

*INSTINCTS and Harlem Summers:*  
*Two projects towards*  
*a Performance Practice concentration*

By

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Note: From Fall 2019-Spring 2020, I was involved in two senior projects for my Performance Practice Concentration: *Harlem Summers* by Destiny Tompkins, Fall 2019 and *INSTINCTS* by Erin Pollack, Spring 2020. I wrote a large portion of my research essay in the Fall of 2019, before adding *Instincts* as an additional project. Upon recommendation from my advisor, my research essay revolves around one project, with my Artistic Aims and Technical essay about the second project.

Due to the circumstances of the social distancing and early departure from campus in Spring 2020, neither project held a stage reading., However, we did substantial work to complete our work and exploration in both projects. The essays following reflect those investigations.

### *Instincts: Artistic Aims*

Inspired by a true story, *Instincts* is a play based on a real life story. Life is full of trials and tribulations; this play helps us see that as we grow up, the choices we make for ourselves are essential. One single action we make conscious and subconsciously can not only change our lives forever but other lives. While we cannot always control what happens to us, we can control how we let it affect us. Certain situations and environments are easier to cope with than others but, one mistake can change your life and others forever. It is important to acknowledge that everybody is fighting their own battles and to try to be understanding.

As humans we all have instincts that enhance our ability to cope. Instincts are an intuitive way of acting and it is natural. Everybody suffers from a certain level of anxiety on various levels, some more severe than others. According to Alison Stone, a holistic psychotherapist based in New York, anxiety can throw our instincts for a loop.

“Remember that anxiety is our brain’s way of scanning for possible threats or danger.”

(Weingus) Our brains create alternative storylines when we experience severe anxiety.

My character in the play *Instincts*, Liza, suffers from severe anxiety attacks that result in psychosis, a severe mental disorder in which thought and emotions are so impaired that contact is lost with external reality (Lexico). While there are more than 200,000 cases of psychosis in America per year, few people acknowledge how common a problem it is.

People who have psychotic episodes are not aware of what they are doing and are not malicious. More often these individuals are associated with being a drug user or an evil human being and not treated properly.

Many associate psychosis with violence, but the truth is that psychosis is simply a temporary disconnect from reality. There are many opinions and myths about the origins, traits and causes of psychosis. There is a difference between anxiety-induced psychosis, a temporary state and drug-induced psychosis which is less common to be temporary. Research from Alvarado Parkway Institute states that treating the anxiety disorder can stop the cycle, provide great relief, and significantly reduce the risk of a repeated psychotic episode (Alvarado Parkway Institute). Anxiety-induced psychosis will not get better without treating the anxiety disorder. When patients experience a psychotic episode as a result of their anxiety, it tends to intensify their fears, leading to a greater likelihood of a panic attack or anxiety attack and another potential episode of psychosis. According to The Recovery Village, people with psychosis may hear voices or see things that others do not and may believe things to be true that are not. (Megan Hull, 2020)

My character Liza has been misunderstood by her friends, community, and arrested without proper care due to her killing her roommate even though she was tested and no drugs were in her system. This is why awareness towards mental health is important and I hoped to increase this awareness as an artistic goal in pursuing this project. Treating anxiety disorder correctly can significantly reduce the chance of a repeated psychotic episode that eventually gets worse and turns into a psychotic disorder. I want to explore how my character grew up in all aspects from her mental health, religion, and how she grew up.

The girls in *Instincts* grew up in a Catholic school, an environment that is more closed minded in regard to mental illness. Her old friends therefore had mixed reactions towards her release from prison years later. For example, Brittany quotes the bible about sinning and forgiving sinners. She does not understand why Ana and the other girls are so forgiving of Liza that she killed somebody. Liza also was chanting a "Hail Mary" prayer during her episode. Liza did commit a crime and messed up her own life and those of others. Still, she is not an evil killer, but a victim of a severe mental illness. Religion can increase anxiety in certain individuals. Judgement of sin and other issues may negatively affect some people. According to (Ellison, Burdette, & Hill, 2009) there have been connections that were proven positive between the strong belief in the pervasiveness of sin and anxiety. Delusions in some psychiatric patients appear to be fueled by religious ideas. This is not to say that the delusions are caused by religion, but religion can contribute to it. This connects back to a combination of what Liza experienced from her childhood friends and a piece of her individual reality, how Liza interrupted and reacted to this. The artistic aims that I am focusing on are religion, self-expression, and emotion. The fact that actors draw on their personal experiences to support character motivations. Mental illness is a topic that I have personally experienced and never really had concrete information and understanding to comprehend it. But as I worked on embodying Liza and her story, it helped me as an actress to pull from this personal experience.

