

Sample essay on gentrification and the creative class: a guide to whats happening...

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



As cities across the country and all around the world continue to grow and expand their borders, both physical and cultural, a question lands in citizens' minds, although it is hardly a new one: where is the city going?

In the essays in which this paper is founded on, there are at least two major points to make regarding the shift in demographics: the first the phenomenon of gentrification (which is to say, when an urban community changes towards wealthier residents or businesses, making the property more valuable in the market); and, secondly, there is Richard Florida's theory regarding the so-called Creative Class, which according to him is the one that currently drives every aspect of the economy.

In Justin Davidson's essay "Is Gentrification All Bad?" he recounts the example of Manny Ramirez, a business owner in Inwood, New York who's turned his traditional shop (a drug store, no less) into an example of how businesses can keep up with the times and actually be a good reflection of the shifts in the neighborhood's new inhabitants and their ways of life.

In Davidson's work, Ramirez calls himself a "corner druggist" (350), while he explains that his way to keep up to date with the times and the changes in his neighborhood is simply listening to people talk around it.

Later on, Ramirez mentions an interesting example of how the fear of a changing neighborhood has always been in the minds of residents. Davidson tells the story:

"One day, he heard the checkout girls at a Dominican bakery grumbling in Spanish about how the neighborhood was changing. 'I remembered when I was a kid and the white people were talking about the neighborhood changing - only they were speaking English.' Same complaint, different

language.” (351)

Gentrification is really a long-standing issue, not one that was just birthed in the latest days of urbanization. Johnnie Rennie Short’s essay “ We Must Start All Over from the Ground Up” tells the story of the first ideas of what we know understand as urbanism – a point which was founded in the beginning of the 20th century by demolishing all that was there before.

Short’s essay is an account of how, when it became time for cities to become monuments of tall buildings that attempted to reach the skies, the neighborhoods that had been standard up until that point became “ slums” in political discourse, giving governments an opportunity to easily demolish them and make way for newer, better and higher housing; however, while politicians always said that for every demolished house there’d be at least one built someplace else, often these promises were void, as luxury buildings were created instead and improved the “ quality” of the neighborhood’s inhabitants.

Gentrification isn’t inherently good or bad, of course – rather, its possibilities divert considerably. In Daniel José Older’s “ Gentrification’s Insidious Violence: The Truth About American Cities”, the author makes a point of saying that the demographic shift towards ethnical diversity’s problem is that it sometimes goes entirely unrecognized; he puts forward the example of the HBO show ‘ Girls’, where the leading characters are entirely white and paint a side of Brooklyn that basically negates the reality of what happens in the city’s streets: a truly ethnically diverse town.

On the other hand, Richey Piiparinen, on his essay “ Gentrification and its Discontents: Cleveland Needs to Go Beyond Being Creatively Classes,” talks

about the need for the particular city to create its own personality – or, rather, for government officials and people of power to actually keep up with what’s happening inside the city limits. In his essay, Piiparinen states that the new wave of urban theories based on Richard Florida’s statements mean that cities are being pushed into adapting into sorts of brochures for the Creative Class, creating policy and urban ground to entice that kind of people, instead of having the city life run its own course or even adapting to the new waves of migrants step by step.

The issue of Richard Florida’s views has been treated substantially in different essays recently. Two works stand in particular: Jim McGuigan’s “Doing a Florida Thing: The Creative Class Thesis and Cultural Policy” and Imre Szeman’s “Neoliberals Dressed in Black; or, the Traffic in Creativity.” On the one hand, McGuigan explains that Florida’s main thesis (exposed in his work ‘The Rise of the Creative Class’) is neither new nor accurate and much less truly game changing. The bobo (bourgeois bohemian) is, according to Florida, unconcerned with money and mostly wants to have a voice in the company and a creative outlet – and the creation of a “Creative City” for these bobos is aloof in terms of policy, as Florida speaks of culture but actually talks about economics regarding the welfare of his Creative Class.

In the meantime, Szeman’s essay focuses on the technical problems in the use of Florida’s terminology, exposing that the author becomes vague when standing in front of the term “creativity,” adding some fairly controversial indexes, particularly the Bohemian index and the Gay index, both of which Florida claims that strongly correlate to creativity. Also, Szeman notes a

different point: cities that would then be “cool” and attractive to the Creative Class would also mean those found in the more liberal spectrum, which gave right-wing thinkers something to raise an eyebrow at. According to Florida, the weight of “uncool” falls into cities that are coincidentally also related to voting Republican.

In any case, Szeman also stands out the fact that in Florida’s work, some “creative” professions are more creative and important than others: Florida has a strong preference for technology in this respect.

In any case, one thing is clear from the readings that were the basis for this work: the urban scenery is changing in the country, both socially and economically, and it is high time for governments to step up to the plate and keep up with the times they live in.

Works cited

Breeze, et al. *The Engaged Reader: Issues and Conversation for Composition*. Cincinnati: Van-Griner, 2014. Print.