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Final Paper

Gentrification in Brooklyn from the 1960s to 2013

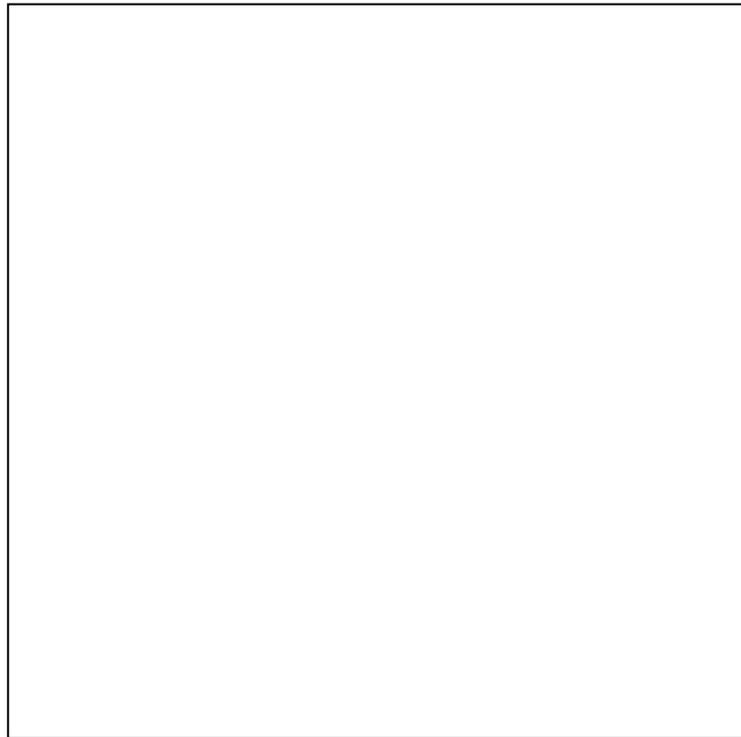
In recent years, Brooklyn has become an emerging hotspot for culture and undergoing a developmental resurgence. Neighborhoods like Park Slope, Fort Greene and Dumbo have resurfaced as hip places to live and work. The newly populated areas have also become hyper---developed, allowing commercialization to thrive. This recent cultural renaissance cyclical in nature, and is attributed to a large change over time involving gentrification and the displacement of people. Gentrification in Brooklyn has dramatically altered its residents—positively and negatively—through race relations, real estate development and cultural production from the 1960s into the 21st century.

Gentrification is a term used to describe the process of wealthier white people moving into urban areas and rehabilitating deteriorated neighborhoods. It results in steep increases of monthly rent and property value, and a change in the general demographics of the area. It tends to occur in cities where the “convenience, diversity, and vitality of urban neighborhoods are major draws, as is the availability of cheap housing, especially if the buildings are distinctive and appealing.”¹ Because Brooklyn is so close to Manhattan, it became an area that artists and the highly educated flocked to during the 1970s. Crime reduction, investment in buildings and

¹ Benjamin Grant, “What is Gentrification?” *PBS*, June 17, 2003. <http://www.pbs.org>

homes and increased economic development were desirable aspects of gentrification to these newly developing communities.²

Franz Schurmann, a sociologist at the University of California at Berkley, is quoted in a 1979 issue of *New York* magazine said that “gentrification has a multiplier effect: Middle---class people generate economic activity around them. It’s the future, and it’s going to increase.”³ The economic boom completely shifted the populations of neighborhoods like East New York, Fort Greene, Prospect Heights and Flatbush, amongst many others. Although Brooklyn’s new inhabitants enjoyed this process, “established residents [found] themselves economically and socially marginalized” and led to greater racial tensions.⁴



² Benjamin Grant, “What is Gentrification?”

³ Fergus Bordewich, “The Future of New York: A Tale of Two Cities,” *New York* magazine, July 23, 1979, 32---40.

⁴ Benjamin Grant, “What is Gentrification?”

This map of North and Central Brooklyn showcases many of the neighborhoods discussed in this paper.⁵

Gentrification displaced the poor and working---class, and many African Americans who previously lived in Park Slope, Williamsburg or Dumbo and relocated to other Brooklyn neighborhoods like East New York.⁶ Additionally, longtime white residents left because of increased housing costs.⁷ By 1966, “more than 80 percent of East New York’s residents had been in the area only a short time,” according to John B. Manbeck.⁸ Even more shocking, from 1970 to 1980, East New York “transformed from 85 percent Caucasian to 80 percent non---Caucasian [and] it took some time for all of these groups to learn to live together in a single neighborhood,” wrote Manbeck.⁹ This created a huge upheaval of people that lived in one neighborhood and replaced them with people of another race and income level.