The roots of my acting technique come from gathering different viewpoints, and being aware of issues. Becoming Liza not only helped me find a deeper understanding

of mental illness, but I know the play will help others who see and hear it. Mental illness is a broad topic to grasp and focusing the play on this helps bring awareness and understanding towards it as a common social phenomena. Artists use the theatre to comment on societal norms, rules and injustices. Touching on such a specific type of psychosis and environment, *Instincts* has the ability to force people to re-examine their own moral structure and way of looking at the world.

## *Instincts: Technical Essay*

*INSTINCTS* is a play inspired by true events. As an actress, I challenged myself to physically and mentally embody and immerse myself into information I learned about psychosis and the elements of Liza's life. As I went through the different phases Liza endured from school, to the episode, prison, and coming home, I experienced numerous ups and downs and self reflection. There is far more to embodying a role than just relating to the character. In playing Liza, not only did I have to experience a psychotic episode, but I was required to experience multiple phases of mental illness. This called for working with my imagination to create a specific atmosphere, and set of feelings. In order to bring the truth to this role, I explored the character's inner life and created a scenario that is related to the context of the moment. As I experience the moment, my expressions radiate to the audience. This is what Michael Chekhov calls, Creative Individuality of the actor.

The cast and I did research together of the actual story and case to thoroughly develop an understanding of the context. During rehearsals, we did individual exercises and a group warm up in the beginning for relaxation, concentration, and observation. I would often initially find my center for each scene I'm working on as a part of my character work. Sometimes my center was the same and sometimes it was different depending on the scene I was reading and how I connected with it. I found myself using both Stanislavski and Chekhov's techniques. Even though these acting styles differ, they both share affective psychological aspects. As an actress, it is important to be in touch with my emotions and memory in order to let myself be vulnerable to triggers and

express those emotions. This practice is a part of Stanislavski's approach. It is also important to know that this approach may limit me in bringing authenticity to the character and story. Even though I am embodying the role, my character and myself are two different people. I may not connect to my character in the storyline she is experiencing and this may create a conflict in my expressing those feelings. Chekhov's approach helped me open my mind to better express those feelings to the audience, despite feeling conflicted by my character. I explored by using my imagination and subconscious and let my emotions radiate from the inside out of me as I'm relating it to the context. Stanislavski encourages actors to find their own method that works for them but to still remember the basis is what guides the actor through any challenges in character work. I always ask myself, "Who is my character?" "When does the action take place?" "Where does it take place?" "What is the conflict?" and "Why? What is my motivation? As I answer these five questions, I pull from both Stanislavski and Chekhov methods to best help me understand and reach my goal.

After a couple of full read throughs of *Instincts*, the company started to work on each individual scene with the full company present. I received constructive criticism and thoughts from the rest of the cast members that helped us create character bonds as well as deepen our individual characters. We worked together with the other cast members and the writer to figure out character intention and tactics. As the severeness of the pandemic increased on campus, and we had to start practicing social distancing, we still made time to work on the scenes with the necessary cast members and continued communication with playwright Erin Pollack about the character and play as a



whole. I was very excited to perform Liza during the stage reading because the role would have forced me to tap into deeper, more subconscious emotions than I have had to process with other characters. Throughout the rehearsals and the run throughs, I was able to become more flexible and thorough with checking into myself, my character, and her world as deepened by understanding.

As we received the news of the new circumstances of how we would present this project due to the pandemic, we started preparing for a possible audio reading/listening experience, in place of a live audience, for our own purposes.. This challenged me as an actress to present this story in a different format which gave me the opportunity to improve and further my acting abilities. Throughout this part of the process working with the play, I listened to my voice and made notes for myself as I read and dissected a monologue in the play and scenes amongst the other cast members. This helped me in many ways especially when I listened to my own voice in audio recordings. I did not realize that most of us do not sound the same out loud as we do in our own minds. This helped me work on my tone of voice, how I pronounce words, and my accent. It is important to be aware of how your voice comes across because it can alter the effectiveness of the context and how the audience reacts.

