term to describe demographic shifts within urban communities.[3]

- There is some debate about what gentrification entails and its usefulness as an umbrella term for the range of transformations that occur in urban areas. However, it often exhibits the following changes:[4][5]
  - Demographics: a decline in racial minorities, and increase in household incomes and a rise in smaller families and singles.
  - Real Estate Market: an increase in development, a move away from rentals and shift toward home ownership, and escalating cost of living.
  - Land Use: the conversion of industrial buildings to living, work, and business spaces.
  - Culture and Character: a shift in expectations regarding how the community should interact, contribute to the neighborhood, and manage their own properties.

- By 1976, an Urban Land Institute study found that approximately half of 260 U.S. cities with a population over 50,000 had undergone gentrification. Their report specifically highlighted that the young generation of gentrifiers was creating a promising market for "White" middle-class families.[6][7]

- In 1982, the "broken windows" theory of policing and community development was coined by criminologist, George L. Kelling and political scientist, James Q. Wilson. These policies facilitated gentrification through the displacement of low-income communities and the increased criminalization of poor people of color.[8][9]

- In 1985, California passed the Ellis Act, allowing owners of housing properties to evict residential tenants in order to "go out of the

rental business". The act has been cited as a driving force behind gentrification. In San Francisco, Ellis evictions increased from 0 in 1997 to 246 evictions in 2007, and in Los Angeles, owners took nearly 19,000 rent-controlled units off the market between 2001 and 2015. [10] [11]

- In 2003, Dr. Loretta Lees, Professor of Human Geography, coined the term "super-gentrification," which she described as "intensified re-gentrification in a few select areas of global cities like London and New York that have become the focus of intense investment and conspicuous consumption by a new generation of super-rich 'financiers.'" [12]

DIG DEEPER | TRANSFORMATION TO GENTRIFICATION

" A boy last week, he was sixteen, in San Francisco, told me […] 'I've got no country. I've got no flag.' Now, he's only 16 years old, and I couldn't say, 'you do'. I don't have any evidence to prove that he does. They were tearing down his house, because San Francisco is engaging—as most Northern cities now are engaged—in something called urban renewal, which means moving the Negroes out. It means Negro removal, that is what it means. "
— James Baldwin, 1963

WEEKSVILLE AND "GENTRIFICATION CAMP"

In the summer of 2014, children aged 7-12 from Brooklyn started their local summer camp program at Weeksville Heritage Center (WHC), but unlike other summer camps across the country, these campers would be learning how to use digital technology, multi-media mapping, robotics, coding, and 3D Printing to explore the history and impact of gentrification in their community. [13] The campers used their research to identify which neighborhoods were likely to experience gentrification, how the communities might change, and what they could do as residents to be empowered during this period of transformation. [14]

The Weeksville Heritage Center (WHC) opened in 2013 on a few acres of land in Brooklyn that intersects with Bedford-Stuyvesant, Crown Heights, and Brownsville neighborhoods. The WHC was built to celebrate the neighborhood's unique connection with a 19th century African-American town, Weeksville, that was once located on that land and to preserve four original Weeksville homes, the Hunterfly Houses, re-discovered in the 1960s. [15]

Today, changes in urban development and demographics are once again encroaching on Weeksville, as the surrounding neighborhoods experience escalating gentrification. As property values, rents, and the cost of living continue to rise, longtime residents and their children fear that they will be priced out of their homes and the rich history and culture of their community that they helped to create and preserve. [16]

BACKGROUND: URBAN RENEWAL, REDLINING, AND THE CHANGING URBAN LANDSCAPE

The American Housing Act was passed in 1949 and ushered a nation-wide era of urban renewal with the goal of clearing out "slums" to rejuvenate cities.[17] Soon after it began, questions arose about what defines a "slum" and who gets to decide. Many neighborhoods targeted for renewal would likely not be labeled as "slums" today. They were often communities populated by working class families and small businesses. [18]

Once seized through eminent domain, whole communities were razed for infrastructure projects, or they were turned over to private developers for below market rates and repopulated by more economically affluent residents. For working class, low, and middle income families, high-rise communities were built to pack as many residents as possible into a small area of valuable urban real estate. These communities became known as "the projects". [19]

During the same period, "redlining"--the discriminatory practice by which banks, insurance companies, and other institutions refuse or limit services in targeted neighborhoods--made it even more difficult for neighborhoods to attract and retain homeowners.[20] Real estate

agents and developers also practiced "blockbusting" – facilitating the sale of a house to Black residents in a predominantly White neighborhood so that White residents, fearing the loss of property value and demographic changes, would sell their own properties at a loss. The agents would profit on the commissions from both White and Black homeowners. [21] Practices like these resulted in widespread "White flight" to suburban areas, increased racial segregation, decreased services and economic investment in marginalized neighborhoods, and ultimately, urban decay in cities across the country. [22]

