Drew University

College of Liberal Arts

Plays about New York City's Gentrification: The Gentrifier, The Gentrified, and the Tension in-Between

A Thesis in Theatre Arts

By

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ABSTRACT:

As many cities worldwide are changing before our eyes, urban dwellers have become familiar with the term "gentrification." The term is often associated with local delis being replaced by Whole Foods, and an influx of new, typically white, faces into previously low-income neighborhoods housed by people of color. There are oftentimes many benefits to gentrification, such as improved public services, better access to grocery stores, decreased crime rates, etc. However, these benefits are often coupled with the closing of local stores, displacement of indigenous residents, demolition of historic monuments, and a lower collective efficacy. Thus, being a "gentrifier" can easily be seen as a label that automatically leads to these negative outcomes. This thesis will explore gentrification in New York City through the lense of three modern plays in order to voice the experiences of the gentrified and their anxiety about their changing neighborhoods, as well show how the actions of gentrifiers can lead to positive or negative outcomes in gentrifying neighborhoods. Overall, I conclude that the three plays reveal an anxiety about legacy among the gentrified, that gentrification is embedded in race, and that one can be a gentrifier without negatively affecting their community by taking specific actions to become aware of its pre-existing culture and history. I urge artists, especially artists who are gentrifiers, to create, perform, and produce plays about gentrification alongside the gentrified to give them a platform to speak on and to educate gentrifiers on the impact of their actions or lack thereof. I urge gentrifiers and scholars to read and study these plays, the ones that have yet to be created, and the conclusions that can be drawn from each, because underneath the quantitative data of rent prices and the wealth

inequalities in gentrifying neighborhoods, there is a distinctly human story that is explicitly about race, culture, and history that can either be valued or ignored.

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GLOSSARY

- **Black Gentrification-** "a product of the continued racial exclusion of African-Americans and reflects **a specific social justice** agenda that challenges this system of racial and class stratification" (Moore 3)
- **Marginal Gentrification-** "refers to middle-class households who are 'richer in **cultural capital** than in *economic capital*'" (Van Criekingen & Decroly, 2003, p. 2454 qtd. in Moore p. 6)
- **Yuppification-** "the process in which a previously marginalized urban neighborhood experiences an influx of **high income and high status** residents and businesses" (Van Criekingen & Decroly, 2003; Zukin 1982 qtd. in Moore p. 5)
- **Thirdwave Gentrification-** "usually initiated by **corporate developers** collaborating with government agencies" (6) often creating a "more *quick* and complete" (Moore 6) transformation
- **Cultural Capital-** "refers to the to the symbols, ideas, tastes, and preferences that can be strategically used as resources in social action" (Scott and Marshall)
- **Collective Efficacy-** Amount of social cohesion among neighbors

INTRODUCTION

> *"When you meet any opportunity as an obstacle, it will reflect as a static situation. By meeting a problem as an opportunity, it has the ability to awaken something inside of you. We see [gentrification] as an opportunity to hone our skills, we can anchor ourselves and become the stronger tree"*
>
> - Jonathan McCrory, The National Black Theatre (Director of Theatre Arts Program)

As rent prices soar in many cities nationwide, people have become more familiar with the word "gentrification," associating the word with a corner bodega turning into a Whole Foods or artisan café. The neighborhoods I will be discussing have been known for decades as cultural hubs for low-income families and people of color, and are suddenly being infiltrated with unfamiliar faces searching for cheap rent and an urban lifestyle. Gentrification is a wave of change, with no one person, company, or real estate agent to blame.

The following chapters will explore gentrification in New York City through three modern plays. As an undergraduate student at Drew University, I have had the opportunity to intern and live in New York City over these four years, giving me the opportunity to observe gentrification first hand in the city's many boroughs. However, I have chosen to delve solely into gentrification in New York City not only because it is a rapidly gentrifying city that I have spent the most time living and working in, but also because it is the nation's, and arguably the world's, center for theatre. Considering Broadway and Off-Broadway Theaters alone, there are 107 theaters in New York City. This does not include the many community and Off-Off Broadway theaters that fill the streets throughout all five boroughs. For instance, the Working Theater and the Labyrinth

Theater Company, which are small theater companies that work closely with playwrights, helped produce two of the plays I will be discussing. In total, New York City has over 400 theaters, the most of any major city in the world (Brown), almost doubling another well-renowned city for theatre, London, which has 214 theaters (Brown). All three plays that I will discuss were performed Off-Broadway, some reaching dozens and others reaching hundreds of New York City residents at a time. Overall, New York City has the resources and the audiences to give plays about gentrification a stage to start on. Furthermore, plays provide an accessible and familiar platform to speak to gentrifiers in New York City. I can think of no better way to reach New Yorkers than through a performance.

This research was conducted over the span of almost a year, during three months of which (the Summer of 2017), I resided in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. Bed-Stuy is a similar neighborhood to the ones I will discuss because it is rapidly gentrifying. Over just three months, I observed the completion of new apartment buildings and local stores going out of business. I experienced the feeling of being an outsider to a community that is primarily made up of Hispanic and Black residents. However, I also saw how gentrifiers, like myself, can either join their new community or exclude themselves. One of my roommates had been living in Bed-Stuy for over a year. Yet, he was hardly involved in the neighborhood, spending most of his time going to auditions in Manhattan. My other roommate was heavily involved in the community. She had only been residing in Bed-Stuy for a few months and she was participating in local activities and attending a church down the street. She helped introduce me to the life of Bed-Stuy through her

church, her favorite local restaurants, and her nearby friends. She was the first person to show to me that gentrifiers do not have to be outsiders if they invest in their community.

Being a gentrifier cannot be equated to being a newcomer in just any neighborhood. The following plays will show gentrifying neighborhoods that have been homes for low-income people of color for decades. The gentrifiers we see in the plays (mostly white, college educated, young, etc.) are distinctly different from the current residents. Furthermore, these gentrifiers are not simply newcomers in an otherwise homogeneous neighborhood. Unless gentrifiers do specific actions to show otherwise, they can erase the pre-existing culture and history of gentrifying neighborhoods. The following plays will expose the outcomes of a gentrifier's actions and how they can either be active members of their community and positively affect their neighborhood, or they can choose to be outsiders.

In order to focus my research, I have created the following graphs that summarize the basic components of the plays and the analytical questions that are important to explore in each one.

	LOCATION	WHY SELECTED	DATE PREMIERED
PLAY #1 *Bamboo in Bushwick* by Ed Cardona Jr.	Bushwick, Brooklyn	Part of a theatre initiative whose main goal was to create pieces "for, inspired by, and in response to each community"	April 2017
PLAY #2 *Buzzer* By Tracey Scott Wilson	Brownsville, Brooklyn	Renowned play, performed by the Public Theater. Given rave reviews by many including the New York Times	February 2012
PLAY #3 *Dolphins and Sharks* By James Anthony Tyler	Harlem, Manhattan	Gives unique insight to Harlem, NY and the racial tensions occurring in this borough.	March 2017

PROPOSED QUESTIONS	1) What is the definition of a "gentrifier" and what are the outcomes of their actions in their neighborhood?	2) How does the play portray the anxiety about legacy that the "gentrified" have?	3) How does race create boundaries between the gentrifiers and the gentrified?	4) What is the value of the play in terms of representing a gentrifying community?
PLAY #1 *Bamboo in Bushwick* by Ed Cardona Jr.				
PLAY #2 *Buzzer* By Tracey Scott Wilson				
PLAY #3 *Dolphins and Sharks* By James Anthony Tyler				

CHAPTER ONE: WHAT IS GENTRIFICATION?

Before delving into the plays themselves, it is important to know the basic components and outcomes of gentrification. First, what is gentrification? I gathered a couple responses to this question from peers of mine (ages 21-23) who have lived and/or worked in gentrifying areas of New York City. Before getting into the academic definition of the word, I want to look at how current New York City gentrifiers, or those who may not live in New York City but witness its gentrification first-hand, see the term. One responder said,

> "this is super not right and perceptual, but I think gentrification is more wealthy companies coming into low income areas and 'beautifying' spaces with businesses and homes that are new to the neighborhood, for example, a vegan market. It's a tool of making things trendy."

Another said,

> "it is the alienation of original inhabitants of a neighborhood from their homes. The pricing out of original homeowners to make room for a wealthier and usually white new occupancy of the area. It's also a cultural and capitalistic thing, in that locally owned businesses begin to make room for more corporate businesses i.e., Starbucks replacing a neighborhood dive bar (which literally happened in greenwich village when I lived there). That's my impression. Gentrification begins to wipe away the watermark of a culturally diverse place and creates a cookie cutter thing out of it."

Lastly, one peer said,

> "gentrification is the evolution of neighborhoods from a change economically and socially."

As one can see from these quotes, gentrification is often seen as an obvious change in a neighborhood, and typically one that appeals to whiter and "trendier" residents. Gentrification can manifest in a variety of ways, which will be explained further in this chapter, however this shared viewpoint that gentrifiers are white and "trendy," is a testament to who are currently seen as gentrifiers in New York City.

Now that we have seen how current gentrifiers see the term, I would like to look at the definition and history from an academic point of view. The term "gentrification" is relatively new, having been coined in 1964, by the British sociologist Ruth Glass as she was searching for a way to describe the influx of young professionals invading the working-class borough of Islington, London (Thomson). Patterns of gentrification often include artists, teachers and other people with "cultural capital" (Zukin qtd. in Thomson) moving to lower-income areas, having been priced out of richer areas, and seeing the

opportunity “to appreciate the urban environment in a way that other middle class people do not: the houses, the crowded streets, the social diversity, the chance to be bohemian” (Zukin qtd. in Thomson). Cultural capital refers to the amount of social assets a person has, such as a certain level of intellect, and style of speech and/or dress. Young artists tend to have high cultural capital even though they may not have economic wealth, these are the gentrifiers that Zukin is referring to and that are prominent in New York City right now. This form of gentrification will be clarified and distinguished from others later in this chapter.

Once young artists pave the way, real estate developers often notice the influx and realize they can market this lifestyle, which is why gentrification is closely linked to capitalism and consumerism (Thomson). However, once developers discover this opportunity for profit, the demand and price to live in gentrifying neighborhoods increases because they have attracted “ever wealthier young professionals” who want “to call brownstones and lofts home” (Angotti qtd. in Thomson). Thus, the artists and young professors with cultural capital that first invested in these neighborhoods are forced out by their wealthier peers, forcing young artists to discover new cheaper neighborhoods all over again and thus the pattern continues.

Although it is evident that the term is more nuanced than this, to put it in one sentence, gentrification is a process of renovation of an urban neighborhood to appeal to more affluent residents, whether this be in terms of cultural capital and/or economic wealth.

GENTRIFICATION IN NEW YORK CITY

Although the term began in London, it is now commonly used in many major American cities and is relevant in New York City today, and in recent decades, to both scholars and residents because of rapid neighborhood changes. Sociologists first began to use the word "gentrification" to discuss neighborhood changes in New York City in the 1970s (Wagner School of Public Service). Young residents, again often artists and/or teachers with a high cultural capital, began to discover the potential of grungier downtown warehouses in the mid-late 1970's (in areas such as SoHo and TriBeCa) as affordable live and work spaces. These young residents took full advantage of these spaces even if it meant sinking every penny into making former warehouses liveable (i.e. fixing floors, repairing windows, patching holes). By the 1990s, rent prices were visibly increasing in certain areas of New York City and then were rapidly increasing all over the city in the 2000s (Wagner School of Public Service). Although rent was rising all over the city during the 2000s, it rose the most in gentrifying neighborhoods, mostly uptown Manhattan (Harlem) and various boroughs of Brooklyn (Wagner School of Public Service).

Today, TriBeCa, once a home for empty warehouses, is now one of the most expensive places to live in Manhattan with the median rent for a one-bedroom apartment at $4,350 a month (O'Brien). Boroughs in Brooklyn have a median rent for a one-bedroom ranging from $1,500/month (for Brownsville, an east-Brooklyn neighborhood farther from Manhattan) to $3,910/month (for DUMBO, the neighborhood closest to Manhattan, just across the river). Harlem's median rent for a one-bedroom ranges from $2,250/month to $2,300/month. Incoming residents are continually looking for a lifestyle

that suits their cultural capital. Furthermore, current gentrifiers want to live somewhere with venues to appreciate art, with coffee shops that they can work in, and with restaurants that serve contemporary food. Zukin refers to this as the ABCs of gentrification: “art galleries, boutiques, and cafes” (Zukin qtd. in Thomson). All of the neighborhood spots that appeal to gentrifiers with a high cultural capital. This has caused gentrification to spread beyond Downtown Manhattan and into the outer boroughs, and the exorbitant rent prices follow.

Older buildings in Harlem, Washington Heights, Crown Heights, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and other uptown and outer-borough areas became unaffordable to low-income households between 2000 and 2010-2014 (Wagner School of Public Service). However, unlike Soho and Tribeca and other Downtown New York spots, where there were empty spaces to occupy, today the influx of gentrifiers into these outer-boroughs is displacing existing residents in these areas. The demand for apartments in low-income areas gave landlords the ability to raise rent to a level that working-class residents could not afford.

CONTEXT: SPECIFICS ON GENTRIFICATION

From the information above, it is evident that “gentrification” can mean the influx of trendier stores and younger people, and this is often what is associated with current gentrification in New York City. It is not a bad thing to see young people come into a neighborhood, or to see new stores pop up. In fact, new life in a neighborhood can be a good thing because it shows investment and interest in the neighborhood and its potential. However, what is harmful is when the influx of gentrifiers is coupled with a loss of place

for many indigenous low-income residents who are typically people of color. The rest of this chapter will focus on what specific outcomes and patterns of gentrification relate to the three plays I have chosen to include, and how they affect the gentrified community.