The performance aspect is important but vocal delivery is just as important. As rehearsals and run throughs couldn't not be held in person any more due to social distancing, I was also able to not only do my character exploration for performance purposes but also for voice purposes. I had the opportunity to focus and explore the different ranges of my voice and how I can deliver the moment also using Michael

Chekhov's method. Finding my center and absorbing any emotion developing inside from the moment and executing it in numerous ways such as slower/quicker tempo, the tone of my voice, where and if there are beats, etc. As an actress one of my goals is to capture and keep the audience's attention. Physical performance and vocal work go hand in hand, as when your performance is great, your voice carries the play and keeps the viewers interested. The way you use your voice helps guide the audience in the direction you are aiming for and helps impact the audience.

Working on *INSTINCTS* was challenging but helped develop myself as an actress. I explored and learned things about myself by experimenting with multiple types of acting until I felt confident in my understanding and delivery of tools within Michael Chekhov's approach and Stanislavski Acting Techniques and Method Acting. Through this experience, I was also able to learn how to effectively use multiple strategies to tell the same story from a performance, to a stage reading, to an audio experience. I overcame the challenge of synthesis and integration, combining my inner and outer acting skills. This learning experience has helped me become a more flexible actress and impacted how I find ways to bring authenticity and inner truth to a play.

## *Harlem Summers: Research Essay*

“There is no place like home” and “Home sweet home” are common sayings used by families across America. This assumes a comfort in the familiarity of home or hometown. But over time, one’s hometown can change. One may go away for a period of time and not recognize one’s city when returning home. Through the arrival of new businesses and residents, gentrification can change the character of a neighborhood. Many cities and districts across the country are undergoing gentrification and individuals within these communities respond differently to these changes.

Gentrification is a controversial topic. The Department of Housing and Urban Development oversees many of the building projects connected to gentrification and is therefore at the center of the controversy that comes along with gentrification. The debate over gentrification between long time residents that live in the boroughs of New York City and developers takes place in many other cities as well all over the country. A common question that often comes up with gentrification both in New York City and beyond, is, how can a neighborhood economically improve and stabilize without replacing its poorer residents and erasing the community’s culture? Many residents within communities experiencing gentrification believe that there is more bad than good that comes with these changes. HUD claims that gentrification helps lower income colored families by helping improve the neighborhoods and the people that reside in those cities by making them affordable and free from discrimination (Secretary Donovan). The department's mission is "to increase homeownership, support community development and increase access to affordable housing free from discrimination

(Secretary Donovan). Why are higher income families moving into urban low income neighborhoods? In this essay, I aim to more clearly explore the complexities of gentrification by investigating the questions it raises as a social and political phenomena.

According to the New York Times, "Every city has a Clybourne Park." (Piepenburg, 2011). *Clybourne Park* by Bruce Norris is a play based in Chicago. Clybourne Park is not a real place but it is based off of Washington Park, which is a subdivision of Chicago's Woodlawn neighborhood. This play explores a neighborhood throughout two generations and brings awareness to the controversial debate about gentrification, class, and race. *Clybourne Park* borrows the plot line from *A Raisin in The Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry, addressing racial bias and discrimination in housing. *Clybourne Park* explores the thin line between race and property within the span of fifty years. Act One is a direct response to *A Raisin in the Sun* and Act Two portrays issues that many lower income families of color are familiar with today.

During 1959, Clybourne Park was a white middle class suburb. A couple, Bev and Russ, are selling their home in this neighborhood and are selling it to what would be the first black family in the neighborhood. The white middle class residents did not approve of the black family moving into the neighborhood because they said the value of the property would drop and they would not fit into the community. Fifty years later in 2009, Clybourne Park is a predominantly black neighborhood and now the same property that was sold to the first black family is now being sold to a young white couple. The residents of Clybourne Park are concerned that their neighborhood is about to be

gentrified. As a reaction, the black residents are opposed to the property to be sold to the young white couple. This scenario is one that was all too common in America in the 1950's. Many cities undergoing gentrification had initially disapproved of African Americans moving in by both the residents and the city itself by allowing racially restrictive covenant laws in their town (Welsh, 135). Similarly, many long time African-American residents by 2010 have had families who lived in these buildings for generations after the upper class people moved out.