New York magazine ran a story in its July 1979 issue about Aurora Santos, a 63---year---old resident of Boerum Hill for 46 years before she was evicted from her building.¹⁰ The article stated:

⁵ Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁶ Fergus Bordewich, “The Future of New York: A Tale of Two Cities.”

⁷ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

⁸ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.

⁹ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.

¹⁰ Fergus Bordewich, “Cast Out From Brooklyn,” *New York* magazine, July 23, 1979, 35.

“The new people were less friendly than the tightly knit working---class community they replaced, Mrs. Santos says. They were people ‘out only for their work and money.’ One by one her lifelong friends were pushed out of the neighborhood. She can think of only one who still remains. ‘There’s a part of us we left in Brooklyn.’”¹¹

Santos reported that she was “hoping a low---income project would go up... The new people didn’t want low---income people in there.”¹² According to the reporter, the monthly rent for her apartment was \$140 before the beautification process and then rose to \$300 a month.¹³ This anecdote reflects similar situations that low---income people experienced during this time, regardless of race, along with the increasing real estate. It also exposes a huge negative of gentrification—people with deep roots in those areas can no longer afford to live there. Homeowners were getting priced out of their neighborhoods and moved to new places that were overwhelmed by crime.¹⁴

This anecdote also sheds light on how certain residents perceived the new dynamic between neighbors in the changing neighborhoods of Brooklyn. Prior to gentrification in Brooklyn, “neighbors looked out for one another,” said Jamel Shabazz, a photographer from Red Hook and an interviewee in Kelly Anderson’s documentary, *My Brooklyn*.¹⁵ Once whites started flocking to these neighborhoods,

¹¹ Fergus Bordewich, “Cast Out From Brooklyn.

¹² Fergus Bordewich, “Cast Out From Brooklyn.

¹³ Fergus Bordewich, “Cast Out From Brooklyn.

¹⁴ *My Brooklyn*, directed by Kelly Anderson (2012; Brooklyn, NY), DVD.

¹⁵ *My Brooklyn*.

“all of a sudden everything changed.”¹⁶ Minorities were phased out, as the Santosos ultimately were. In the meantime, residents that had been in these neighborhoods for a few months had more input in the area’s development than residents of decades due to their economic and racial statuses. This negatively affected morale and led to a lack of friendliness between neighbors. Blacks perceived the whites as the force behind their displacement, while whites moving into those areas did not understand the social norms of their new neighborhoods.

In the documentary, *My Brooklyn*, Professor Lance Freeman of Columbia University explained this phenomenon of cultural norms as how “Newcomers may not like the fact that people are congregating on the street corner and they might see that as a sign of disorder. Whereas compared to people who had been living there for a while, they feel like, you know, this is something we've always been doing, we haven't been causing any harm so why should we now have to change our patterns of behavior?”¹⁷ This lack of understanding of cultural norms between races was an effect of gentrification during the 1960s and 1970s. Bordewich refers to it as a “double---edged blade.”¹⁸ It’s clear that there is economic and social vitality in gentrified areas. Development increases, and residents are no longer required to leave the neighborhood to go to the supermarket or fill a prescription.¹⁹ However, “The poor, already battered by unemployment, shrinking opportunities, and shoddy education, will sooner or later turn with bitterness and perhaps violence on people

¹⁶ *My Brooklyn*.

¹⁷ Lance Freeman, interviewed by Farai Chideya, *Home Ownership and Wealth*, NPR, July 20, 2006.

¹⁸ Fergus Bordewich, “The Future of New York: A Tale of Two Cities.

¹⁹ Lance Freeman, interviewed by Farai Chideya.

they perceive as a privileged elite stealing their homes.”²⁰ This factors into the racial tensions communities face.

Bordewich defined gentrification as “newcomers coming into the neighborhood from a different area perhaps with a different set of expectation, a different set of norms.”²¹ He argues that resentment bubbles from longtime residents who “feel like they sort of stuck it out when times were bad and now that things are improving it's not improving for them and they or their offspring might not be able to take advantage of it,” as Santos mentioned to the reporter.²² The city was “displacing and dispersing them in the benefit of someone else,” said Tom Angotti, a professor of Urban Planning at Hunter College interviewed in *My Brooklyn*.²³ “The government set public policy that destroyed many lives,” he added.