BLACK GENTRIFICATION AND THREE FORMS OF GENTRIFICATION

Black gentrification, as defined by Professor Kesha Moore, author of "Gentrification in Black Face?: The Return of the Black Middle Class to Urban Neighborhoods," is "a product of the continued racial exclusion of African-Americans and reflects a specific social justice agenda that challenges this system of racial and class stratification" (3). Thus, this is a different form of gentrification and "does not produce the same outcomes as the patterns of gentrification observed among white gentrifiers" (3). Moore thus challenges scholars to take "race from the margins to the center of our analysis" (3), insisting that gentrification often turns into a discussion of class, leaving the discussion of how race and class interact in the dust.

For context, Moore outlines three prominent forms of gentrification recognized by scholars of the subject. One model Professor Moore reviews is what is known as marginal gentrification. *Marginal gentrification* "refers to middle-class households who are 'richer in cultural capital than in economic capital'" (Van Criekingen & Decroly, 2003, p. 2454 qtd. in Moore p. 6). A large difference between marginal gentrifiers and the yuppies is that marginal gentrifiers "do not have the economic resources or job stability of yuppies" (6) although they are often highly educated. Marginal gentrification is also associated with "a high degree of residential turnover" (6) because once they have established "families" and "high paying jobs" (6), they often leave gentrified

neighborhoods to join "established middle-class communities" (6) with better schooling options. When I say "middle-class communities," I am referring specifically to a community of highly educated, salaried professionals with incomes anywhere from $30,000 to $100,00 a year for a household of three. This is the specific form of gentrification that was aforementioned by Zukin, regarding the influx of young artists or other residents with cultural capital into neighborhoods. Once young artists have led the way in a neighborhood in New York City, then the yuppies will follow. Marginal gentrification is more prominent in the plays I will discuss.

Another form of gentrification that Moore describes is yuppification. *Yuppification* refers to "the process in which a previously marginalized urban neighborhood experiences an influx of high income and high status residents and businesses" (Van Criekingen & Decroly, 2003; Zukin 1982 qtd. in Moore p. 5). This model is associated with young business professionals attracted to "the cultural amenities" (5) of an "urban chic" (5) life, spending large amounts of income on art and renovating their homes. Yuppification also involves the replacement of local shops in the community with "new upper middle-class" (5) shops such as artisan cafes, craft breweries, and organic supermarkets (commonly Whole Foods in New York City). This model is less common in the plays I will be discussing because often yuppification occurs after neighborhoods have already seen marginal gentrification.

Lastly, Moore discusses "*thirdwave gentrification*" which "emerged after the recession of the early 1990s and differs in both magnitude and form from the earlier patterns" (Lees, 2003; Hackworth, 2002 qtd. in Moore p. 6). This form of gentrification is

"usually initiated by corporate developers collaborating with government agencies" (6) often creating a "more quick and complete" (6) transformation. This form involves purchasing "fully gentrified neighborhoods" instead of slowly transforming a neighborhood "through individual investments of economic and cultural capital" (7). Thirdwave gentrification is most prominent in the last play I discuss, *Dolphins and Sharks*, because it describes new chain restaurants appearing and entire lots being bought by real estate developers to build new condominiums.

By observing these three forms, one can see how the discussion of gentrification has been mostly based between "white college-educated gentrifiers without money (marginal gentrification) and college educated white gentrifiers with money (yuppification and thirdwave gentrification" (6). Thus, a college education and the amount of wealth one has are often seen as the defining factors of a gentrifier, showing that race as a factor has been pushed to the side. However, the following plays, all written by people of color, show that race is a central part of the conversation on gentrification in every form.

DISPLACEMENT AND SEGREGATION

Displacement and segregation are two results that can occur once gentrifiers begin to move into a low-income neighborhood. Displacement is a result that is specific to current gentrification in Brooklyn and Harlem because of the concentration of rent-stabilized buildings in these neighborhoods that existed prior to gentrification. Landlords have found enough loopholes in tenant protections laws that displacement of once rent-stabilized tenants has become a common real estate practice (Greenberg). Thus, landlords

are able to charge double or triple the rent to incoming gentrifiers once they push out previously rent-stabilized residents, even if they have been living there for decades. However, although this is an obvious trend in the three plays I have chosen, displacement being directly correlated with gentrification is highly debated among scholars. Freeman's research actually "did not show evidence of a causal relationship between gentrification and...displacement" (Freeman 4). Many were skeptical of his results because it was not "consistent with their personal observations of change in gentrifying neighborhoods" (5). Thus, displacement can often be a personal experience of people living in gentrifying neighborhoods, making it notable in the following plays. However, quantitatively, "the process of neighborhood chance in gentrifying neighborhoods is often gradual, driven more by succession or a change in who moves into the neighborhood than rapid and widespread displacement" (Freeman 127).

This also leads to the segregation of people by class and race if low-income people of color can no longer afford to live in rising neighborhoods because the influx of white residents has raised property value. Since displacement and segregation are surfacing in New York City gentrification, both topics are prominent in gentrification's modern plays.

The main cause of this displacement and inherent segregation stems from the ability of landlords, and larger institution owners, to capitalize on the new appeal of a neighborhood. The more in-demand a neighborhood is, the higher they can raise the rent, forcing old tenants out for new tenants who are willing and able to pay more. This may seem purely class based, but, as aforementioned, race is more central than one may think

since the people landlords are often pushing out are people of color and the people moving in are often white. Attracting gentrifiers may also involve marketing a new, catchy nickname for the neighborhood. In an interview with Jaylene Clark Owens, an actress, spoken word poet, playwright, producer, director, and Harlem native explained her fervent belief against the renaming of Harlem. Owens is also known for her piece *Renaissance in the Belly of a Killer Whale*, a series of poems, songs, and scenes written about gentrification in Harlem. When I asked her about the most prevalent changes she has noticed as Harlem gentrifies, she mentioned how her and her friends aim to "fight SoHa," a nickname given to the neighborhood by many incoming gentrifiers and real estate developers. In Owens' spoken word poem, SpaHa, she says

> "I just don't understand how some people are trying to turn my home's name into a brand. Trying to box it and squeeze it into some four-letter package. Being from 'SoHa' was not and never will be part of my heritage. SoHa, really? So let me get this straight, you can spell it out to small businesses that they need to pack their stuff to make way for your high rises that just can't wait. But when it comes to spelling out the name of this place you're trying to profit off of, you decide to abbreviate? Oh, gentrification" (Owens, 2012).

Owens actively fights against the branding of her neighborhood through her art and even performed this version of her poem on 125th St in Harlem in 2012 in front of passing residents and visitors.

In Mary Pattillo's book *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City*, she makes a case for and against public housing, revealing how housing in urban cities can be inherently racist although it may seem to be centered around class. She describes this phenomenon saying that,

> "past racism has so distorted the functioning of institutions and markets--here the housing market--that overt racism is no longer even necessary to ensure

> inequality, and the discriminatory racial history is no longer visible. The legacy of past racism sustains and reproduces contemporary racial disparities without even having to mention race" (Patillo 182)

As a result of our country's racist past, there is an inherent "genius systemic racism" (182) that still sustains. For instance, in the suburb of Mount Laurel, New Jersey, black residents filed a lawsuit against the town because, "despite their tenure" (189), they were being targeted and pushed out by "upscale, suburban-type housing" (189). The new white mayor simply told these black residents "if you people can't afford to live in our town, then you'll just have to leave" (189). This shows how easy it is to escape being accused of racism by blaming displacement on class, but if the new housing market is only affordable to rich white people, it is inherently racist. Inherent racism is enough to push people of color out, forcing them to live separately from their whiter, richer counterparts.

In Lance Freeman's book *There Goes the Hood*, he also discusses this displacement that is seemingly due to wealth inequalities. He argues that in some ways, the critique of gentrification is the critique of using the market to allocate real estate, meaning that it's a critique of capitalism (208). As aforementioned, gentrification can seemingly exacerbate wealth inequalities, making the real beneficiaries property owners, big business owners, and others that capitalize on raising rent prices. However, Freeman shows in his book that by talking one-on-one with residents, it is evident that gentrification is more than just class conflict, it is a racial conflict as well.

By listening to the perspective of indigenous residents to gentrifying neighborhoods, Freeman argues that both scholars and residents can combat "the undesirable outcomes inherent in market capitalism" (209), such as racism. These plays

will discuss gentrification on an individual basis and how these harsh effects can be combated.

COLLECTIVE EFFICACY

After discussing how and why gentrification occurs, it is important to discuss the effects of a changing neighborhood on its residents once they are living among people of typically different class, race, and age. Collective Efficacy is defined as the "social cohesion among neighbors" and is "linked to reduced violence" (Sampson et al.). Freeman describes collective efficacy in the context of gentrification noting that it is the amount of "social intimacy between the gentry and long-term residents" (135). He notes that many long-term residents find differences between them and the gentrifiers. For instance, one long-term resident found that "gentry [gentrifiers] complain about noise and disturbance with kids playing outside. They don't want the neighborhood kids playing outside or on their own, which is something that is normally common in Clinton Hill (139). Actions such as these that gentrifiers take to dismantle pre-existing daily socialization and culture are lowering the neighborhood's collective efficacy by creating social divides. The following plays will show how gentrifiers can raise and lower a community's collective efficacy through specific actions.

WHITE PEOPLE = BETTER SERVICES

Another prominent issue that surfaces in gentrifying neighborhoods, is the recognition that more white people means better services. Freeman discusses this in his chapter titled "Making Sense of Gentrification" (95) in which he discusses this phenomenon in the neighborhoods of Harlem, Manhattan and Clinton Hill, Brooklyn.

Freeman's book details his interviews with residents, which are interrupted by his reactions to the interviews and discussion of his findings. With a new appreciation for the property in Harlem and Clinton Hill, residents were not surprised about the arrival of whites that began "to move there en masse" (97), yet many were surprised that their arrival seemed to be associated with "neighborhood improvement" (97). One resident of Clinton Hill, Samantha, told Freeman how "I usually went shopping outside of the neighborhood so that I could get fresh meat, fresh produce. Just in the past couple years they have been totally modernizing the store. So my son and his friend went in there and asked the manager 'why are you fixing up the store now all of the sudden?' And they said 'because more whites are moving into the area'" (98). The store manager in this case was Hispanic. Thus, as more white people move into the neighborhood, it seems that "certain things that have been commonplace will no longer be accepted" (99).[1]

Another improved service among gentrifying neighborhoods is an increase in police protection and response. One person that Freeman interviewed discusses this phenomenon saying that "you see maybe a more police presence, but that's for them. That's not really for the older residents….if it's for the older residents, they would have been there prior to the new people...so when you see like an improvement of services because of your new neighbors...it sorta is a slap in the face" (104). Yet, what Freeman notices is that there is not resentment towards white people, but a resentment towards the fact that being white seems to be coupled with better treatment. Residents have also

[1] While living in Bed-Stuy, a currently gentrifying borough, I noticed this phenomenon with the grocery store down the block from my apartment on Fulton Street in Bed-Stuy. It is a Super Foodtown that spans larger than anything else in the neighborhood, beyond the little mom and pop shops and bodegas. I also learned that it was relatively new to the neighborhood. Since it was the only place one could get every basic food need (meat, milk, vegetables, etc.), I wonder what residents did before the grocery store was there.

noticed increased services in sanitation, regulation of noise level, and less tolerance for loitering. The scariest part of this is that it mirrors the differential treatment that once accompanied old Jim Crow ways (107). It is good that the residents of color are also now benefiting from most of these increased services, but why did these services lack before their whiter counterparts moved in? Furthermore, gentrification continues and exacerbates pre-existing racism in New York City.

THE GENTRIFIER AND THE GENTRIFIED

Although the definitions for "gentrifer" and "gentrified" vary, these are the definitions that I will employing:

The gentrified are indigenous residents of a gentrifying community that are active members of the established culture. The gentrified are typically low-income (families or individuals earning enough income to meet the American poverty line or be below it) people of color and are of all ages. The gentrifiers are usually young adults, such as recent college graduates, new to the neighborhood, have high cultural capital, and are typically white.

As one can see from the information above, being a gentrifier is often a negative label that can result in displacement, segregation, racism, and erasure of daily culture. However, these negative outcomes are the result a gentrifiers actions, thus gentrifiers can take specific actions to combat these negative outcomes. The following plays will show gentrifiers taking actions that encourage these negative outcomes as well as gentrifiers that take actions to combat them.

Characteristics of a Gentrifier	Negative Outcomes from Influx of Gentrifiers
● Young professional ● New to neighborhood ● High cultural capital ● Typically white	● Lowering collective efficacy ● Erases/ignores/disrespects/appropriates existing culture of a neighborhood ● Displacement

HOW I AM RELATING GENTRIFICATION AND THEATRE

I will be focusing primarily on gentrification in Harlem and neighborhoods of Brooklyn since these are the neighborhoods that have been most rapidly gentrifying in recent decades (Wagner School of Public Service). Thus, plays written about New York City's gentrification tend to be set in one of these locations.

Using the previously discussed information about gentrification, I will discuss and analyze three plays on the subject, exploring how they reflect the rapid changes of gentrifying neighborhoods. Like Freeman and Moore previously stated, gentrification seems like a class warfare on the surface, but beneath the top layer, it is also about race, culture, and history, all of which my analysis will expose through the following plays.

CHAPTER TWO: *Bamboo in Bushwick* by Ed Cardona Jr.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Bamboo in Bushwick by Ed Cardona Jr. was commissioned by the Working Theater and premiered in April 2017 in Brooklyn. It toured all five boroughs as a part of the Working Theater's Five Boroughs/One City Initiative, which launched in Fall of 2014. This initiative commissioned artists "to create a piece of theater rooted in a neighborhood in each of the five boroughs of New York City by engaging a specific

community as both source and resource in the creative process. The work being created is for, inspired by, and in response to each community" (the Working Theater initiative's mission). Thus, Cardona's play is the commissioned piece for Brooklyn, but focuses specifically on the neighborhood of Bushwick (see Figure One below).