History is a very important theme when it comes to gentrification. Residents feel like they are not only being replaced by the upper class residents, they feel like their culture and its history is being erased. In Chicago, many of these housing complexes and houses have a lot of history behind them that is important to the residents. Many families are affected by gentrification not only in identity and history matters but legal matters as well. Lorriane Hansberry's *A Raisin In The Sun*, the play inspiring *Clybourne Park*, uses Hansberry's own experience of her parents buying a house in a white neighborhood in Washington Park as a basis for the play. The case in reality ended up in a court case called Hansberry vs. Lee in 1940. Carl Hansberry, who is Lorriane's father, was sued by a white landowner James Lee and told he needed to leave according to Kenneth Poortvliet in Hansberry v. Lee: Summary, History, & Facts (Poortvliet). This case was a racially restrictive covenant that did not allow African Americans to purchase or lease land in Washington Park.

In the play *Clybourne Park*, Lena has an emotional and political connection in the neighborhood. She feels it is important to mention the historical connection the property

has to the community since her great aunt lived in that Clybourne Park house after the previous white family lived there. She hopes to explain the history of the house to Steve and his wife because that home is a representation of how life was like in the past. Lena attempts many times politely to speak about the house and the history it holds but is never truly acknowledged by Steve and Lindsey. Since the white couple wants to remodel the house, it is implied that they lack care for the neighborhood and its history. In Lena's speech she says, "No one, myself included, likes having to dictate what you can or can't do with your own home, but there's just a lot of pride, and a lot of memories in these houses, and for some of us, that connection still has value." (Norris, 59) Many residents believe that gentrification will lead to residents being replaced and their history being erased with them. Historical detail of houses and buildings are important because it gives a sense of history in the neighborhood.

*Harlem Summers*, a play by Purchase College student Destiny Tompkins, explores contrasting views on gentrification. Two sisters are debating on whether to sell their grandmother's brownstone. One wants to keep the brownstone to conserve their family history after the death of their grandma. The other wants to sell it and use the money for a better life for her daughter. As the play covers the lives of these two women from kids to present day, it also explores the history of their neighborhood and their family. *Harlem Summers* reveals why certain people are moving out of their family home and are not as opposed to gentrification. From the contrasting views of these two sisters, the play argues both the value and danger of gentrification. *Harlem Summers*

brings awareness to gentrification, family history, and the pros and cons of what can occur through gentrification.

Not all aspects of gentrification are negative. Some improvements can be considered good for the neighborhood such as updated, newer housing and better quality food. But some lifelong residents believe that these new updates that are coming into their communities are more harmful than helpful. For example, increasing housing prices to levels that are no longer affordable to current residents can push people out. Installing upscale grocery stores like Trader Joes can put more affordable local grocery stores out of business. A neighborhood can be a place that has newer construction and national chain stores but yet still stay affordable. According to *The Washington Post*, “Yes, you can gentrify a neighborhood without pushing out poor people, they stated that when rich people move in, they often displace residents. But it does not have to be that way.” (Van Tol) They explained a couple of ways we can help people stay in their communities. For example, they can provide renters the opportunity and financing to purchase and own their own homes. Research on gentrification suggests that home ownership resists displacement. A 2016 study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia found that gentrifying neighborhoods in that city reduced low-cost rental units at nearly five times the rate of non-gentrifying neighborhoods (Jesse Van Tol, 2019). Change can be a good thing but is the outcome of gentrification a good change for everybody in the community?

Gentrification poses the question: “Who is responsible for the change and who does it serve?” Just like many long time residents, Lena in *Clybourne Park* is concerned

that the changes that come with Lindsey and Steve and the other newcomers moving in will bring displacement and change to Clybourne Park. She further goes on to make the point that the long time residents of Clybourne Park should be able to be a part of the change that is happening in the neighborhood and not just the wealthier, upper class people. It is important for developers and the long time residents to have a level of communication and understanding of what these cities are undergoing in order to make each community a place that is stable and affordable for everybody to live without fear of being displaced.