During that time, “the racially biased policies of real estate brokers and speculators and their unrestrained exploitation of house---hungry blacks” ruined East New York, added Walter Thabit.²⁴ The racial biases that Thabit mentioned were exacerbated by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development in the 1960s and 1970s, which led to foreclosures on housing by the federal government.²⁵ The trend of a changing economy dates back to the Great Depression in the 1930s, said Craig Wilder, a professor of American history at MIT in *My Brooklyn*.²⁶ According to Wilder, the government’s main strategy for stimulating the economy was convincing

²⁰ Fergus Bordewich, “The Future of New York: A Tale of Two Cities.

²¹ Lance Freeman, interviewed by Farai Chideya.

²² Lance Freeman, interviewed by Farai Chideya.

²³ *My Brooklyn*.

²⁴ Walter Thabit, *How East New York Became a Ghetto*, (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

²⁵ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.

²⁶ *My Brooklyn*.

people to buy homes.²⁷ The U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development hired community experts to work with neighborhoods at a local level, but their expertise was really in banking. They divided up Brooklyn into 66 neighborhoods with names and grades and redlined major areas of Brooklyn. The grades ranged from an A to a D, and any area with 5 percent or more blacks automatically received a D rating, said Wilder.²⁸ Essentially, the federal government devalued black homeowners with this law and catapulted both gentrification and reverse gentrification.

The effects of reverse gentrification created a transitional period for specific neighborhoods. “Economic and social upheaval in the late 1950s and 1960s caused a retailing slump in Downtown Brooklyn and other urban areas,” wrote Manbeck.²⁹ Prospect Heights saw the effects of white flight, which resulted in abandoned buildings and criminal acts like riots, arson and vandalism.³⁰ The government assisted in reverse gentrification because “White people could stay in their houses and watch their homes decline in value,” said Wilder, or they could move to the suburbs. Neighborhoods with any black people were put under a financial quarantine—mortgages and home equity loans weren’t available, said Wilder. Racism was blatant within the policies created by the government; even the names of government money were racist. Shabazz pointed out that when the government issued money to black people, it was called welfare; yet when whites received

²⁷ *My Brooklyn.*

²⁸ *My Brooklyn.*

²⁹ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn.*

³⁰ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn.*

money, it was called subsidies.³¹ Meanwhile, half a million whites had left Brooklyn during this time.³²

While gentrification relocated low---income blacks to different neighborhoods during the 1960s, additional “community destruction” was committed by “up to 200 real estate firms [who] worked overtime to turn East New York from white to black,” according to Thabit.³³ He wrote that brokers “paraded” black families around neighborhoods to “frighten whites into selling.” Meanwhile, middle---income African American families were buying these houses at inflated rates and businesses began moving elsewhere. Disinvestment was occurring as well, said Freeman.³⁴ “Landlords were no longer maintaining their properties. They were oftentimes abandoning their properties,” he added. ³⁵ Bordewich added that “mechanisms must be developed and aggressively employed to encourage working---class families to buy homes they’ve been renting and to enable the poor to own and manage their own dwellings,” as a possible means to fixing disinvestment.³⁶ The change in the racial dynamic ultimately led to welfare families moving in and the middle---income blacks moving out, creating what Thabit believed is the ghetto of East New York.³⁷

While this created racially divided neighborhoods all over Brooklyn, development was able to come out of it through federal funding. “A major goal of city housing policy has been to increase the stock of new an decent housing in the

³¹ *My Brooklyn.*

³² *My Brooklyn.*

³³ Walter Thabit, *How East New York Became a Ghetto.*

³⁴ Lance Freeman, interviewed by Farai Chideya.

³⁵ Lance Freeman, interviewed by Farai Chideya.

³⁶ Fergus Bordewich, “The Future of New York: A Tale of Two Cities.”

³⁷ Walter Thabit, *How East New York Became a Ghetto.*

so-called ghetto areas,” wrote *New York Times* reporter Edward C. Burks in 1975.³⁸ Starting in 1972, three quarters of the borough’s new residential construction was financed by the city, and only one out of six units out of 8,719 total units were privately financed.”³⁹ One popular complex began construction in 1972 and consisted of 46 apartment buildings—most with as many as 20 stories.⁴⁰ It was built on the 153-acre Starrett City, located in East New York.⁴¹ The apartments, which are now known as Spring Creek Towers, were the largest federally assisted housing project in the United States as of 2004.⁴² During 1972, however, a quota was issued that reserved only 35 percent of the rented apartments for non-Caucasians. Manbeck wrote that “the not-for-profit developers feared that if no quota existed, Starrett would soon become 100 percent black.”⁴³ This development and its quota system questioned the importance of integrated housing compared to providing low-income housing for the residents of East New York. Both were necessary, but the racial tensions in Brooklyn during the 1970s fueled the development of one or the other.