I chose to include this play because of its recent creation and production, but also because Cardona informed me in an interview that he spent two years creating the play, which involved conducting random interviews with Bushwick residents on the street, planned interviews with community leaders, and multiple readings with talkbacks afterwards. Thus, the Bushwick community was always at the heart of his process. Cardona specifically emphasized how the talkbacks were important because they allowed community members to agree or disagree with the themes of the play as well as add their own stories. Although Cardona has lived relatively close to Bushwick for the past fourteen years in Washington Heights, he is originally from Connecticut, thus it seems that the two years were vital in his learning the neighborhood. Cardona is bilingual, speaking English and Spanish, as are many residents of Bushwick, giving him the ability to craft spanish-speaking characters. In my interview with Cardona, he emphasized the importance of keeping the Spanish in the dialogue despite having an English-speaking audience, providing them with subtitles instead. Cardona sees the Spanish as an important aspect of the play because it makes the audience feel like outsiders. As one will see, Cardona brings us into the lives of the gentrified in Bushwick, how they feel about the occurrence of gentrification and how they help each other, as well as what everyday life

is like in Bushwick: dominoes, delicious majarete, and a community that values each other.

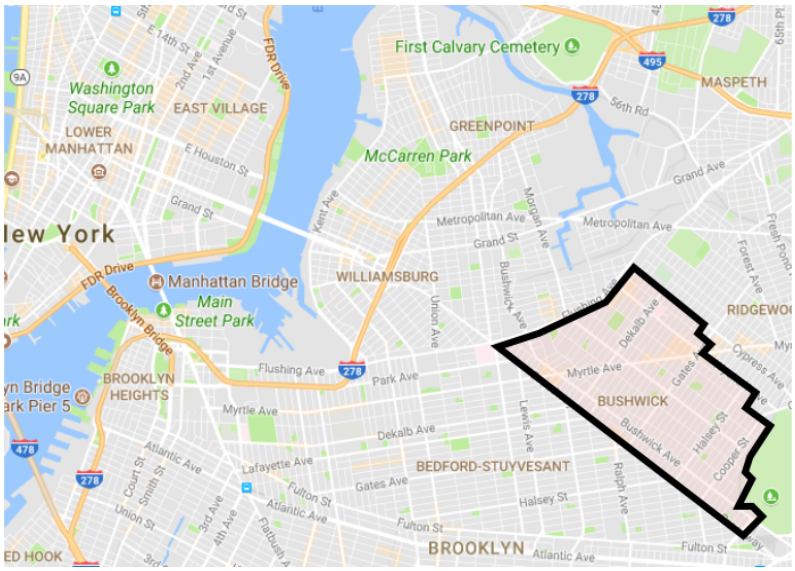


Figure One: Neighborhood of Bushwick outlined in Brooklyn

CHARACTERS

The play takes place in present day in springtime and has six characters who each have a different relationship to Bushwick. Each character also doubles as a color that all together form "a mural of a frozen, icy, tundra; with stylized totem poles, polar bears and penguins filling the foreground" (1). Each character, as their color, enable a mural to come to life throughout the play.

- Edson is twenty-eight years old and an undocumented Mexican immigrant who only speaks Spanish throughout the play. Although he is known to be "one of the best handymen in Bushwick, where he lived for twelve years," (iii) he now lives further away in East New York, where the rent is cheaper (for now) than the rapidly gentrifying Bushwick. He doubles as the color Green.

- Crispin is a fifty-year old Puerto Rican Bushwick native and also speaks primarily Spanish. He is a retired social worker, “El Presidente on his block” (iii), and doubles as the color Blue. He often tries to pull Edson into playing dominoes with him, even when Edson is headed to work.
- Swayze is a 30-year old white photographer and a Queens native although he has lived in Bushwick for four years. He fits the bill of an “aging hipster” (iii) and can often be found photographing his friends and neighborhood. He doubles as the color Red.
- Magalia is a forty-year old Dominican who speaks mostly Spanish. She makes a living by selling majarete (corn pudding) in Bushwick and has lived there for over twenty years. She doubles as the color orange.
- Budi is a twenty-seven year old Korean American. She is “an army-brat” (iii) and lived in both Korea and the US as a successful fine artist who has “traveled the world creating street art” (iii). She keeps a studio in Bushwick and doubles as the color Violet.
- Nirt is a thirty-three year-old fine artist as well and is known on the street for being “one of the best freehand artists” (iii). He is a Bed-Stuy native and teaches his alma mater, the Pratt Institute. He doubles as the color Indigo.

PLOT AND DISCUSSION

The play begins on a “cracked sidewalk in Bushwick” (iv) that meets an abandoned warehouse that is “primed a dreary gray” and we hear “the rattling of bamboo wind chimes” (1) hanging from a nearby tree. Immediately this gives the flavor of

Bushwick to an audience, a neighborhood that defies the typical new york city skyscraper setting with long, low warehouses, which are slowly turning into cafes, restaurants, and even studio apartments as gentrification increases. The presence of murals all over Bushwick signals the second form of gentrification described in Chapter One: marginal gentrification. It is characterized by an influx of young artists that may not have the wealth to remodel buildings, but have the cultural capital to revamp empty brick walls into colorful murals.

Figure Two: Photo of a cafe in Bushwick (Photo credit: Haviland Atha-Simonton)

All of the colors form the aforementioned mural, then dissolve away back to the dreary gray. Edson enters the stage and is trying to paint over a recent tag on the wall of the warehouse that said “Will I be remembered” (1). Budhi enters with her mural drawing materials, arguing with someone on the phone. Edson reveals that he had done a mural of the Great Wall of China on this wall and wonders who tagged his work. He also answers Crispin’s questions about how he and his family are adjusting to East New York after leaving Bushwick, to which he says that his wife hates it, but it is less rent than Bushwick was. This is not an uncommon conversation for most native residents of Brooklyn, and is

a prime example of the displacement in gentrifying neighborhoods that was described in Chapter One. Many residents have not had the choice but to move out to Queens or even out of the city to Newark, NJ to escape the rising costs of rent in neighborhoods such as Bushwick. This is partially a class issue because Edson could not keep up with the rising cost of rent in gentrifying Bushwick, but this is also a racial issue since gentrifying neighborhoods are seeing a rise in white residents. Bushwick saw a massive decline in Hispanic and Black residents and a huge increase in white residents from 2000 to 2015 (see Figures Three and Four below).

Figure Four: Bushwick Racial Makeup 2015

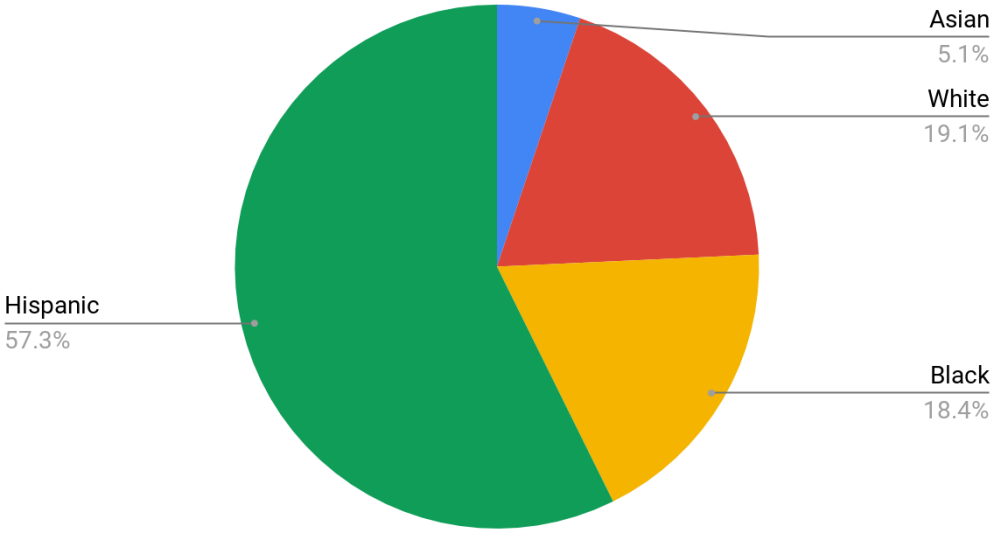
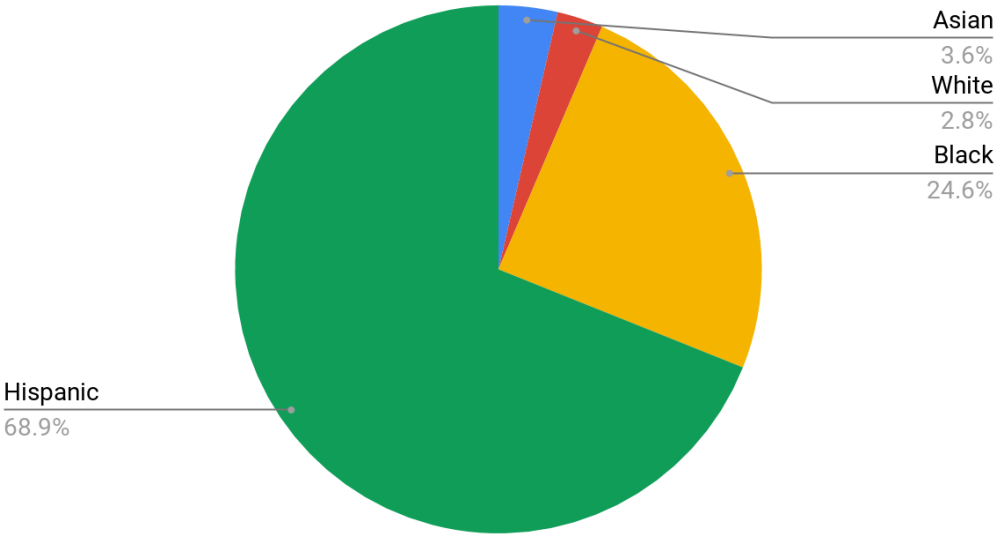


Figure Three: Bushwick Racial Makeup in 2000



2

In Scene Two (Polar Armstrong), we are back in the "mural-verse" (12) and Blue and the other colors (except Red) come to life out of the mural as a polar bear and a "waddle of penguins" (12). Blue, as the polar bear, explores this icy tundra they are in, exclaiming how it has "so much potential," but the other colors make it clear that he does not belong there with "the storms, the crevasses, the ominous orcas prowling the sea" (14). When interviewing Cardona, he expressed that he wanted a polar bear and penguins in the mural verse to both portray the strong force of a polar bear and the defenselessness of penguins, giving the effect of the power the gentrifiers have over the gentrified. Cardona had also noticed how animals are a prominent theme among murals in Bushwick.

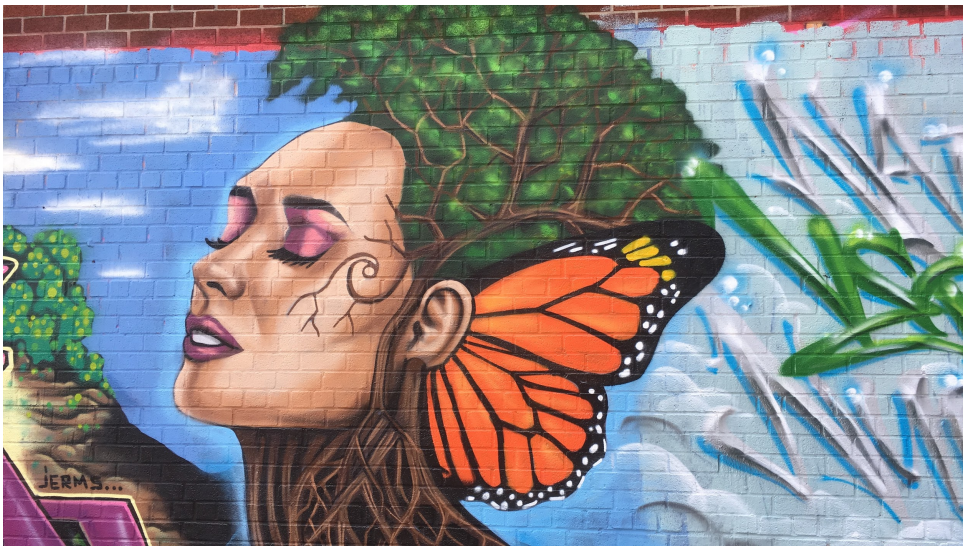


Figure Five: Mural on the side of a warehouse in Bushwick (Photo Credit: Haviland Atha-Simonton; Artist unknown)

[2] Data for both graphs was found on citylab.com who received the data from The New York City Comptroller's office in May, 2017

The roar of a polar bear is heard as the play transitions back to Crispin and Edson on the sidewalk, starting Scene Three (Fool's Glass) as if no time had passed. Magalia enters with her majarete cart and converses with Edson and Crispin, revealing to the audience that she is waiting on her husband and son to join her from the Dominican Republic which is a matter of immigration paperwork. Magalia asks Edson to come fix her door that is falling off her hinges because her "landlord is not going to do anything about it" (21) and she doesn't want her family moving into a "disaster zone" (22). Edson pleads to her to stop fixing the apartment and talk to a lawyer about her landlord who has also removed her toilet and will not make other fixes. Yet, she refuses and Edson finally agrees to fix her apartment, even though Magalia does not have the money to pay him. Crispin and Edson talk about how they have to look after people in the neighborhood because so many are being displaced out of Bushwick.