Gentrification has become a main topic when it comes to politics and urban planning. Is gentrification pushing out families who have lived in these areas for generations and replacing them and its culture? Or is it improving and making these neighborhoods more updated? There are many pros and cons when it comes to gentrification. I would argue that there has to be a middle ground in which cities that were established after World War II can be updated to them more stable for everybody.

Harlem is an example of a neighborhood that has experienced extreme gentrification in New York City. In *The New York Times* "The End of Black Harlem," Micheal Henry Adams, explores gentrification and how its residents are reacting to these changes. The article focuses on Joseph Micheal Lopez who lived in Harlem for thirty years and says he has watched the change happen right before his eyes (Adams). He explains Harlem as a place for cultural connection within Black America and a home for oppressed people seeking opportunity. He also explains that many people who have never been in Harlem, look at the neighborhood as a place of pain and suffering, when



he looks at it as a place of beauty and culture (Adams). For example, Harlem was the birthplace of the music, poetry, dance of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s. Urban pioneers, as the media calls them, are tourists and developers, a group of people who have been growing rapidly and contributed to the gentrification of Harlem (Adams).

When tourists come to neighborhoods undergoing gentrification, they tend to go to the updated high end stores instead of the older more established businesses. This robs the neighborhood of its uniqueness and its authentic originality. Various public improvements like new landscaping, parks, and yoga studios have improved neighborhoods like Harlem. While this could be considered a good thing, Joseph explains that there are more complex issues that the residents have with the new Harlem that is developing. A common complaint of gentrification is the rise in rent. Renovating housing improves the quality of buildings, but the median income in Harlem is less than \$37,000 a year which means that many of the families that previously lived in these apartments can no longer afford to live in the new housing that is being built (Adams). For example, according to the article, Joseph states, “[In] One Morningside Park, a new luxury housing building by the Fredrick Douglas statue, a portion of the apartments are supposed to be allocated as “affordable housing.” Two bedroom condominiums there are listed starting at 2.5 million dollars.” (Adams) This apartment starting at \$2.5 million is perversely supposed to be considered affordable housing.. The rise of prices in rent for these housing buildings leads to the increase of evictions of tenants that already lived in that housing complex. Old houses and industrial buildings are being used as investment opportunities that turn into luxury housing or condos with

rent that does not correlate to the median income of the towns in Harlem. This is why new housing developments are often one of the main arguments against gentrification.

It is painful to see Harlem being transformed because the city holds so much rich culture and history. As part of the african diaspora in the United States and the historical facts that validate these strong opinions, which are facts. A lot of residents feel as if their Harlem is being remade for wealthier white people and wiping out Harlem's significance. Many historic buildings are coming down such as The Renaissance, where Duke Ellington used to perform and the Child's Memorial Temple Church of God in Christ, the location where Malcom X's funeral was held (Adams). "Everywhere I travel in the U.S. and even in Brixton, in London, a place as culturally vibrant as Harlem, wherever people of color live, we and the landmarks that embody our presence, unprotected, piece by piece, are being replaced," said Valerie Jo Bradley, who helped found the preservation advocacy group "Save Harlem Now!" (Adams) Many black churches relocated all over Harlem and prime residential properties were purchased by black residents. Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, promoting political and economic independence, built the Renaissance Theater and Casino in the early 1920s when African Americans migrated in large groups from the south (Leeuwen, 2000). The theater, shops, and dancehall that was once there was demolished in 2015. (Adams, 2016) These are just a few examples on how gentrification can negatively affect the community's culture and significance.

Many of the people and families who had lived in Harlem for generations who are no longer living in the neighborhood feel as if they were replaced by upper class white

residents and being pushed out. From 1916-1970, Harlem was not in good shape, great migration of African Americans occurred from southern states to the north, Many people who lived in these cities moved out on their own to the suburbs, well before the newcomers and gentrifiers came. Their communities are undergoing gentrification after the city reached decline but recovered due to the longtime residents who resided in the community.