³⁸ Edward C. Burks, “New Housing is Centered on Five Communities in Brooklyn,” *The New York Times*, November 16, 1975, [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com).

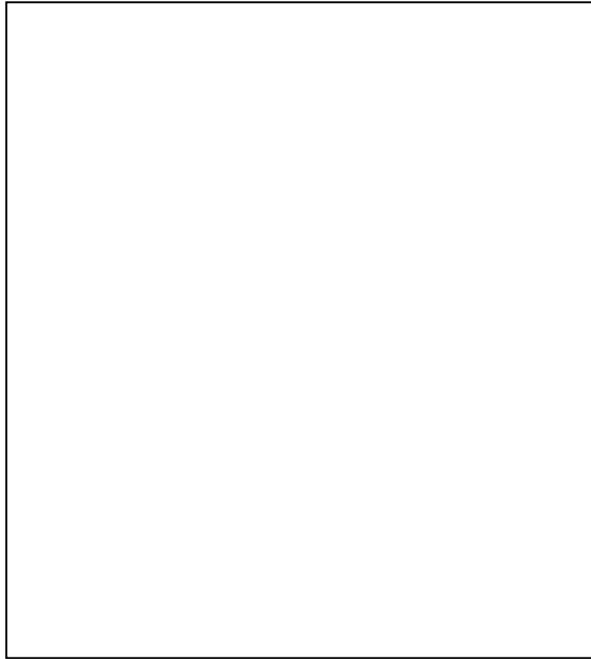
³⁹ Edward C. Burks, “New Housing is Centered on Five Communities in Brooklyn.”

⁴⁰ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.

⁴¹ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.

⁴² John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.

⁴³ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.



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By 1975, “More than 7,600 government---aided housing units have been completed and made available for occupancy since 1970 in Brooklyn,” with the majority clustered in East New York.⁴⁵ Similarly, the Breukelen Housing Projects in East New York gave low---income families the opportunity to live in the development, created out of federal funds. “There were ten or twelve seven---story buildings,” said Acting Chair of American and African---American History at Baruch College Clarence Thomas, who grew up there due to gentrification.⁴⁶ “We lived there for a while. It was for lower---income folks, but people who made more money, like my parents,

⁴⁴ Edward C. Burks, “Brooklyn Housing Aid Clustered in 2 Areas,” *The New York Times*, February 2, 1975, <http://www.nytimes.com/>.

⁴⁵ Edward C. Burks, “Brooklyn Housing Aid Clustered in 2 Areas,” *The New York Times*, February 2, 1975, <http://www.nytimes.com/>.

⁴⁶ Clarence Taylor, “Ocean Hill---Brownsville,” *In the Country of Brooklyn: Inspiration to the World*, edited by Peter Golenbock (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 471.

were able to hide their money, fudge their W---2s. It was not a slum. It was well kept. They had maintenance service to make sure it was clean.” Just as Thomas’ anecdote implies, planners and the city’s elected officials fought hard “for money to provide new, quality housing for the remaining families that are inevitably displaced in a gentrified area.”⁴⁷

Brooklyn “fell on hard times during the 1970s, but [its] expensive stock was perfectly positioned for revitalization as the Manhattan boom of the past few decades pushed young professionals across the river.”⁴⁸ By the 1980s, “New York City began selling groups of abandoned buildings to encourage redevelopment in Prospect Heights. Restoration began in the area near Prospect Place and moved east to Washington Avenue. The results were tremendous. Park Slope was becoming overcrowded, new jobs were created in Brooklyn, and housing was in demand.”⁴⁹ Gentrification was beginning to burst through Brooklyn, and although Angotti believed that the process of gentrifying is “not necessarily making Brooklyn a better place to live,” it dramatically altered the city in many positive aspects.

This, in part, was due to the 1960s restoration of Bed---Stuy’s brownstones. The project was funded with millions of federal funds and promoted by Robert Kennedy, fixed up 3,700 homes within a ten---block area,” wrote John Mackie, a white cop in the second largest black community in America.⁵⁰ The project was successful due to underwriting home mortgages and building a community center and job---

⁴⁷ *My Brooklyn*.