The unfair treatment from landlords is so severe that Crispin even tells Edson of a friend in Bushwick whose landlord "came to install a new smoke alarm or C02 detector. Before he knew, they had torn down half of the ceiling in the apartment...now the whole building is under renovation" (28-29). This is a personal account of the aforementioned ability of landlords to force low-income residents out. I also inquired about mistreatment from landlords in my interview with Cardona who explained to me that landlords have often recently been found to ignore repairs in apartments to the point of extreme inconvenience, or even danger, in order to force out rent-controlled tenants so they can renovate and raise the rent for new gentrifiers. Sometimes these renovations are done well, other times cheaply, knowing that gentrifiers are eager enough to live in these

neighborhoods that they will pay exorbitant rent for a cheaply renovated apartment.[3] All it takes is a cheap renovation to raise the rent up a couple hundred dollars and pull gentrifiers in, an easy move for landlords.

Swayze enters taking pictures with his Yashica T4 camera, "runs his fingers through through the bamboo wind chimes" (30) and exclaims how all the murals that portrayed the people of their community, such as "a memorial to some Haitian kid who got hit by a car or some shit" (32) are now being replaced with "fucking spacey, tweaked out, German expressionist" (31) murals. He takes a picture of Crispin's wind chimes and says that "the polar bears are going to eat us alive...not even your bamboo wind chimes are going to survive" (33). In the less gentrified areas of Brooklyn, one may see the type of murals that Swayze is describing, ones that are specific to the community. For instance, Bed-Stuy is not completely gentrified, so one can find more locally-focused murals in the neighborhood (see figure Six below).

[3] The apartment I lived in during the Summer of 2017, although in Bed-Stuy, exhibited these same trends. The hallway leading to the apartment had stained carpeting, an old paint job, many cracks in the walls, and often cockroaches seeping in through the front door. However, once entering the apartment, it seemed brand new: exposed brick, white walls, new appliances, and hardwood floors. Yet, if one looked more closely, it was visible that there were small inch-wide cracks in the hardwood floor, pipes were left exposed making it easy for mice to enter, doors were made from cheap plastic, and more.

Figure Six: Mural on Fulton St in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn dedicated to Yusuf Hawkins, an African-American teenager that was shot to death in 1989 in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn (Photo Credit: Haviland Atha-Simonton; Artist unknown).

Scene Four (Pubescent Penguins) takes us back into the mural-verse. All the colors are huddled together as "a waddle of stylized penguins" (34) as they move from the two-dimensional mural into our three-dimensional world. They are freezing and scared of the roar of a polar bear they hear in the distance. Suddenly, panic arrives as the polar bear jumps into the water near their ice sheet to attack and the colors have no choice but to abandon their home for safety. Indigo is forced to leave her egg behind.

Scene Five (DJ Barack) shifts back to the sidewalk, again as if no time has passed. Crispin and Swayze persuade Edson to take a break from work and play dominos with them. Swayze reveals that he is going through a breakup and his ex-girlfriend is giving him thirty days to find a new place to live. He gives no further explanation than "I guess she fell out of love. That shit happens, right" (45). Crispin, who has been married for a long time, tells Swayze "with all the love in the world because you're a good guy….a woman will never forgive a man that can't provide" (46). The others agree with Crispin, knowing that Swayze is a photographer, who does not make a lot of money. Swayze says he values himself and will not take "any little bullshit job," which the others

refer to as “Blanquito sueñitos” (white dreams) (47). These lines from the play are specifically referring to the presence of white artists as gentrifiers.

In an interview with Rebecca Amato, Professor of Sociology at NYU with an emphasis on gentrification, she further explained how many gentrifiers are young white artists and they often bring with them a certain amount of privilege to these neighborhoods, since it is often a privilege to choose art as a living given its financial instability. Specifically, Amato made it clear that gentrifiers who are artists, and possibly something like baristas or waiters on the side, often cannot survive on this salary alone in New York City. They often come from a privileged background and have family to support them financially. Thus, Swayze embodies this kind of gentrifier in a lot of ways. He differs from Crispin and Edson because he does not work a laborious job to provide for himself and his girlfriend. He has a privileged job of art and pleasure, “Blanquito sueñitos.” This furthers the aforementioned point in Chapter One that on the surface, the difference between gentrifiers and the gentrified may seem like an issue of class, but by observing gentrification on an individual level, it is evident that it is also a distinctly racial issue. Budhi and Nirt enter with art supplies and “*two large coffee cups with fancy lids, definitely not a bodega cup of coffee*” (49) and begin to discuss a mural on the wall. Nirt looks at Budhi’s design idea on her phone, which includes bamboo. Crispin passively invites them to join for a game of dominos to which they respond with “I’m sorry. We need to get started” (50).

Scene Six (A Little Bigger Crozet) brings us back to the mural-verse “filled with magnificently majestic frozen totem poles” (52). Indigo, Orange, and Red (still as

stylized penguins) step into the three-dimensional world and cross to one of the totem poles. The roar of the polar bear still serves as a constant threat. The scene ends as they recite an almost ritualistic poem that includes phrases such as "I am the gentle snow/ You are the swift uplifting rush of wind from a glacier peak" and ends with "As long as you remember me" (53). These themes of being remembered are repeated and will continue to be throughout the play, revealing an anxiety about leaving a legacy as a community once they are all displaced by incoming gentrifiers.

The play transitions into Scene Seven (Gentri-Fuck-Wick) by mixing the sounds "*of a city street mixed with the roars of a polar bear*" (54). Again, no time has passed as Nirt and Budhi unpack their supplies and Crispin, Swayze, and Edson look from the side. Edson exits to get back to work as we hear "MAJAREEEEEEETE!" (54) from off stage right before Magalia enters. She has already sold much of her cart, but wants to catch the church crowd. She asks Swayze to help her get there and they both exit. Budhi and Nirt ask Crispin to watch their things while they get a ladder from Nirt's aunt that lives two blocks away (revealing that he is not completely an outsider). Crispin agrees to, looking through and picking things up from their art buckets once they leave. Swayze re-enters, telling Crispin that they should steal their stuff, an idea that Crispin rejects. Budhi and Nirt re-enter and Swayze and Crispin exit to go to the store. Nirt moves the domino table to start on the mural, claiming that Swayze and Crispin "won't even notice" (62). They spill the dominos and Budhi panics, but Nirt tries to calm her down saying that he "can deal with these guys" (64) as they pick up the dominos. Budhi is still nervous because she is "really sensitive about going into a new community" (64).

Swayze and Edson re-enter with their purchases (Goya snacks and bodega coffee). Edson re-enters, seeing Budhi and Nirt begin to plan their wall. Swayze, Edson, and Crispin discuss all of their friends, who used to play dominos with them, that have left for Staten Island, Queens, or other farther boroughs. Budhi and Nirt try to figure out how to ask the guys to move so they can paint on the part of the wall behind them. Swayze snaps, knowing what they want, saying "This ain't the zoo" to which Nirt responds with "B. K. kind of is" (72). Magalia enters again, diffusing this situation. Budhi and Nirt buy two majareete from Magalia, Budhi orders and pays by speaking Spanish to Magalia. Crispin starts to talk to the guys about how he used to have to show the police his ID to get to his block during "the crack epidemic in the 80's" (77). Although they have all heard this story a million times, Crispin cannot help but reminisce on how Bushwick used to be known for crack and now is "sexy and vibrant. The place to be if you can afford it...from blackouts to riots...to now craft beers, high rents, bikes, and little doggies everywhere. Paintings on the walls that belong in MoMa and not on the block" (79). The scene ends as Crispin solemnly states that "it's going to be like we never existed. They're going to just paint right over us" (80). Crispin's memories of the old Bushwick show how gentrification is good in the way that it makes neighborhoods safer, by controlling drug use and violence. This is an example of how the influx of white gentrifiers brings better services to the neighborhood, like police control, as aforementioned in Chapter One. However, Crispin acknowledges that the increase in quality of life in the neighborhood is also associated with the erasure of low-income people of color like himself.

Scene Eight (Check This) takes us back into the mural-verse and we see Blue and Indigo as "stylized polar bears dressed in paramilitary uniforms" (81). They step into the three-dimensional world and we see that Indigo is "*devouring a penguin*" (81). They then run into Green and Violet (stylized penguins) who say they are going home to what Indigo refers to as "Gentriwick" (81). Blue and Indigo are surprised that Green and Violet still live in Gentriwick, but are not gentrifiers. Indigo and Blue are about to let them pass, but they want to see their papers first. Violet has forgotten hers, thus they do not let her pass and she is forced to wait for Green to get them and return, or she must go "back to the East Edgelands where you belong" (85). Yet, before Green can return, Blue and Indigo have snarled their polar bear teeth at Violet and they: cut her to pieces with the ice picks" (89).

Scene Nine (Chuchazo) transitions once again with a mix of street sounds and a polar bear roar until we see Crispin, Swayze, and Edson again at the domino table, no time has passed as Budhi asks them to slide over so they can start painting the wall. Swayze gets angry quickly saying "fuck this" to Nirt and Budhi. When Budhi says "Listen. We're just here to do some art for the community," Swayze responds with "Your art. Not our art." (91). Although Budhi says they will leave and come back tomorrow, it's not good enough for Swayze and he ends up in a tug-o-war with Nirt over their art supplies. Eventually they all join in, including Magalia who enters with her cart, trying to somehow end this tug-o-war over the art supplies in the milk crate. During all of this commotion,

> "*the wall comes alive in a frenzy, it has short-circuited. It exploded with the colors of the rainbow..on the wall we see images of Bushwick streetscapes,*

> *graffiti, murals and photos from Swayze's camera...eventually the colors form a mural of a frozen, icy, tundra. Minus the stylized totem poles, penguins, and polar bears. During all of this we hear the sounds of a waddle of penguins, small arms fire, the roar of a polar bear, can of spray paint being shakes and sprayed and the rattling of the bamboo wind chimes*" (93).

The fight ends as they all come crashing into the flower box, it is destroyed and we here nothing now but the bamboo wind chimes. Once he rises, Swayze yells at Nirt, calling him a gentrifier, to which Nirt responds with,

> "*from Bed-stuy to Bushwick my family still reigns so you can't tell me shit...I came up in these streets when you wouldn't even think of getting off the Jefferson stop...I'm giving back with my art. What are you doing but playing dominos on the street corner*" (95).

Budhi and Nirt go to leave when Crispin politely says that they will not return until next Sunday, so they can work on the mural until then. He then tells them to "Remember us" (97) as the scene ends.

Scene Ten (Penguin Pinchos) transitions back into the mural-verse. As the colors step into a three-dimensional world, Orange and Indigo are stylized penguins, making up a totem pole. Violet and Red are facing the audience upstage as polar bears, "looking at a piece of artwork" and holding "a glass of wine and a small plate with what appears to be penguins skewers...they are a part of an art gallery opening" (101). They both study the totem pole that Orange and Indigo are frozen into, discussing how their "ancestors" are frozen into this artwork. The play ends with the wall coming to life once more as the colors for the phrase "Will I be remembered?" (104).

CONCLUSION OF DISCUSSION

Now that the main plot has been described and discussed, I am going to go back to my initial grid to explore what analytical questions Cardona's play answered and to what extent (see Figure Seven below).

PROPOSED QUESTIONS	1) What is the definition of a "gentrifier" and what are the outcomes of their actions in their neighborhood?	2) How does the play portray the anxiety about legacy that the "gentrified" have?	3) How does race create boundaries between the gentrifiers and the gentrified?	4) What is the value of the play in terms of representing a gentrifying community?
PLAY #1 *Bamboo in Bushwick* by Ed Cardona Jr.	-Fits aforementioned characteristics of a gentrifier -Gentrifiers can combat the label's negative connotations with certain actions, or else they risk dampening the communities collective efficacy	-Anxiety manifests through arguments and pleads to be remembered	-Black gentrifiers unintentionally drawing boundaries between them and the gentrified	-A nuanced and representative portrayal of gentrification, reflected by Cardona's extensive research and interviews

Figure Seven: Grid with analytical questions answered for *Bamboo in Bushwick*

Regarding the first analytical question, Cardona's portrayal of gentrifiers fits the previously described characteristics of a gentrifier in Chapter One. Cardona shows the negative outcomes of being a gentrifier employed through the actions of the character Nirt. Nirt does not attempt to form relationships with the gentrified, such as Edson or Crispin. He also does not respect their culture of socializing on the sidewalk and playing dominos during the day. This creates tension between the two groups and eventually

leads to an outburst that is never resolved. However, Cardona also shows that gentrifiers can combat the negative outcomes of the label with certain actions, through the character Swayze. Swayze is a gentrifier, but he creates art about Bushwick by photographing its residents, and he has formed relationships with Edson and Crispin, showing that he values the culture and people of the neighborhood. Swayze's actions enhance the community's collective efficacy by forming mutual trust between himself and the gentrified, creating a safe and pleasant environment. On the other hand, Nirt's actions dampen the neighborhood's collective efficacy by ignoring the gentrified and creating tension. Thus, Cardona shows the audience the two roads that gentrifiers can take (see Figure Eight below).

Characteristics of a Gentrifier
• Young professional • New to neighborhood • High cultural capital • Typically white

Actions Taken by Gentrifiers		**Negative Outcomes from the Actions of Gentrifiers**
• *Not communicating with the gentrified* • *Disrespecting the neighborhood's pre-existing daily culture*	= =	• Lowering collective efficacy • Erases/ignores/disrespects/appropriates existing culture of a neighborhood • Displacement
Actions Taken by Gentrifiers		**Positive Outcomes from the Actions of Gentrifiers**
• *Creating art with and about the community* • *Forming mutually beneficial relationships with the gentrified*	= =	• *Enhancing collective efficacy* • *Educating oneself and respecting existing culture of a neighborhood* • *Helping neighbors survive harsh conditions*

Figure Eight: Characteristics of a gentrifer re-stated as well as the actions taken by gentrifiers and the resulting positive and negative results on the gentrified community in *Bamboo in Bushwick*
Italics indicate new information gained from Bamboo in Bushwick

Second, Cardona's play shows that the gentrified residents of Bushwick have anxiety surrounding their legacy and being remembered. Cardona shows this through the arguments between the gentrifiers and the gentrified as well as through Crispin's direct plead to be remembered.