The number of black residents in Harlem and numerous other low income urban cities has decreased to its lowest point. In “Blacks are no longer the majority in Harlem,” Ben Muessing describes that in 1970, sixty four percent of black people lived between East 96th street and West 155th street and in 2008 the percentage of black residents in that community dropped to forty one percent. (Muessing) In central Harlem, north of 110th Street by Faith and St.Nicholas Avenue, the change has been similar. The Latino population has grown 27 percent compared to the white population that has more than doubled since 2000. This is a major demographic shift in a city that is acknowledged as one of the centers of Black urban America. Howard Dodson, director of Harlem’s Schomburg Center for Research in Black culture states “Gentrification is about displacement.” (Roberts)

Wealthy black and hispanic homeowners in Harlem are small (Clarke). If gentrification continues to proceed, the in-migration of white residents potentially leads to the displacement of its black residents. This affects Latino people in Harlem as well. Harlem is truly a melting pot of people of African descendants from African Americans, Afro-Caribbeans, and Afro Latinos which makes the culture of the city very rich. Can

gentrification make environmental improvements to a city without displacing the people, history, and culture that lived there for generations? Most people who are vulnerable to gentrification are the renters and families who reside in the cities.

Home ownership can be fostered by building good credit and obtaining knowledge about the homebuying process. Rev. Charles Butler, who heads affordable homeownership seminars at Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement explains that it is not an ethnic group issue, it is a money issue. Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to have poorer credit histories than whites and asians. Nearly 30% of blacks and Hispanics in America have no usable credit report and often get shut out of the mortgage finance system completely (Clarke). Advocacy groups like NFHA are trying to do something about that and are working with agencies to help would-be borrowers get evaluated based on their VantageScores, which are more forgiving of minor delinquencies on bills for credit cards or electricity (Clarke). Besides mortgage problems, the lack of information is a major disadvantage to gain home ownership. "I'm not saying that it would have been better if I was white but, if my parents had been in a better situation or if I had been more educated early on, I would have been better prepared," said Annette Cruz, a 50-year-old Harlem grandmother who is trying to save to purchase her first home (Clarke). Many people feel blindsided when they attempt to buy their own homes because they do not know if they will be qualified, if they're getting a good deal, and this is intimidating.

Many American gentifiers are middle and upper class white citizens who are moving into these urban cities in groups into areas that are urban low income. Young

wealthy gentrifiers who come from the suburbs seem to be the ones pushing gentrification. According to “What, Exactly, Is Gentrification?” by Alan Ehrenhalt, many millennials have told numerous polls that they would much rather live in a city. The growing amount of numbers of higher income and suburban youth are multiplying, David Kidd (2015). Along with young millennials, artists, writers, and other outgoing, adventurous, free spirited people are being looked at as gentrifiers. Neighborhoods go from being neglected to having new affluent residents and businesses that cater to those residents in just a couple of years. One thing about gentrification is that it does not take a lot of people to have a significant amount of profound effects on a neighborhood. The possibility of lower housing rent, the convenience of city living, and the vitality that comes from these neighborhoods all draw gentrifiers

Change has come and continues to come to Harlem. Longtime residents remain wary of how gentrification is going to affect the community and its people. There are clear benefits that will improve the neighborhood but low income residents are scared of what's to come. The benefits and disadvantages of gentrification can vary. Although gentrification can stabilize the community by improving its economy, decreasing crime, and renovating parks and landscapes, gentrification can also price out long time low residents leading to eviction and forced homelessness. The System for Observing Play and Recreation was used in communities in NYC to observe the outcome of renovated parks and unrenovated parks. The study looked at four parks, two unrenovated and two renovated. The results showed that the improved park doubled the number of visitors and encouraged more physical activity (Cohen). Adults and children were surveyed and

the improved park was significantly associated with the perception of safety. Concerns about children not having safe places to play was associated with the rapid acceleration of childhood obesity (Kaboom About Kaboom). So, in theory, the perception of more safe spaces would be considered an improvement. But the common debate is, is it worth it? Are the pros and cons of gentrification distributed evenly? As stated in “Just Say Yes to Gentrification,” an article in the LA Weekly by Art Tavana, “The hipster-hating mob ignores evidence that gentrification helps eradicate gang violence, strengthens the local economy, and encourages diversity in neighborhoods separated by racial lines. These positives far outweigh the only logical advantage to opposing progress: cheaper rents and Spanish colonial architecture that will crumble like Jenga pieces in the next big earthquake.” (Tavana) According to “IS GENTRIFICATION RUINING LOS ANGELES, OR SAVING IT? PICK A SIDE” by Isaac Simpson, a lot of buildings and housings are very old and are experiencing wear and tear from erosion and the natural causes throughout the decades. It is important for the resident’s health and physical well being to update the architecture to remove any possible mold and other harmful aspects that develop over time and to save these buildings from collapsing underneath them.