⁴⁸ Adam Davidson, “Why Can’t the Bronx Be More Like Brooklyn?” *The New York Times*, July 10, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/>.

⁴⁹ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.

⁵⁰ John Mackie, “Cop on the Beat,” *In the Country of Brooklyn: Inspiration to the World*, edited by Peter Golenbock (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 439.

training center.”⁵¹ While the exquisite Victorian and Queen Anne---style brownstones routinely sell for over a million dollars now, in the 1960s Bedford---Stuyvesant was one rough neighborhood.”⁵²

Despite the toughness of Bed---Stuy, by 1970, the neighborhood had an “emerging black middle class” and was “one of the best organized ghetto communities in the city,” wrote the City Planning Commission. ⁵³ Even so, gentrification became polarized due to the brownstones. People began buying up the properties and renovating them, which increased house values overall. “In the southern part of Fort Greene, brownstone enthusiasts began moving in during the 1980s to renovate reasonably priced historic homes and settle into the area,” wrote Manbeck.⁵⁴ In 2004, “renovated apartments sell for as much as 20 times their purchasing price in the 1980s,” wrote Manbeck.⁵⁵ Any of those brownstones now run for \$3 million.⁵⁶ And by 2013, “Brownstone Brooklyn has evolved into a gentrified destination for growing numbers of upper---middle---class singles and young couples seeking intimate neighborhoods, artisanal shops and restaurants, and liberal politics,” wrote Sam Roberts in *The New York Times*.⁵⁷ Gentrification turned

⁵¹ John Mackie, “Cop on the Beat.”

⁵² John Mackie, “Cop on the Beat.”

⁵³ “Excerpts From City Planners’ Recommendations for Brooklyn’s Development,” *The New York Times*, July 20, 1970, <http://www.nytimes.com/>.

⁵⁴ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.

⁵⁵ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.

⁵⁶ *My Brooklyn*.

⁵⁷ Sam Roberts, “Brooklyn Emerged as Big Winner in Primaries,” *The New York Times*, September 11, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/>.

the gritty, poor Brooklyn into a city unrecognizable over the course of a few decades.⁵⁸

Similarly, journalist C.J. Hughes compared Bay Ridge to gentrified Park Slope in terms of real estate and nightlife in a *New York Times* article from 2011. By comparing the house value in Bay Ridge from the 1950s into the 21st century as Hughes does, he gives a financially---driven image of how the area is steadily improving, even taking into account inflation. Hughes also has brokers comment on Bay Ridge “never really [having] a fallow period in the 1970s,” compared to other parts of Brooklyn because “there was never an exodus of families.”⁵⁹ This is mainly due to the fact that “there were no government---assisted developments in such areas as Bay Ridge or Bushwick---Ridgewood” because the city was focused on more low---income parts of Brooklyn like East New York.⁶⁰ Even in the summary findings and recommendations by Brooklyn’s City Planning Commission in 1970, Bay Ridge was considered to be a “sound, desirable and stable middle---class area with no serious environmental or social problems.”⁶¹

But Bay Ridge wasn’t the only neighborhood in the borough to be untouched by the racially fueled economic divide. Black and white residents of Lefferts Gardens “are proud that their neighborhood has been peacefully integrated since the 1950s,” wrote Manbeck.⁶² The City Planning Commission believed that the neighborhood

⁵⁸ Sam Roberts, “Brooklyn Emerged as Big Winner in Primaries.”

⁵⁹ C.J. Hughes, “You’ll Notice There’s a Bridge,” *The New York Times*, March 11, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/>.

⁶⁰ Edward C. Burks, “Brooklyn Housing Aid Clustered in 2 Areas.”

⁶¹ “Excerpts From City Planners’ Recommendations for Brooklyn’s Development.”