Third, through the character of Nirt, Cardona shows that black gentrifiers can unintentionally draw boundaries between themselves and the gentrified. Nirt has good intentions to give back with his art, but in the process, he is ignoring the wishes of Crispin, Edson, and others. Thus, because of his race and his background, Nirt thinks that

he is automatically an effective member of the community. Yet, he is still a gentrifier by nature of his age and cultural capital, so he needs to make an effort to form connections between himself and the gentrified, not create distinctions.

Lastly, Cardona has created a play through an extensive process of interviews, workshops, talkbacks, and more. This process led him to a play that shows a nuanced and representative portrayal of gentrification. He shows a multitude of interactions between a variety of gentrifiers and the people they have gentrified, as well as how gentrifiers can positively and negatively affect their new community. Thus, Cardona's play is valuable because it has the potential to show audiences a full picture of modern gentrification in New York City.

CHAPTER THREE: *BUZZER* By Tracey Scott Wilson

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Buzzer, by Tracey Scott Wilson, was commissioned by and premiered at the Pillsbury House Theatre in Minneapolis, Minnesota in February 2012. It was then produced by the Goodman Theatre in Chicago, Illinois in February of 2014 before it moved to New York City to be performed at the Public Theater in March of 2015. Although *Buzzer* focuses on the subject of gentrification, it does so through a more intimate view, through the eyes of an interracial couple who has just moved to a gentrifying area: Brownsville, Brooklyn (see Figure Nine below). Jackson, the main character, grew up in this neighborhood and is now returning after an Ivy League education.

I chose to include this play because it is one of few plays on gentrification that I found that was performed with well-renowned theater companies such as the Goodman Theatre and the Public Theater. I was intrigued to learn why Wilson's depiction of gentrification resonated with audiences. Thus, I chose to include this play because of how it presents this issue through a unique and seemingly appealing point of view, but also because of the themes surrounding harassment towards females in gentrifying neighborhoods, knowing that myself and many other females constantly deal/dealt with harassment in Brooklyn.

Figure Nine: Neighborhood of Brownsville outlined in Brooklyn

CHARACTERS

- Jackson is a black man in his mid-twenties who grew up in Brownsville, Brooklyn before going to Harvard University. He is Suzy's committed boyfriend.
- Suzy is a white woman in her mid-twenties and a teacher.

- Don is a white man in his mid-twenties and an old friend of Jackson's.
- An unnamed Black Man in his mid-twenties
- The outside world (Wilson notes that "the outside world is another character in the play and the sound design should help us get a clearer sense of the outside world and how it's seeping inside their space and psyche" (4))

PLOT AND DISCUSSION

The play begins with lights on Jackson as he talks to the audience about how "this used to be my neighborhood..It is changing for the better. Used to be horrible when I was here. Crack and Heroin...Now look. A coffee shop. Two restaurants…" (5). Immediately, Jackson introduces a gentrifying neighborhood using common indicators that audience members would likely recognize, especially in New York City. Jackson also tells the audience about his background of being "the first person in my family to go to college...Never thought I'd be back here but…" (5). The audience then realizes that Jackson is actually talking to a real estate agent about buying a place in Brownsville, saying "I want it. I want this place here...before the wave swallows up another person here, I want in. I know this neighborhood. I know what it's worth and I know what it can be...How much do you want?" (5).

The lights then go up on Suzy as she describes an incident in the classroom where she lost her temper in an incident of bullying and yelled "'Put the motherfraking book down'" (5-6) at a student. Needless to say, Suzy was put on "administrative leave" (6) which frustrates her because "they were just starting to understand percentages. If they get some crappy sub in there while I'm gone, they'll be weeks behind by the time I get

back" (6). We learn that Suzy probably works in a low-income school district from Jackson's attempt to comfort her by saying that once she gets back "you and all the precocious Magical Negroes win against the big, bad, white high school" (6) in an academic contest. They hug after this joking but comforting statement.

After this, Jackson reveals that he bought a place in Brownsville that is big enough that the two of them can move in together. Next an "*excited Suzy squeals*" (8) and we transition seamlessly into "*the fabulous apartment on Sutter*" (8) with "newly renovated wood floors. Huge windows. Natural sunlight. High ceilings. New appliances" (8) and more.

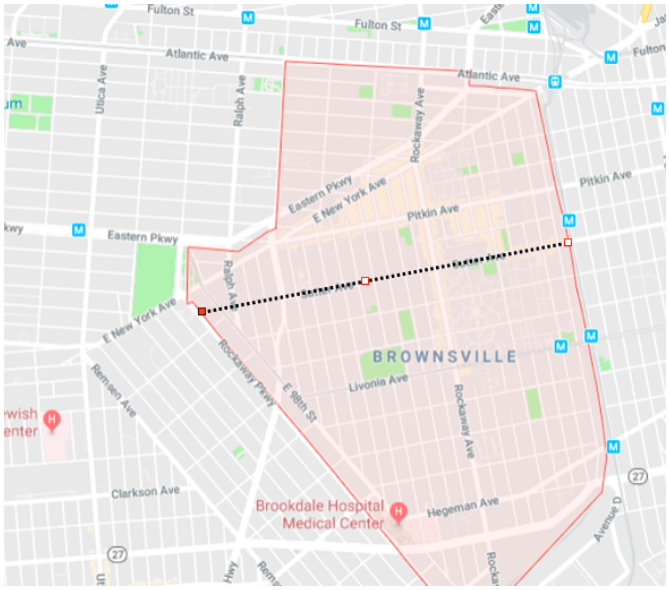


Figure Ten: A closer look at Brownsville. The dotted line is Sutter St. which stretches throughout the whole borough.

However, once Suzy is in the apartment she starts to have some doubts. She wants to make sure that she and Jackson are not rushing anything. Jackson tries to convince her about the neighborhood saying that "They're building a cafe there/A new gym down the street/There are two gay guys across the hall Suze" (9). They worry about none of their

friends coming to see them out there, but are excited about the apartment nonetheless, talking about how sound proof everything seems to be as they undress on the way to the bedroom. It seems that Jackson is more excited about the changes of the neighborhood, knowing that it's different from the place where he grew up. These descriptors of the neighborhood, and of Jackson and Suzy's economic status, denote marginal gentrification. Similarly to *Bamboo in Bushwick*, the neighborhood has barely been gentrified, and Jackson and Suzy do not have notable wealth. However, they do have cultural capital, as signaled from their college degrees and Suzy's job as a teacher.

Next lights up on Don in an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. He talks about "not doing so great...Had two beers this week" (10). He also found out that he will be evicted. He explains his alcoholism saying, "I'm horny, broke, and nearly homeless so if i just had a job, a woman, and a house, popsicle beer would not be so appealing" (10). On the bright side, Jackson has a "soul mate, my male soulmate" in Jackson (11). As he says this, Wilson leads us into a conversation between Suzy and Jackson, and Jackson and Don simultaneously: "*Don and Suzy don't see or acknowledge each other. They only speak to Jackson, who addresses both of them when indicated*" (11). The two conversations intertwine about Don staying with Suzy and Jackson in their new apartment. Jackson practically begs Suzy to let Don stay there, even though Suzy does not want Don or his issues near them. Suzy finally agrees as long as he stays no more than six months and she insists that she and Jackson will have a "zero tolerance" policy towards Don's alcohol and drug addictions.

Next we see Don, Jackson, and Suzy move in, "*A busy, noisy urban street….heard consistently throughout the rest of the play*" (12). It is revealed that Don and Jackson met at Exeter, a private preparatory school, from a letter that Don reads aloud about how appreciative he is for Jackson. He has been there for him through seven trips to rehab. All three of them know and even point out how Suzy has an issue with Don; it is not a secret. As Suzy is trying to have a private moment with Jackson, the "*Buzzer rings. Suzy goes to the intercom*" (15) only to learn that "the buzzers don't work. You gotta go downstairs to answer" (16). Suzy and Don even bicker about the buzzer until Jackson gets frustrated and says he will answer the door and that he will not be the "Magical Negro Man. Alright? That's not how this is gonna work" (16) and the two of them have to "Work it out. Alright?" (16).

Once Jackson leaves, Don starts to apologize to Suzy for many things such as calling her "drunk from rehab, for starters" (17). Yet, he also sparks a fear in Suzy saying that "this place [their apartment] was heavy duty. People died here" (17). Later, she tells Jackson what Don said and he comforts her, saying that "He spent two summers here….you know he always exaggerates" (18). This transitions quickly to Suzy and Don discussing the subject again later. Don tells her stories about scoring drugs in the neighborhood before he went to rehab.

However, Don quickly changes the subject to some "guys across the street" (19) and asks Suzy what they said to make her upset. She says "nothing," (20) but Don insists something was wrong because she "looked upset. And when you got inside you went straight to your room" (20). He tells her about a model that was killed "two blocks over

on Randolph where Jackson used to live. Raped and killed….They had broken buzzers in that building too. *(Pause)* You guys gotta get these buzzers fixed. Soon" (20). Local men treating Suzy in a suspicious way continues to occur throughout the play as one will see. Freeman discusses the "harassment of female pedestrians" (141) in his chapter "Neighborhood Effects in a Changing 'Hood," saying that this harrassment is "surely an example of the type of disorder that would be prevented in a neighborhood with a strong sense of collective efficacy" (141).

If gentrifiers and long-term residents have a weak collective efficacy because of a lack of social interaction, cultural norms, mutual trust, etc. then preventing harassment is difficult. Later on, it is revealed that the reason one man (Dennis) in particular is harassing Suzy is because she kept ignoring him when he would say a simple "good morning" (47). Thus, if gentrifiers are directly trying to prevent the continuation of existing culture in a neighborhood, by calling the police about a noise disturbance at a local party or, like Suzy, simply interrupting a culture of friendly greetings in the morning, the community's collective efficacy is weakened.

Transition to a scene with Suzy, Jackson, and Don, toasting "to Don's new job" (21) and to "the end of my [Suzy's] motherfraking suspension!" (21) . Everyone is joyful, Jackson and Suzy flirt and kiss, making Don uncomfortable. We learn that Don has been hired to sell "Gaiam" (22) products which represent "planetary awareness, preservation, and support of the interconnectivity of all living things" (22). Don explains this in a speech that was taught to him when he was hired. Suzy thinks he will be able to sell to "all these hipsters moving in" (22) even if it is "eight fucking dollars for a bar of soap"

(22). New vendors like “Gaiam” are examples of the previously described boutiques that gentrifiers with high cultural capital are searching for in their new neighborhoods.

Don and Jackson begin to think and talk about the days when they were in school together. Jackson gets worked up when Don says he should write a book about his life. Jackson laughs and says “folks will be fascinated. He did what? He said that? He survived life with all those filthy, nasty Negroes in the projects?” (24). Jackson is irritated with because Don is romanticizing the past, living with Jackson when he was addicted, Jackson insists that “you [Don] were probably very happy.. But your brain was chemically altered so you didn’t see, you didn’t smell, you didn’t hear or feel even a tenth of what I did” (25). Jackson insists that he loves “gated communities” (25) and “manicured lawns” (26) and that the only reason that he is living in Brownsville is because “all the little Dons living in the gated communities are gonna want to be here” (26), referring to young white gentrifiers that will soon move in, thus eventually making Jackson’s property more valuable. Jackson shows that he is in favor of gentrification and thinks it is changing the neighborhood for the better, not considering the negative effects on the gentrified.

Don, who had learned this from Suzy earlier, confronts Jackson about seeing Don’s father for lunch recently. Don hates his father, insisting that “he’s a member of the John Birch Society. He’s like best friends with Rush Limbaugh” (27), but Jackson says that Don’s dad misses him, and he was always good to Jackson and his late mother. Don fights against him saying that his father used to call Jackson and his mother “the ‘good blacks.’ Except he didn’t say ‘black’” (27). Jackson knows that Don chooses to exile his

father from his life, but tells Don that "he's always there, in the back of your mind. Every time you do something really stupid and reckless, some part of your brain tells you it's all going to be okay because Daddy will pay for it. Daddy will fix it...I wish to God I had that luxury, man" (28). From this conversation, it is evident that class is a part of what brings tension to Jackson and Don's relationship, but an equal part of it is race and the privileges that accompany Don by being white. Don, like many gentrifiers, grew up in a suburban (mostly white) neighborhood, and wanted to be in Brownsville to escape the cookie cutter landscape that he grew up in. Yet, Jackson is upset because Don is able to romanticize life in the projects because of his privilege, so he can be bailed out at any moment. Jackson did not have that privilege. He had to work hard to get into Exeter, then to Harvard, then to afford his own apartment while Don was off getting high on the "mystery Negro tour" (25). In this way, Jackson confronts Don of having "Blanquito sueñitos," similarly to how the characters in *Bamboo in Bushwick* confronted Swayze.

In the middle of all of this, Suzy gets her coat to get more cigarettes because Jackson threw hers out in an effort to help her quit. Don and Jackson hassle her about smoking, yet what actually influences her to not leave is when she "*looks out the window. She sees something that bothers her. The guys do not notice this*" (29). She sits back down, the guys think they have stopped her from getting more cigarettes, unknowing that she is more scared of what lies outside. Transition to Don speaking to Suzy's class about the downfalls of drug addiction. Transition back to the apartment, Don and Suzy chatting about Don's speech. Don talks about his regrets, revealing that he and Suzy kissed on a

vacation in Florida with Jackson. Don confronts Suzy again about the guys outside who harass her. Suzy finally gives him the details, describing what they say to her:

> " 'Hey sexy./Where you going?/You lost? Smile./ You can't smile?/ You can't say, 'Hello'?/ We're just being friendly./ Bitch./ Stuck up bitch./ We know you like black dick./ He fucking you right?/ You know you want this./ Let me up in that ass./ Fuck you then./ Stupid ho./ Nobody wants your stank white pussy anyway. You.../ Cock/ Teasing/ Cunt" (32-33)

Suzy admits that Jackson doesn't know because "he has a lot going on right now" (33). These are the effects of a neighborhood of people living in close proximity, but having no social proximity. It's not just that Suzy probably has more money than the men harassing her, but her white skin is a designator of an outsider, and somebody whose investment is in the neighborhood for the real estate value, not an investment in the people in the neighborhood. Don offers to walk Suzy to and from school, she declines at first, but after some convincing, tells him "now you're being sweet" and "*squeezes his hand*" (34), accepting his offer.