In the companion article “Gentrification is a Form Of Oppression,” Issac Simpson explains that even though gentrification may come with good intentions, it can still lead to displacement and a destroyed community. For example, instead of bringing people together, gentrification can cause clashes between the different racial and economic classes and police violence creating resentment from the long time residents. (Simpson)

Gentrification has brought violence and conflict in numerous American cities in the past along racial and economic class clashes. For example in *The Washington Post* article "How Gentrification caused America's cities to burn," Dylan Gottlieb argues that Hoboken, New Jersey, a city right across the Hudson River from New York City, was poor and had the second highest rate of welfare and unemployment topping 12%. A marketing campaign led by a local redevelopment agency brought newcomers who were wealthy bankers and lawyers. Landlords became interested in this and wanted to turn their tenement builds into luxury housing. Due to the fact that the landlords were unsuccessful in buying out the current lower income (and largely Latino) residents, some set their homes on fire knowing that the insurance payout would be higher than the income from being bought out. New York City and the surrounding areas have experienced violent arson, about 10,000 per year especially in declining and impoverished areas. (Gottlieb, 2019)

I personally have grown up going to the Labor Day parade and J'Ouvert with many of my family members in Brooklyn for years. Throughout the years, the Brooklyn residents and people who enjoy this cultural celebration noticed an increase in excessive police presence and checkpoints along the route of the parade. In *The Atlantic*, the article "The Criminalization of Gentrifying Neighborhoods" by Abdallah Fayyad explains areas that are changing economically often draw more police, creating conditions for more surveillance and more potential misconduct... Imani Henry, the president of the police-accountability group Equality of Flatbush told Abdallah Fayyad

that “There’s a criminalization of our neighborhood,” and the increase of police force as increased is a part of a larger pattern in gentrified areas (Fayyad, 2017). The annual celebration alongside the normal behavior of everyday life of these cultures became suspicious to the newcomers who are mostly caucasian. This creates more demand to involve law enforcement. “There’s some evidence that 311 and 911 calls are increasing in gentrifying areas,” Harvard sociology professor Robert Sampson stated and “that makes for a potentially explosive atmosphere with regard to the police.” (Fayyad) This creates tension between the newcomers and long time residents due to resentment and the lack of understanding of the residents culture, way of life and criminalization.

Gentrification and the differences of the new comers and longtime residents disproportionately affects communities of color in a negative way. From the *Times* to the *Post* to Public Radio to New York 1 Cable TV, news coverage centered on acts of violence at the parade and many included calls to shut down J’ouvert. The event was portrayed as a late-night drunken party, with no explanation of its history or cultural significance (Allen). The people who celebrate and attend this festival are often associated with “hoodlums.” What these critics do not realize is that gatherings are a festival that celebrates our freedom from slavery and the colonizers that our ancestors endured. This pan africanism represents and celebrates our culture from African Americans to Afro Latinos to Caribbeans as a whole. No matter what motive or definition of gentrification you choose it is a controversial issue that impacts race, class, and real estate in American cities. The social, economic, and physical aspects of gentrification can lead to political turmoil. Gentrification will continue to bring challenges



and issues within communities if we don't bring awareness to the tensions it creates and find a solution that is appropriate for both the residents and the real estate agents/housing developers. Change is inevitable. Change will benefit some and hurt others. The effects of gentrification vary and have different circumstances but it is essential for the local residents, city governments, and housing developers to manage the changes of gentrification to include and involve everybody in the development of the city. Harlem summers explores the lives of two sisters who have opposite views of gentrification as they debate rather than keep or sell their families home they explore gentrification and their lives from childhood to adulthood.

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