⁶² John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.

was progressing.⁶³ Prospect Heights was another neighborhood that remained “committed to not allowing gentrification to push out those who stayed through the hard times—working---class and low---income renters and home owners,” he added.⁶⁴ “Throughout that period and the turbulent 1960s [these areas] remained mostly stable, racially mixed, and predominantly middle class.”⁶⁵

As the changing dynamic of Brooklyn grew and department stores followed their customers to the suburbs, construction began on the Fulton Mall in 1977.⁶⁶ It was New York City’s first pedestrian shopping mall, and the third most profitable in all five boroughs.⁶⁷ The mall would soon become the home to a whole new wave of African American culture. Anderson’s documentary focuses on the history of the Fulton Mall and its importance to the black community; it clearly explores how urban sprawl affected residents.⁶⁸ Despite an outflow of resources that took a toll on Brooklyn, the residents responded to new demographic changes and continued to make a profit; they created new businesses, industries and services.⁶⁹ Anderson described the Fulton Mall, located in Downtown Brooklyn, as a “stubborn holdout against gentrification.”⁷⁰ The area is bustling with blacks who travel from all over the borough to “shop and socialize,” said Shabazz. “Downtown Brooklyn was the nucleus,” he added.⁷¹

⁶³ “Excerpts From City Planners’ Recommendations for Brooklyn’s Development.”

⁶⁴ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.

⁶⁵ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.

⁶⁶ *My Brooklyn*.

⁶⁷ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.

⁶⁸ *My Brooklyn*.

⁶⁹ *My Brooklyn*.

⁷⁰ *My Brooklyn*.

⁷¹ *My Brooklyn*.

The people that hang out at the Fulton Mall have been there for decades; the documentary showcases bookstores, restaurants, barbershops and retail stores owned by African Americans for decades. In 1970, the City Planning Commission noted that Downtown Brooklyn was a “well---established retail and commercial center,” but needed encouragement from the city to update facilities.⁷² One man interviewed said he’s been “out here since 1974” and has “one of the biggest collections” of recorded Malcolm X speeches in the country.⁷³ The music scene in the 1980s and 1990s centered around the Fulton Mall. The musical soundtrack of that time was jazz, R&B, hip---hop and rap,” said Shabazz. The Beastie Boys, Jay Z and Biz Markie came out of Brooklyn, which led to companies that started “designing for and selling to a young urban audience,” added Shabazz.⁷⁴

Beyond the music, the artist economy really thrived in Brooklyn starting in the 1960s and into the 21st century. According to “neighborhood lore, at least as related by an oft---cited local history, has it that ‘Dumbo,’ an acronym for Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass, was coined in the late 1970s by a few artists hoping that an odd name would deter development,” wrote Alison Gregor in a *New York Times* article.⁷⁵ Many artists began to illegally convert warehouses into apartments and studios during the 1970s, creating a new community.⁷⁶

⁷² “Excerpts From City Planners’ Recommendations for Brooklyn’s Development.”

⁷³ *My Brooklyn*.

⁷⁴ *My Brooklyn*.

⁷⁵ Alison Gregor, “Dumbo, Brooklyn: How Noir Looks When Its Polished,” *The New York Times*, August 27, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/>.

⁷⁶ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.

The warehouses were built in the 1860s between the Brooklyn Bridge and the Manhattan Bridge, and were owned by Con Edison.⁷⁷ “Con Edison announced that they were going to tear down those Empire Stores for an electric generating plant and at that time --- that’s in what we now call Dumbo --- it didn’t have a name and there was no one living down there, it was all warehouses,” said Joseph Rosenberg, a preservationist at the Brooklyn Heights Association. “There was no neighborhood to get together and stop it from happening, so the Brooklyn Heights Association took over the responsibility. We named it Fulton Ferry so we got the Landmarks Commission to designate the area that we now know as Dumbo as the Fulton Ferry Historic District and that stopped Con Edison from tearing down the Empire Stores,” he added.⁷⁸ Rosenberg moved to Brooklyn Heights in 1973, and was immediately involved with the preservationist movement to keep Brooklyn authentic.

“The tension between origins and new beginnings produces the desire to preserve the ‘authentic’ city, which has been, since the 1960s, the goal of historic preservationists, and to develop centers of cultural innovation, which has become, since the 1980s, the goal of many who wish to find a magic motor of rapid commercial redevelopment,” wrote Sharon Zukin in her 2010 book, *Naked City*.⁷⁹ That period in between the 1960s and 1980s is where artists began to define themselves, and then fought the paradigm of affording the area that they made hip.

⁷⁷ Joseph Rosenberg, interviewed by Inna Guzenfeld and Soonyoung Moon, *An Oral History Interview with Joseph Rosenberg*, The New York Preservation Archive Project, March 26, 2010.

⁷⁸ Joseph Rosenberg, interviewed by Inna Guzenfeld and Soonyoung Moon.