Transition to Suzy and Jackson chatting in the apartment. Suzy talks about a secretary at her school who has a beautiful apartment that she inherited, but she "paid the price for sticking it out" (35) until the neighborhood got better. Suzy brings up how bad their neighborhood is and insists that "it's messing with you too [Jackson]" because "whenever we walk down the street you glare at every black man you see" (35). Suzy brings up moving because "they hate me, J" (36), but Jackson insists that it just needs time. Suzy feels like she is an outsider because of her race,[4] but she and Jackson decide

[4] I often felt the same way when I was living in Bed-Stuy, like the people of color, long-term residents, in the neighborhood were staring at me because of my white skin. It's not about how much money I have. I

that it's better to wait until gentrification takes over the neighborhood. They would rather isolate themselves and wait for the wave of new residents than invest in the neighborhood and raise the collective efficacy.

Transition to Don staring out the apartment window alone. He suddenly sees Suzy being catcalled. She then comes "*into the lobby. She flips off the guys outside*" (36). She yells at Don for watching her, pushing his embraces away, but "*after a moment, she allows it. Then she kisses him. It gets hot and heavy. Suzy pushes Don on the couch, straddles him, and they start to have sex. Blackout*" (37). The next morning, Suzy and Jackson look through Don's stuff. He is gone. Jackson is more concerned than Suzy, but at the same time says "Fuck him...If he's using again I'm done with him, Suze" (37).

Transition to a few days later, Don is in the apartment alone when Suzy enters, he startles her. Suzy calls Jackson to tell him Don is back. Don and Suzy argue about their mistake, Suzy insists that he has to move out, but Don says he can't "cause then I will use" (39). They both need Jackson. Suzy makes Don "swear to me you won't say anything" (39). Transition to Don and Jackson that evening. Jackson knows something is wrong because "I can just tell Don. You have lied to me so many times" (40). Don lets it slip that something happened with Suzy, and tells Jackson about the guys harassing Suzy, but not about them having sex.

Transition to Suzy and Jackson, Jackson says that he will "have a talk with them [the men harassing her] myself" (42). Suzy paces in the lobby until Don enters, insisting

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was often walking down the street going to the gym, in sweatpants and ratty sneakers. It was about the symbolic presence of my white skin, the fact that I signaled newcomers, change, and privilege.

that Jackson will get himself killed. She wants Don to talk him out of it. Although Don tries, Jackson cannot be talked out of it, insisting he will handle it.

Transition to Suzy and Don talking about a man named Dennis, one of her harassers, that Don ended up talking to. Dennis said he's sorry to Don and that "he is mad...was mad because you ignored him...He says people have been moving into this neighborhood….and they treat him like he doesn't exist. Like he has no right to be here and they wish he would just disappear" (46-47). Suzy is still mad, claiming that "i hate gentrification so I'm going to talk about your pussy" (47) is not an excuse. Don agrees, but says that Dennis is still sorry and "He's outside/ He wants to apologize to you. *(Beat)* I'll go down with you" (47).

The next morning, Jackson wakes up and cannot find his watch. He claims that Suzy's "corner boyfriend" (49) must have stolen it. We learn that Dennis came up to the apartment because "he used to live in the building and he wanted to see what the apartments looked like now" (49). Suzy finds the watch. Jackson is still infuriated at Don for interfering when he wanted to take care of Suzy's harassers himself. Jackson and Don throw verbal punches about each other's families. They "*grapple and try to get at each other. Suzy in the middle*" (51). Eventually Suzy cannot prevent it and they have a "*nasty, messy, loud*" fight until Jackson leaves in a fury.

Later they all sit in the apartment, Jackson and Don heavily bandaged. Jackson wants to report the men outside, Don and Suzy plead to have him leave it alone. Eventually Don starts to panic and almost tells Jackson that he and Suzy had sex, but instead tell Jackson that he was using and that's why he left for a few days. Jackson

forces Don out, enraged at him for using, even though the audience knows this is a lie. The play ends with Suzy in the lobby throwing out Don's stuff. She exits, then re-enters as "*a black man enters the vestibule behind her. He is wearing saggy pants, a doo-rag...Suzy shuts the door on him. He stares at Suzy in disbelief*" (59). The black man says "will you open the door?/ Can you please open the door? I forgot my keys. Open the door...*Suzy walks away*/Open the fucking door./*Blackout*" (59).

CONCLUSION OF DISCUSSION

Now that the main plot has been described and discussed, I am going to go back to my initial grid to explore what analytical questions Wilson's play answered and to what extent (see Figure Eleven below).

PROPOSED QUESTIONS	1) What is the definition of a "gentrifier" and what are the outcomes of their actions in their neighborhood?	2) How does the play portray the anxiety about legacy that the "gentrified" have?	3) How does race create boundaries between the gentrifiers and the gentrified?	4) What is the value of the play in terms of representing a gentrifying community?
PLAY #2 *Buzzer* By Tracey Scott Wilson	-Fits characteristics of a gentrifier -Gentrifiers can combat the label's negative connotations with certain actions, or else they risk dampening the communities collective efficacy	-Anxiety manifests through verbally harassing a female gentrifier	-Gentrifiers intentionally draw boundaries based on race	-Represents one limited case in a gentrifying community

Figure Eleven: Grid with analytical questions answered for *Buzzer*

Regarding the first analytical question, Wilson's portrayal of gentrifiers fits the previously described characteristics of a gentrifier in Chapter One. Wilson shows harsh outcomes that accompany gentrifiers who do not take actions to invest in the neighborhood. This is seen through both Suzy and Jackson, two people who do not care for the people in the community, and look forward to its complete changes. Despite Jackson being from the neighborhood, they are only waiting for gentrification to take over so that they can capitalize on their real estate investment. This lack of interest in the culture of the neighborhood, and the common niceties that are exchanged between residents, is evidently part of the reason Suzy was being harassed and felt unsafe. Although she is right, gentrification is no excuse for harassment, Dennis exclaims that he was doing it partially because he is angry at people like Suzy who are coming in, taking over their neighborhood, and not having the decency to say hello on the sidewalk. Thus, Wilson exposes the negative outcomes of being a gentrifier if they do not take actions to care about the people in their community and their pre-existing daily culture (See Figure Twelve below). Suzy's actions can and did lower the collective efficacy of the community.

Characteristics of a Gentrifier
• Young professional • New to neighborhood • High cultural capital • Typically white

Actions Taken by Gentrifiers		**Negative Outcomes from the Actions of Gentrifiers**
• <u>Not communicating with the gentrified</u> • <u>Disrespecting the neighborhood's pre-existing daily culture</u> • *Racially discriminating neighbors*	= =	• <u>Lowering collective efficacy</u> • Erases/ignores/disrespects/appropriates existing culture of a neighborhood • Displacement • *Public, verbal harassment*
Actions Taken by Gentrifiers		**Positive Outcomes from the Actions of Gentrifiers**
• Creating art with and about the community • Forming mutually beneficial relationships with the gentrified	= =	• Enhancing collective efficacy • Educating oneself and respecting existing culture of a neighborhood • Helping neighbors survive harsh conditions

Figure Twelve: Characteristics of a gentrifer re-stated as well as the actions taken by gentrifiers and the resulting positive and negative results on the gentrified community in *Buzzer*
Italics indicate new information gained from Buzzer
<u>Underlined information indicates points re-emphasized by *Buzzer*</u>

Second, Wilson's play shows that the gentrified residents of Brownsville have an anxiety surrounding their legacy and being remembered. Wilson shows this through the public and verbal harassment towards Suzy from Dennis and his influence for doing so. He's upset with people moving in "like he has no right to be here and they wish he would just disappear" (46-47), which is how he explains his lashing out at gentrifiers. He's worried about what will become of him and his community.

Third, through the character of Suzy, Wilson shows that gentrifiers may intentionally draw boundaries between themselves and the gentrified people of color. At the end of the play, Suzy does not let a black man inside her apartment building for seemingly no other reason than because of the color of his skin, implying that he is one of the gentrified that she fears. She's unwilling to learn and take part in the current culture of the neighborhood, choosing to shut it all out instead.

Lastly, although Wilson has created a play that gives an intimate view of the harsh effects of investing in a community for capitalistic purposes, she does only that. As one can tell from her additions Figure Twelve, she shows a less extensive portrayal of gentrification when compared to *Bamboo in Bushwick*. Wilson's play remains valuable for study, but does not give as full of a picture of modern gentrification in New York City.

CHAPTER FOUR: *Dolphins and Sharks* by James Anthony Taylor

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Dolphins and Sharks, by James Anthony Taylor, premiered in February 2017 as a part of the Labyrinth Theater Company in New York City, known for interrupting "the racial status quo by giving voice to artists of color and reflecting a world where color is the norm and not the exception" (Labyrinth Theater Company mission). It premiered in the Bank Street Theater in the West Village. However, before LAByrinth gave the play a full production, Tyler had been working on the play in staged readings, workshops, etc. for almost three years. *Dolphins and Sharks* is different from the previous two plays in many ways, but most notably because it takes place in Harlem (a borough in upper

Manhattan; see Figure Thirteen below) as opposed to a borough in Brooklyn. Thus, I chose to include this play because of its take on gentrification in a different borough, specifically one that is known for its rich history as a community for African American New Yorkers.

Figure Thirteen: Neighborhood of Harlem outlined in Uptown Manhattan

CHARACTERS

- Isabel Peters: African American, Overweight, gave up on looks but takes time and care with her hair. 38. Female.
- Yusuf Nwachukwu: Nigerian descent but came to America when he was 3 years old. Handsome. Educated. 22. Male.

- Xiomara Yepez: Dominican-American. Pretty in a nerdy way. Short hair with blonde streaks, wears metal framed glasses. 30. Female.
- Amenze Amen: African American. Customer. Name means always calm and brings order into a chaotic situation. 65. Female.
- Danilo Martinez: Dominican-American. Has short dyed blonde-hair, very punk rock in style. 30. Male.

The play takes place from May-August of 2014 in a Harlem office on 125th Street, between Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd and Frederick Douglass Blvd. A FedEx Office type of business. This is a real building that resides in the aforementioned address (see Figure Fourteen below).

Figure Fourteen: FedEx Office on 125th St in Harlem (Picture from Google Maps October 2017)

PLOT AND DISCUSSION

Act 1, Scene 1 opens in darkness as we hear "*city noises*" (1) that fade out as noises of the Harlem office fade in.Yusuf, Isabel, Xiomara, Danilo, and Amenze Amen

are revealed "*locked together in a chain gang fashion, arms and feet chained together*" (1). A similar interlude happens in the beginning of Act 2 as well. When interviewed about these interludes, that vary from the realistic style of the rest of the play, Tyler responded saying "I wanted to show a link between the history of our country and the present day. The historical disenfranchisement of Black people in this country is linked to where we are today. All of the current ideology and biases that we carry today are rooted in the past, and I was looking for a theatrical way to present this idea in those interludes."

There is a blackout and then we see Xiomara in the Harlem office, Yusuf is outside asking to see Mr. Timmons for an interview. He is late and Xiomara reminds him of this. He begs to be let in and Xiomara eventually abides. It is evident that Yusuf is overwhelmed, having lost his phone and waking up late. Xiomara interviews Yusuf on Mr.Timmons behalf.

The audience learns that Yusuf just graduated from NYU with a 3.8 GPA and was "President of the Nigerian-American Club for my last two years" (4). He was born in Nigeria and raised in America. Xiomara does not want to hire him because of his lack of customer service experience, but Yusuf asks that Xiomara ask him more personal questions about his background. He is desperate for "a job to hold me over until I find a real job" (6). Isabel enters during this encounter as Xiomara says that she will not hire Yusuf, he clearly insulted her, however they need another worker, so Isabel influences Xiomara to recommend him to Mr. Timmons. Already in Scene one, it is evident that there is a separation of characters by both class and race. Yusuf points out that Isabel is from the Dominican Republic, he is from Nigeria (and college educated), and we later

learn that Mr. Timmons is white (who never actually appears on stage). Thus, Tyler immediately sets up race and class categories that the audience can keep in mind throughout the rest of the play.

Lights up for Scene Two as Isabel locks the front door of the store and Xiomara "*loads paper into the printers*" (10). Isabel tells Xiomara that she should not be letting Mr. Timmons make her do interviews and call and text her late at night because "his cheap white ass ain't gon put nothing on your phone bill" (10). They both decide to take five dollars out of the register for their metrocards until they get paid tomorrow. Danilo knocks on the door and enters "*Excited and Giddy AF*" (12) about trying to join the NYPD so that he can support "my wife and seed" (13). Danilo is a janitor for the store. Isabel and Xiomara talk about Terrell, their manager who Mr. Timmons just fired. Isabel says that she will not apply because even though "Terrell was black" (18), he was only black "on the outside" (18) and Mr. Timmons' "flat white ass ain't hiring nobody fat and black" (18). Xiomara says that she will apply and has Isabel's blessing as long "as you don't get brand new on a bitch" (20). When I inquired about Tyler's inspiration to write a play that signals this discrimination that Isabel points out towards black people, and the tension between herself as a black woman and Xiomara as an Afro-Latina, Tyler explained that he

> "wanted to show a nuanced dimensional relationship between these communities that also doesn't shy away from the tension between these two groups of people. I wanted to show that Xiomara also experiences oppression as a Afro-Latina woman, but there is still this thing of light skin privilege and the privilege of her not being overweight and the privilege of her being considered attractive. Isabel isn't afforded that same respect and those same privileges by the larger society."