GENTRIFICATION DEBATES: DATA AND DISPLACEMENT

Gentrification is a provocative word. Some academics, policy makers, and researchers have suggested that the word gentrification is so overloaded with sometimes contradictory meanings and is so divisive, that it is no longer useful and should be abandoned or replaced.[23] Others argue that, although the meaning of gentrification has expanded since it was coined in the early 1970s, it still provides the important service of anchoring discussions and policies about neighborhood "renewal", "development", and "revitalization" in important historic and ongoing conversations about economic, racial and social inequality. [24]

There are strong arguments both for and against gentrification and the changes associated with it. Research and scholarship on the impact of gentrification is a problem because there is limited data on how and why neighborhoods change.[25] Both sides of the debate accuse the other of manipulating or cherry-picking data.

One issue that both sides do agree on is that gentrification results in the displacement of the most economically vulnerable members of the community. As researcher Kathe Newman argues, "Ten thousand displacees a year should not be ignored, even in a city of 8 million."[26]

PROCESS OF GENTRIFICATION

In the late 20th century, as the urban economy shifted away from manufacturing and toward service-sector professions (ranging from

retail sales to information technology to banking), it once again became beneficial and desirable to live in cities. Rising costs in higher income neighborhoods motivated newcomers to look for more affordable spaces in neighborhoods that had been economically marginalized.

Although causes of gentrification vary from city to city and neighborhood to neighborhood, the stages of gentrification seem to follow a similar pattern:

1. The earliest gentrifiers tend to be interested in purchasing and renovating homes for personal use or renting affordable spaces. Early gentrifiers may come from a diverse range of backgrounds but are often from the lower-middle/middle class and include people from the creative sector, new college graduates, young professionals, couples, etc. [27]
2. The next wave of newcomers are similar to the first – individuals or families looking for inexpensive homes or rental spaces for personal use -- as well as small-scale developers drawn to the neighborhood, in part, by the presence of the first gentrifiers. [28] [29]
3. With the success of the first two waves of gentrifiers, the neighborhood gains attention – new businesses open, property values and rents increase, and developers and real estate speculators begin to target occupied properties for resale. Displacement of the original residents increases as more renters are priced out and home owners take the opportunity (or feel pressured) to sell. [30]
4. The popularity of the neighborhood reaches a tipping point. Property values and rents continue to rise, and the relocation and displacement of the original community escalates as they are bought out by higher income homeowners or forced out by rent increases. [31]

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

As high-rise, public housing is torn down and its residents dispersed, the urban American landscape is rapidly changing. The danger is that, due in part to social engineering and urban planning initiatives like mixed-income housing, middle and upper-middle class suburbanites are moving back into cities and displacing low-income communities, particularly communities of color. Housing activists and residents protest that instead of transformation they were promised, communities of color got gentrification.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

- What words do you associate with gentrification? Would you describe gentrification as a positive or negative process for a community? Why?

- What happens to a neighborhood when it becomes "gentrified"? Is it possible to improve communities through gentrification without making them inaccessible to the people who live there?

- Have you encountered gentrification in your neighborhoods and communities? If so, how does your experience compare to what the series is describing?

- In what ways do redlining and racial segregation harm individuals and communities on all sides?

- All of the voices talk about how traditional models of gentrification lead to the loss of culture, community, and racial and economic diversity. They also highlight the importance of providing support and resources to strengthen the positive aspects of a community before gentrification has to happen. Have you witnessed or heard of examples of community development that successfully brings together the existing community, new residents, businesses, and political leaders? How could a collaboration like that work?

Hear different perspectives on the Topic of Gentrification
http://pbs.org/what-i-hear/topics/gentrification/

LEARN MORE

IN JACKSON HEIGHTS

http://www.pbs.org/show/jackson-heights/

Frederick Wiseman's documentary IN JACKSON HEIGHTS shines a light on one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse communities in the world exploring issues of assimilation, integration, immigration, gentrification, and religious and cultural differences.

FLAG WARS

http://www.pbs.org/pov/flagwars/

Shot over a four-year period, Linda Goode Bryant and Laura Poitras' Flag Wars is a poignant and very personal look at a community in Columbus, Ohio, undergoing gentrification.

THE URBAN INSTITUTE

http://www.urban.org/

The Urban Institute was founded in 1968 as a research institution, known for broad economic and social policy research and scholarship.

Well-known for his work on 94 Feet, More Than a Month and The March@50
Activist who questions Black History Month and aims to expose African-American history

Shukree Tilghman
Filmmaker

Director of Brooklyn Film Festival's Audience Award, My Brooklyn
Emmy-nominated
Works shown at Sundance, Tribeca and on PBS

Kelly Anderson
Filmmaker

Pulitzer-Nominated
Kresge Fellow
Work included in Best African-American Fiction 2010

Desiree Cooper
Journalist & Author

Visit **pbs.org/whatihear** for a detailed Viewing Guide on every topic.

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