⁷⁹ Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

“For the first time in many decades, after years of comedians’ gags, raised eyebrows at dinner parties, and the baffled inquisitions of friends, Brooklyn is a good address,”⁸⁰ wrote Pete Hamill in a 1986 issue of *New York* magazine. The borough had become home to writers, sculptors, musicians, photographers, actors, and dancers, all of whom were scattered across Brooklyn’s 72.8 square miles.⁸¹ But unlike Manhattan, where for more than “40 years the ‘hot’ neighborhoods have been in a contiguous downtown section,” the arts communities are widely separated in Brooklyn.⁸² This is due to the rise of rents in Manhattan as well as other areas of Brooklyn. Artists moved into areas that were affordable so they could concentrate on their work, even though critics and patrons of the art barely ventured into the borough. “We thought we were hip and cool,” said Kari Margolis, 30, of Park Slope in 1986, “and all of a sudden, we were the Okies of New York.”⁸³

Although the artist community was thriving in the 1980s—more than 13,000 full---time artists and performers live in the borough according to the 1980 census—they weren’t as successful as artists living in downtown Manhattan.⁸⁴ “Dealers wouldn’t visit their studios, the *Times* wouldn’t review their shows, and their friends wouldn’t even come over for dinner. Worst of all, their work was considered second---rate.”⁸⁵ The only prospect of making money for artists in Brooklyn was to have residents support the arts. The Brooklyn Arts Council helped create an “impressive network of arts organizations,” mostly because Brooklyn artists had the

⁸⁰ Pete Hamill, “A New Day Dawns,” *New York* magazine, April 21, 1986, 32---37.

⁸¹ Pete Hamill, “A New Day Dawns.”

⁸² Amy Virshup, “The Newest Left Bank,” *New York* magazine, April 21, 1986, 52---58.

⁸³ Amy Virshup, “The Newest Left Bank.”

⁸⁴ Amy Virshup, “The Newest Left Bank.”

⁸⁵ Amy Virshup, “The Newest Left Bank.”

distinct opportunity of developing a strong and eclectic community untouched by hype.⁸⁶ Brooklyn provided a quiet space for artists to develop and work.⁸⁷

“But as rents in Manhattan escalated, neighborhoods in Brooklyn that only artists wanted five years ago are now increasingly in demand,” wrote *New York* magazine reporter Phil Patten in 1986. “It’s SoHo all over again,” complained Sally Heller, a Brooklyn resident and an interviewee in Patten’s article. “Artists moved in when the buildings were cheap. Then the landlords kicked them out when the property value went way up.” A mere 22 percent of people owned their homes in 1986, which is why rent control was so important to Brooklynites.⁸⁸ Gentrification, although feared by artists, still affected them by the late 1980s and displaced low-income artists. However, Brooklyn used its new artsy label to renew the area to positively create change. The brownstone revival swept through the borough and brought in new residents who appreciated culture. The Brooklyn Museum “rapidly become one of the most vigorous cultural institutions in the city.”⁸⁹ In the three-year span from 1983 to 1986, the Brooklyn Museum’s membership doubled, which caused them to reevaluate the dilapidated building and plan to double its size.⁹⁰ “For decades, the huge Beaux-Arts building on Eastern Parkway hunkered in the long shadows cast by the Metropolitan, the Guggenheim, the Whitney, and the other established museums across the river.”⁹¹ At the time, the Brooklyn Museum Director Robert Buck said he believed that artists were “the ones who created the art world,

⁸⁶ Amy Virshup, “The Newest Left Bank.”

⁸⁷ Phil Patten, “The Art of the Comeback,” *New York* magazine, April 21, 1986, 56.

⁸⁸ Pete Hamill, “A New Day Dawns.”

⁸⁹ Amy Virshup, “The Newest Left Bank.”

⁹⁰ Phil Patten, “The Art of the Comeback.”

⁹¹ Phil Patten, “The Art of the Comeback.”

not the critics or the curators.”⁹² Just their sheer presence allowed Brooklyn to revitalize its name and remove the stigma of lacking culture.