Throughout the play this tension is heightened, creating a distinct separation of privilege by race.

In Scene Three, Isabel and Yusuf are in the store on Monday morning. Ms. Amenze enters. She and Isabel chat about how their machines are faulty and Isabel even says "I wish it had an ass of its own// An ass so I can put my foot up in it" (24). This is Yusuf's first day and he suggests that Isabel watch her language around customers, Isabel lectures him on becoming "my manager in such' a short span'a time" (25), trying to put Yusuf in his place. Amenze Amen enters and they all talk about how today Xiomara has her last interview with Mr. Timmons, Amenze Amen tells her "baby, you got this" (28). Amenze Amen's character gives a sense that the community in and around the store is casual and friendly. They all know her and treat her as a friend. Clearly, this shocks Yusuf as he wants to act in a purely professional manner. Ms Amenze wonders when it is Isabel's "turn to play dress up [apply for manager]" (30) and Isabel insists that "being manager is not my thing" (31), even though the audience knows that the main reason why she does not want to apply is because of Mr. Timmons' racial prejudice. Amenze Amen is the voice of the neighborhood outside the store, and proves this at the end of the scene when she talks about how she is printing:

> "a flyer to save The Renaissance Theatre and Casino from demolition. Building been here in Harlem since 1921. They tryna' say out with the old, in with the new. Things that been around awhile deserve they propers. Don't you think?" (31).

This is the first sign of gentrification we see in the play and how the world outside of the store is changing rapidly. When asked about his inspiration to include the story of the Renaissance Theater in his play, Tyler responded saying that "the main influence...is to

show how so many things that were special to Harlem are now being torn down without any consideration for the feelings of long time Harlem residents," this is again another sign of gentrification leading to the erasure of long-standing culture.

Figure Fifteen: Photo featured in New York Times Article: "Michael Henry Adams, center, leading a demonstration against razing the Renaissance Theater and Casino in Harlem last month. CreditBryan R. Smith for The New York Times"

In December of 2014, the New York Times wrote a story about the Renaissance Theater which had "been vacant for more than 30 years" (Gregory) and how there were "two competing visions about how to revitalize" the theatre: "One calls for demolition. The other, preservation." the article features a pictures of protesters in 2014 advocating for the preservation of the building (see Figure Fifteen above).

City Limits, a nonprofit organization dedicated to investigative journalism in New York City, describes the opening of the theatre in 1921 as "one of the few social venues in Harlem designed, financed, built, owned, and operated by African Americans" (McGruder and Johnson). The famous Harlem Lindyhoppers (swing and jazz dance

group) were known to perform and rehearse in the space along with "fundraisers, assemblies, political rallies, dance marathons, wedding receptions" and more. It stood as a proud symbol of the Harlem community, especially during the 1920s, known as the Harlem Renaissance for Harlem's explosion of black cultural, social and artistic development. McGruder and Johnson even point out that "while many mistakenly believe that the building was named after the era [the Harlem Renaissance] it was in fact the other way around," showing how vital this building was for the beginning of black culture in Harlem.

However, after many decades of abandonment, "the real estate arm of the Abyssinian Baptist Church...sold the building...to BPR Development Corporation for $15 million" (Gregory). In November of 2014, BPR applied for demolition, which was eventually granted. The building, which used to sit on Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard at West 137th Street (just twelve blocks from the FedEx store pictured previously) is now replaced by a large apartment complex. This is an example of the previously discussed term, third wave gentrification, in which corporate developers change neighborhoods drastically and quickly. This shows that Harlem has been gentrifying longer when compared to Bushwick and Brownsville. Corporate real estate developers are starting to buy buildings, and, as one will see later in this chapter, chain restaurants are starting to appear in place of local hubs. Yusuf, who is richer in cultural capital than economic wealth (a marginal gentrifier), can barely afford his rent.

Figure Sixteen: The Renaissance Theater in 2014 (Photographer unknown)

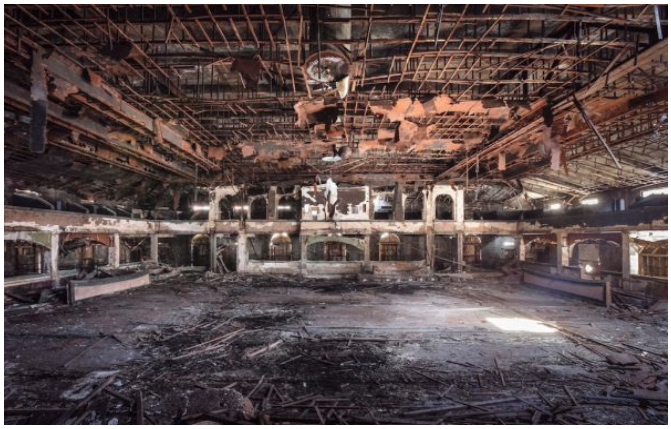

Figure Seventeen: Inside the Theater in 2014 before demolition (Photo taken by AbandonNYC)

Figure Eighteen: The Renaissance Theater in the 1920s

Figure Nineteen: Apartment complex now in place of the Renaissance Theater. (Picture from Google Maps August 2017)

Scene Four: nighttime as Yusuf closes the store, Danilo knocks on the locked doors. Yusuf has not met Danilo, making Yusuf hesitate on opening the door. Danilo tries to explain that "when the store closes I come to clean," but Yusuf responds with "okay, nice try, sir, but i have shut down these computer stations" (32). Eventually, Isabel comes out and lets Danilo in, who accuses Yusuf of being "scared of Dominicans" (33). Yusuf reluctantly apologizes as Danilo shows Isabel a sonogram of his daughter. Danilo also represents the community and outside world from the store that shares a close relationship with the other employees. He also shows that there is a racial prejudice among the people of color in the play, as Yusuf treats him in a hostile manner and is accused of doing so because of Danilo's skin color.

Danilo talks more about his plans to join the NYPD to support his baby daughter. Isabel warns him about how "the NYPD has a way of making people of color forget where they came from" (36). Xiomara enters and reveals that Mr. Timmons gave her the job as the manager of the Harlem office. She explains that she and Mr. Timmons talked about the office having more "top-notch kind of service. I mean at the Upper West Side Office they have in one of the corners one of those little water machines" (39). Isabel responds by saying that she is less concerned with the look of the office and more concerned about having cheaper printing services and better working machines. She says this as the printer makes a "*loud excruciating clacking sound*" (39).

Scene five brings us to closing time on a Wednesday as Xiomara tell Isabel that it is past closing time so "Ms. Amenze should not be in the store" (43) even though Isabel explains that Amenze Amen is finishing "some paper...for that class she's taking at City

college" (43). Isabel reluctantly follows Xiomara's wishes because she insists that "I got ya back" (44), not wanting Xiomara to get in trouble with Mr. Timmons. Ms. Amenze finishes her studying about "Bottlenose Dolphins" (44) and exits as Danilo enters. They kiss on the cheek and exchange a few words as they pass by each other. Danilo hands Xiomara and Isabel (not Yusuf) invitations to his baby shower. They all joke and laugh about Xiomara being the new boss and eventually get back to work. Xiomara counts the drawer, realizing that it is short five dollars, and checks in with Isabel to make sure she is no longer borrowing from the drawer. The scene ends with a snide remark from Isabel as she goes to help Yusuf with some packages and says, "you alright with that or do you not trust me, manager?" (50).

Scene six opens, about a month later (August 1st, 2014), with Isabel and Yusuf trying to operate a new printer the store has bought. Yusuf wonders why the company could get a new printer "but they're claiming that they couldn't start me at thirteen" (51). Apparently "Xiomara said she's working on it" (52), but Isabel laughs at Yusuf thinking that he will get a pay raise anytime soon, just like how she knows it'll take a long time to lower the price of copies, if it ever happens. Ever since Xiomara was promoted, occurrences such as Yusuf not getting a raise, the copy prices staying high, and Amenze Amen not being in the store as much as she wants. Yusuf talks more about how he is paid unfairly, and Isabel insists that it's just the way things are and if he does not like it then he should "go back to Long Island" (53). This is when the audience learns that Yusuf is actually from Staten Island, where his parents still live. Isabel leaves, Yusuf takes money from the register right before Xiomara enters from her office. She notices Isabel has left

and tells Yusuf he could have left with her, but Yusuf insists that "it's safe for *you* [Xiomara] if we walk out together" because "Harlem isn't always the safest" (55). Xiomara insists that she will be fine because "there's a Banana Republic and a Red Lobster just steps away" (55). Yusuf talks about how "the transition hasn't fully happened" and "Harlem is...changing, right?" to which Xiomara responds with "in your mind it's safer when white people move into the neighborhood?" (56). Yusuf tries to respond saying that before gentrification Harlem was really bad. Xiomara is offended, Yusuf apologizes.

Yusuf is from Staten Island which is a mostly white borough of New York City. The census of Richmond County in July of 2016, which occupies all of Staten Island, detailed that of the 476, 015 people in Staten Island, 76.6% are White. The second largest demographic are Hispanic or Latino residents which occupy 18.4% of the population, and the third largest demographic is Black or African American residents which are 11.8% of the population. Thus, Yusuf grew up in a primarily white community, explaining why Yusuf would associate white people with positive change and safety. However, Yusuf is not alone in this assumption. As aforementioned, white people signify privilege, which in turn signifies more improvement than their black counterparts.

Xiomara reveals to Yusuf that he and Isabel will have to start cleaning the bathrooms because they have to let Danilo go since Mr. Timmons thinks that Danilo is "not doing the best job" (57). Xiomara will have to fire him. Yusuf wonders "how can you fire your own friend?" (57), but Xiomara says it is not her choice. Once Danilo

enters, she tries to hint towards firing him, but cannot do it. She fights with the noisy, malfunctioning printer as the scene ends.

Scene Seven begins a week later in the afternoon with Yusuf struggling with the new printer. Amenze Amen and Isabel chat about Isabel's husband who will be celebrating 20 years working with the MTA. Isabel wants to give Amenze Amen her pages for free because one of her pages was jammed, but Yusuf refuses saying "you give one person free prints then all of Harlem will expect them" (63) to which Isabel responds with "you trying to say people in Harlem don't pay for things" (63), again Yusuf is called out for being an outsider of the community for not caring about gentrified members like Amenze Amen.

Scene Eight begins later that night as the office is closed, Isabel reads a magazine while Yusuf finishes cleaning the bathrooms. Isabel tells him that cleaning is not his job and he is only doing it because "ol' Sofia Vergara tells you to get on your hands and knees" (68). She insists that he only listens to Xiomara because she is not a black woman like Isabel is. Yusuf tells her that he is black, but she says "no, you're African" and "ya'll [Africans] come here, think you're not black an think yall better than Black Americans" (69). Yusuf admits that his parents told him "not to trust Black Americans" and even said " 'we only want you with a Nigerian girl. You're better than them'" (70), but Yusuf says in response to that "So - WHAT// I'm - my - own - man" (70). Yusuf has been raised to draw boundaries between himself and Black Americans and he continues to do so even if he says otherwise. In an interview with John McCrory, Director of Theatre Arts at the National Black Theatre in Harlem, he mentioned how "Harlem is being bought up by the

West African community" and "they are coming in with a bunch of resources." In this way, Harlem is unique because once "you take away race, you have to go through so many different layers." Thus, Yusuf may have the same color skin as Isabel, but once one subtracts that commonality, their background, culture, and expectations from their elders are entirely different. Although Tyler agreed that "there are issues within the Black diaspora[5]..I believe that when it comes to gentrification, which is so tied to capitalism, the lack of value and respect for non-white communities are blatantly on display." Thus, Tyler wanted to explore people of color such as Yusuf that are "very book-smart, but still harbored prejudiced views about people and neighborhood that are economically disadvantaged" and "those prejudices and microaggressions" that accompany these people. The tension between people of color in the play is heightened and shows that culture and background are points of contention just as much as skin color.

However, when it comes to gentrification, Tyler sees "white supremacy" as "the cause for the tension." This is seen through the character of Mr. Timmons who does not even have to be present for his position as a white person to take control over who runs the store, the standards they uphold, and how they treat the community.

Luckily, after a heated discussion, Yusuf and Isabel are able to crack a joke, and Isabel admits that "look, we gotta work together// *wegood wegood*" (71). Xiomara enters, telling an upset Isabel that she and Yusuf now have to clean the bathrooms. Isabel refuses until Xioamara says "are you refusing to do your job?" (72), and Isabel eventually backs down. Isabel exits as Danilo enters, starting to clean as he and Xiomara small talk until

[5] See Mary C. Waters' book "Black Identities : West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities" for more information on the realities of American race relations

Yusuf begins to leave. Before he can, Xiomara tells him that the drawer is still coming up short and she knows it's Isabel. Xiomara tells Yusuf that if he can "snap a pic of her stealing...Mr. Timmons said he'll give you the manager position here at the Harlem Office" (76) and Xiomara will be manager at the new Brooklyn office. She promises this way he will get the position and more money. This is the end of Act One.

At the beginning of Act Two, these words from "N.I.G.G.E.R (The Slave and the Master)" by the rapper Nas are projected onto a screen:

> They say we N-I double G-ER, we are
> Much more, still we choose to ignore
> The obvious,
> Man this history don't acknowledge us
> We were scholars long before colleges
> They say we N-I double G-ER, we are
> Much more,
> But still we choose to ignore
> The obvious,
> We are the slave and the master
> What you lookin' for?
> You the question and the answer.

