



Gentrification Is Inevitable and Other Lies

Leslie Kern

Verso (Sep 6, 2022)

Hardcover \$24.95 (288pp)

978-1-83976-754-8

In her latest book, Leslie Kern deconstructs various myths about gentrification, revealing the harm that they cause—on top of gentrification itself.

For middle- and upper-class white people, gentrification—when poor urban areas are taken over by influxes of wealthier people—represents new opportunities for profit and investment. For people in the poor and working classes, immigrants, and marginalized people, though, it all too often means displacement, increased economic hardship, and the loss of communities. Further, gentrification is often oversimplified by observers on both sides of the debate. The first step toward understanding and mitigating its harmful effects, Kern argues, is acknowledging the full range of factors that contribute to gentrification—and the demographics who are most impacted by it.

Kern also notes that gentrification is a complex topic, and thus easy for people to misunderstand. Pro- and anti-gentrification activists alike fall into the trap of using language that discounts past suffering, and that makes it sound like there is no way to stop gentrification. By analyzing and dismantling gentrification myths one by one, Kern reveals the inseparable blend of cultural, political, and economic factors that affect the lives of those who can least tolerate such changes, including elderly people, disabled and mentally ill people, women, and LGBTQ+ communities, all of whom rely on the locations and social connections that gentrification destroys.

The book ends with a decisive call to action, broken down into small, accessible, and implementable steps. It emphasizes that gentrification touches everyone's lives, and that everyone therefore has a responsibility to devote their specific skills to reducing its impact on vulnerable populations.

Gentrification Is Inevitable and Other Lies is a humane analysis of the many contributing and consequential factors of urban takeovers.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (July / August 2022)

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