The lasting impact of gentrification in Brooklyn is still visible, even in the 21st century. A negative aspect is that “Flatbush Avenue, for example, is [still] recovering from the effects of ‘white flight’ to become closer to the way it was during its heyday in the late 1960s and early 1970s.”⁹³ From 1970 to 1980 alone, almost 550,000 people left Brooklyn, most of them white.⁹⁴ “There aren’t as many deeply rooted Brooklynites, second, even third generation,” said Hamill, a Brooklyn native, attributing it to gentrification.⁹⁵ Recent politics entirely created a second round of gentrification and affect the areas that were flocked with blacks due to the first round of gentrification in the 1960s. In the mid---2000s, Mayor Michael Bloomberg planned to rezone Brooklyn in attempts to rival Los Angeles for office space and as an act of revenge for “stealing our Dodgers.”⁹⁶ When the city’s baseball team was traded to L.A., it was considered by many to be a wound that wound never would heal.⁹⁷ But by 2012, Brooklyn had its own professional sports team again and currently plays in the \$4.9 billion Barclays Center.⁹⁸

Even MTV’s Video Music Awards were hosted in Brooklyn to commemorate its 30th award show; it was the first major show to take place in the borough.⁹⁹ “From hip---hop to hipsters, JAY Z to MGMT, Brooklyn musicians have a long history

⁹² Phil Patten, “The Art of the Comeback.”

⁹³ John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.

⁹⁴ Pete Hamill, “A New Day Dawns.”

⁹⁵ Sam Roberts, “Brooklyn Emerged as Big Winner in Primaries.”

⁹⁶ *My Brooklyn*.

⁹⁷ Pete Hamill, “A New Day Dawns.”

⁹⁸ “About Atlantic Yards,” Empire State Development, <http://www.esd.ny.gov>.

⁹⁹ “MTV Video Music Awards,” Barclays Center, www.barclayscenter.com.

of dominating the ‘spotlight’ on MTV. Brooklyn is a cultural Mecca—the hippest, coolest place for young people across the country, and has played a crucial role in the careers of some of 2013’s biggest bands, like Fun and the Lumineers,” stated Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz.¹⁰⁰ Markowitz’s statement reflects the new opinion of people in the 21st century: that Brooklyn, now a hip place, is seeing a cultural resurgence that was always there, but it just wasn’t cool to claim it. Now those stars that Markowitz mentioned are returning to their roots. A recent poll conducted by the Business Insider using SurveyMonkey found empirical evidence that supports the second wave of gentrification. They polled only 414 New Yorkers, whom are defined by living or working in New York, and drew up maps displaying all the neighborhoods in each borough and their percentage of votes. The results concluded that almost all of Brooklyn is the most improved out of the five boroughs, Williamsburg is the second---highest most changed neighborhood and Bushwick is the new up---and---coming neighborhood.¹⁰¹

The transformation and revitalization of Brooklyn seen in the 21st century is due to the positive and negative aspects of gentrification during the mid---20th century. The area was conducive to gentrification due to the high populations of various races in a racist period of American history. On an abnormally warm Easter in 1960, *New York Times* reporter Milton Bracker described “strollers were out in large numbers on the flowered paths of the Botanic Garden and along the boardwalk at Coney Island. Here and there in Fort Greene, the Navy Yard district and Bedford---

¹⁰⁰ “MTV Video Music Awards.”

¹⁰¹ Walter Hickey, “26 Maps That Show How New Yorkers Really Feel About Each Other,” *Business Insider*, October 10, 2013, www.businessinsider.com.

Stuyvesant section, little girls emerged from slum homes in spotless white Easter dresses. And blond children of Scandinavian ancestry displayed their finery in Bay Ridge.”¹⁰² This description of these neighborhoods before gentrification really took hold of Brooklyn emphasizes how easily the process would advance onto the city in the coming years. Yet 20 years later, Brooklyn was only an integrated society on the subways, not in the neighborhoods.¹⁰³

While race relations were tested under economic and racial policies that segregated blacks and whites, it also fostered urban sprawl. People were able to adapt and thrive in these circumstances, and create a new culture that ultimately led to the creation of the young, black, urban audience. With this new cultural center, it made Brooklyn even more desirable and beautification of the city evolved. Brownstone Brooklyn drove up real estate value, though a negative about creating a sustainable city is that it soon becomes too expensive for people to live there. It happened to the middle---class and the poor, as well as the white artists that moved there in the 1970s. Even Anderson explains that she chose Brooklyn for the cheap rent and a “diverse community that reflected a lot of [her] values.”¹⁰⁴ The same process of gentrification that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s is beginning a cyclical process again in the 21st century.

¹⁰² Milton Bracker, “1,500,000 Stroll in Easter Parade in Mild Weather,” *The New York Times*, April 18, 1960, nytimes.com.

¹⁰³ Pete Hamill, “A New Day Dawns.”

¹⁰⁴ *My Brooklyn*.

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