The song stops and we see all the characters chained together again "*in chain gang fashion, arms and feet chained together...They all push and pull trying their damndest to break free of the chains*" (77). There is a blackout then lights up, the morning of August 14th, 2014 as Yusuf and Isabel stand facing Xiomara who in front of a blackboard that reads "AGENDA FOR STAFF MEETING" (77). They are all there thirty minutes early for this staff meeting, which Isabel and Yusuf both verbally complain about to an irritated Xiomara.

Act Two, Scene Two, later that same evening as Isabel and Yusuf close up the shop. Yusuf looks at a poster that Isabel has designed for "Faith Temple's Luncheon"

(87), noting that it is well designed and that she "should go to school and study graphic design" (87). Isabel is flattered, but reminds Yusuf that she has boys that need to be in college. Isabel offers to talk to Xiomara about Yusuf's raise, which Yusuf declines. Just then he gets a call from NYU, telling him that he needs to start paying his loans now. Yusuf pleads that "it's only August, so I haven't been out of school for six months...Okay..Okay..uhh huh...NINE HUNDRED DOLLARS!... Nine hundred dollars a month?" (89). Yusuf takes a moment, burying his face in his hands. Isabel has no pity for Yusuf, and he lashes out at her in response.

Scene Three opens the next day with Isabel, Yusuf, and Amenze Amen in the store. Amenze Amen is telling Isabel about how she walks in "*my* neighborhood and they don't have the decency to even share it because they got two dogs taking up the whole thing" (98). She said she had to walk in the street because these people:

> "take over and don't even know nothing about nothing. Don't know that William C. Roach ad Joseph H. Sweeney - black folks from Montserrat - and Cleophus Charity from Antigua, had the Renaissance built in 1921. They don't care about nothing about that and you can tell because they're coming up here and erasing everything that we've built" (98).

Again, Amenze Amen proves herself to be a voice of the neighborhood and a long-term resident infuriated with gentrifiers coming in and not caring about the history of her neighborhood. Yusuf asks Amenze Amen if she is "talking about white people" to which she responds with "I'm not talking about green aliens with pink polka dots from Mars" (98) and that soon "you won't see a Black face in Harlem. They just demolishing one building at a time" (52). Amenze Amen is there to print flyers for a rally to save the Renaissance, and talks about its importance in many ways, but namely because her

"grandparents held their wedding reception there...They had to hold it uptown because they weren't letting black folks hold no wedding receptions at places below central park" (100). This line reveals how Harlem has been a safe haven for people of color for decades, and she now feels like it is not her home anymore because it is being infiltrated by gentrifiers.

Amenze Amen wants the prints for free, which Isabel would normally do, but cannot now with the stricter management. Ms. Amen is angry, talking about how many other places such as the Lenox Lounge and The Lafayette Theatre have already been closed down. She cannot believe that someone like Isabel "who grew up in the Polo Grounds, is scared of little ol' Xiomara" (101). She even calls Yusuf and Isabel "slaves to the white folks that run this company" (53). Isabel rants to Amenze Amen about how "Niggas gotta eat! You gotta make sacrifices when you are trying to make sure your kids and your husband are eating…" (102). Amenze Amen apologizes as Xiomara asks Isabel to come into her office. Amenze Amen's outburst shows just how anxious she is about the legacy and history of her neighborhood being erased.

Scene Four begins with Isabel in Xiomara's office. Xiomara tells her that "this is going to be your last day working for the Harlem office" (105) on account of the stealing that "me and Mr. Timmons" (106) have noticed. Isabel demands to know what evidence Xiomara has because she knows "the security cameras, inside this store, ain't been working for over a year" (106). Isabel is infuriated saying

> "man, I expect this with these brand new white motherfuckers come in this store, most of them thinking they know more than me. New employees, college motherfuckers like Yusuf, look at me like 'you don't know shit, bitch'....but you,

> girl that came up like I came up...nah, even with you letting this manager shit go to your head, I still didn't expect this from you" (108).

Isabel even makes it personal and talks about how she was there for Xiomara through a break up and other hard times, to which Xiomara says "the day I told you that I got the manager position you acted like you didn't even care" (109). Isabel confesses that she was not happy for her because "I applied four times. Two before you started working here and two after" (110) and she was never hired even when her behavior was extremely professional, she dressed well, and was even losing weight. Mr Timmons never hired her. They both exit the office in front of Amenze Amen, Danilo (getting his last check), and Yusuf. Isabel gives Amenze Amen the flyers on the house and reveals that she was fired. Yusuf is hyperventilating as Xiomara tells Isabel in a fit of rage that she is fired for stealing from the drawer. Isabel denies that she has ever stolen from the drawer while Xioamara was manager. Yusuf finally admits that he stole from the drawer because he was sick and tired of not getting his raise. Eventually "*a hostile war of words breaks out with Xiomara, Isabel, Yusuf and Danilo all swimming around Amenze Amen like sharks*" (115). Amenze Amen finally yells to "STOP FIGHTING EACH OTHER" (115).

The play ends with Amenze Amen asking each character "So we're just going to sit back and accept this? (116). As she asks each character, they turn their back to her and the printer prints a page of a chain image. Finally, after each character has turned their back, Amenze Amen faces the audience and says "This system not working for everyone. Are you going to accept this?" (117). All the characters turn to face the audience, look at each other, then face the audience again "*continuing the search for answers*" (117) and the play ends.

CONCLUSION OF DISCUSSION

Now that the main plot has been described and discussed, I am going to go back to my initial grid to explore what analytical questions Tyler's play answered and to what extent (see Figure Twenty below).

PROPOSED QUESTIONS	1) What is the definition of a "gentrifier" and what are the outcomes of their actions in their neighborhood?	2) How does the play portray the anxiety about legacy that the "gentrified" have?	3) How does race create boundaries between the gentrifiers and the gentrified?	4) What is the value of the play in terms of representing a gentrifying community?
PLAY #3 *Dolphins and Sharks* By James Anthony Tyler	-Fits characteristics of a gentrifier -Gentrifiers can combat the label's negative connotations with certain actions, or else they risk dampening the communities collective efficacy	-Anxiety manifests through the fight to keep historical buildings	-Gentrifiers intentionally draw boundaries based on race	-Represents one limited case in a gentrifying community

Figure Twenty: Grid with analytical questions answered for *Dolphins and Sharks*

Regarding the first analytical question, Tyler's portrayal of gentrifiers fits the previously described characteristics of a gentrifier in Chapter One. Tyler shows the negative outcomes of being a gentrifier employed through the actions of the character Yusuf. Yusuf sees his job at the store as a means to an end for most of the play. He does not care for the community, shown through his inhospitable behavior towards Amenze Amen, Danilo, and Isabel. This creates tension among him and the gentrified members of

Harlem and is one of the leading causes for the animalistic fight that breaks out at the end of the play. Thus, Tyler exposes the negative outcomes of being a gentrifier if they do not take actions to integrate themselves into the community (See Figure Twenty-One below). Yusuf's actions can and did lower the collective efficacy of the community.

Characteristics of a Gentrifier
• Young professional • New to neighborhood • High cultural capital • Typically white

Actions Taken by Gentrifiers		**Negative Outcomes from the Actions of Gentrifiers**
• Not communicating with the gentrified • <u>Disrespecting the neighborhood's pre-existing daily culture</u> • Racially discriminating neighbors	= =	• <u>Lowering collective efficacy</u> • Erases/ignores/disrespects/appropriates existing culture of a neighborhood • Displacement • Public, verbal harassment
Actions Taken by Gentrifiers		**Positive Outcomes from the Actions of Gentrifiers**
• Creating art with and about the community • Forming mutually beneficial relationships with the gentrified	= =	• Enhancing collective efficacy • Educating oneself and respecting existing culture of a neighborhood • Helping neighbors survive harsh conditions

Figure Twenty-One: Characteristics of a gentrifier re-stated as well as the actions taken by gentrifiers and the resulting positive and negative results on the gentrified community in *Dolphins and Sharks*
<u>Underlined information indicates points re-emphasized by *Dolphins and Sharks*</u>

Second, Tyler's play shows that the gentrified residents of Harlem have anxiety surrounding their legacy and being remembered. Tyler shows this through Amenze Amen's fight to maintain historical buildings such as the Renaissance Theater and others.

Third, through the character of Yusuf, Tyler shows that even if a gentrifier is black, this does not automatically imply that they have rightful intentions for the neighborhood. Yusuf is of Nigerian descent, but he intentionally draws boundaries between himself and the other people of color in the play, specifically Isabel. This further shows that gentrification is based in race just as much, if not more, as it is based in class.

Lastly, although Tyler created a play that exposes the tension between the gentrified and the gentrifiers, he only shows the negative outcomes that gentrifiers can produce, as one can tell from his additions to Figure Twenty-One. Unlike Cardona's play *Bamboo in Bushwick*, Tyler does not expose the possible positive outcomes that can come from gentrifiers if they take certain actions. Tyler's play remains valuable for study, but does not give as full of a picture of modern gentrification in New York City.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINAL CONCLUSION

PROPOSED QUESTIONS	1) What is the definition of a "gentrifier" and what are the implications of their actions in their neighborhood?	2) How does the play portray the anxiety about legacy that the "gentrified" have?	3) How does race create boundaries between the gentrifiers and the gentrified?	4) What is the value of the play in terms of representing a gentrifying community?
PLAY #1 *Bamboo in Bushwick* by Ed Cardona Jr.	-Fits characteristics of a gentrifier -Gentrifiers can combat the label's negative connotations with certain actions, or else they risk dampening the communities collective efficacy	-Anxiety about legacy manifests through arguments and pleads to be remembered	-Black gentrifiers unintentionally drawing boundaries between them and the gentrified	-A nuanced and extensive representative portrayal of gentrification, reflected by Cardona's extensive research and interviews
PLAY #2 *Buzzer* By Tracey Scott Wilson	-Fits characteristics of a gentrifier -Gentrifiers can combat the label's negative connotations with certain actions, or else they risk dampening the communities collective efficacy	-Anxiety about legacy manifests through verbally harassing a female gentrifier	-Gentrifiers intentionally draw boundaries based on race	-Represents one limited case in a gentrifying community
PLAY #3 *Dolphins and Sharks* By James Anthony Tyler	-Fits characteristics of a gentrifier -Gentrifiers can combat the label's negative connotations with certain actions, or else they risk dampening the communities collective efficacy	-Anxiety about legacy manifests through the fight to keep historical buildings	-Gentrifiers intentionally draw boundaries based on race	-Represents asemi-limited case in a gentrifying community

CONCLUSIONS =	**-Gentrifiers must employ certain actions to reinforce collective efficacy**	**-Anxiety about legacy manifests in a multitude of forms**	**-Gentrifiers draw boundaries based on race both intentionally and unintentionally**	***-Bamboo in Bushwick* portrays a more extensive representation of gentrification**

Figure Twenty-Two: Final grid with analytical questions answered for all plays with final conclusions drawn from all answers

By looking at the chart above, one can draw clear conclusions to the four analytical questions that were first posed in my introduction.

First, regarding the definition of a "gentrifier" and the implications of this label, it is evident that one can be a gentrifier by fitting the aforementioned characteristics. However, gentrifiers can combat the negative outcomes of this label by taking specific actions that make them active members of their community, such as forming relationships with long-term residents, participating in mutually- and locally-beneficial organizations such as churches and community centers, and learning about the culture and history of the neighborhood. By taking these actions, gentrifiers are reinforcing their neighborhood's collective efficacy.

Second, gentrifying communities depict an anxiety surrounding their legacy in a multitude of ways. Primarily, this anxiety manifests through verbal arguments and harassment as well as the fight to maintain historical monuments. If gentrifiers do not take the aforementioned actions, not only can a neighborhood's collective efficacy be ruined, but culture and history can be erased.

Third, gentrification is an explicitly racial issue because gentrifiers show a tendency to draw boundaries between themselves and the gentrified based on race. If

gentrifiers draw these boundaries, intentionally or unintentionally, they are pursuing a racist agenda, an obviously negative outcome of being a gentrifier. Gentrifiers must actively engage with the people in their community, regardless of race, through the aforementioned actions or else the neighborhood's collective efficacy can be dampened and the pre-existing culture and history of the people of color living there will be erased.

Lastly, each play depicts a story of gentrification that helped come to the conclusions listed above. However, *Bamboo in Bushwick* by Ed Cardona Jr. tells the most extensive story of gentrification by telling the story of gentrifiers and the gentrified of many races and ages. He also gives examples of how gentrifiers can both positively and negatively affect their community, thus fully showing their potential effect on a neighborhood's collective efficacy and appreciation of culture and history. I would suggest that playwrights and artists model his process and play when looking to create plays about gentrification.

When considering these four conclusions in sum, it is evident that, in varying degrees, these plays voice the gentrified's anxiety about legacy and how gentrification is a distinctly racial issue. They also show exactly what a gentrifier is and how a gentrifier can fight the negative associations of their label in order to enhance a neighborhood's collective efficacy and protect its culture and history. Plays can do this effectively because they are an accessible and familiar platform to speak to gentrifiers in New York City. However, there is always more to learn when it comes to the experience of the gentrified, the actions and impact of gentrifiers, and the relationships between. These are just three plays about three specific gentrifying communities.

Ultimately, I urge artists, especially artists who are gentrifiers, to create, perform, and produce plays about gentrification alongside the gentrified to give them a platform to speak on and to educate gentrifiers on the impact of their actions or lack thereof. I urge gentrifiers and scholars to read and study these plays, the ones that have yet to be created, and the conclusions that can be drawn from each, because underneath the quantitative data of rent prices and the wealth inequalities in gentrifying neighborhoods, there is a distinctly human story that is explicitly about race, culture, and history that can either be valued or ignored.

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