

Columbia University Gentrifying Harlem: Who is the Neighborhood Improving For?



(Starbucks on the corner of 125th and Lenox, right next to a Checks Cashed Place)

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Introduction

There were many opportunities that came up during crucial periods of U.S history that benefited certain groups over others, and the effects of the discrimination and inequality can be felt today, especially in the issue of urban renewal. One example that led to this problem was the benefits of the G.I Bill. In 1940 Roosevelt passed the bill that allowed for Blacks and other minorities to join the military and fight in World War II, although they fought in segregated troops with separate housing and resources, (Bound & Turner, 146). Through the G.I Bill soldiers were able to obtain higher education or vocational training for little or close to nothing. But, Blacks weren't eligible for as many resources as whites because of mental deficiencies or illiteracy, (Bound & Turner, 151). They also had to deal with the limited enrollment they had at the time, where most of the colleges and schools open to them were only historically Black colleges or universities. These colleges were underfunded and lacking resources compared to white colleges and universities, they also offered very few masters and technical programs, like engineering, which limited the level of education Blacks can get. Most that enrolled couldn't even get in due to the limited enrollment because of the lack of resources, (Bound & Turner, 153). This is one area where there was a large amount of social mobility amongst whites as opposed to Blacks and other minorities. Another area was in the attainment of housing.

After the great depression there was a need to stimulate the housing market, which resulted in the creation of the Federal Housing Administration in 1934. It resulted in low mortgages and down payments; construction of single family homes in suburbs, home ownership and maintaining the segregation of neighborhoods. Mortgages were only to be insured if they were in white, homogenous, neighborhoods, (Gotham, 19). This

resulted in a racialized value system in housing, housing in all-white areas were valued the most, as the residents became more mixed, the value in the housing would go down, therefore realtors and bankers did all they could to keep people of color out of white neighborhoods, (Gotham, 19). It was until civil rights legislation in the 1960's that these discriminatory acts ceased to continue. The 1968 Federal Housing Act resulted in two sections, which required for private developers and lenders to put more business and affordable housing into inner city neighborhoods, and to allow for lower income households and minorities to obtain mortgages and loans more easily. Apparently until then the only thing the FHA was contributing to the inner city was aid in the construction of project buildings, (Gotham, 21). The thirty years of housing discrimination resulted in the segregation of neighborhoods and the deterioration of inner city neighborhoods. This resulted in "white flight" as well, which was the whites leaving the inner city to take advantage of the new housing opportunities and to get away from the crime and minorities. The lack of funding and resources causes the neighborhoods to slowly break down over time. Buildings and houses become abandoned, public schools are underfunded, and crime rates increase. Soon neighborhoods that were once diverse, full of life and well funded become homogenized ghettos, mainly inhabited by African Americans, Latinos and immigrants.

The jobs are still in the downtown areas of many cities forcing many suburbanites to travel through the city. This is where urban renewal comes in. During the 1960's cities began revitalizing their inner city neighborhoods. The locations of most of these ghettos were considered valuable because of their close proximity to the downtown areas, (Zukin, 130). Developers and city officials see this wealthy population commuting into the city

everyday while often going through the run down neighborhoods that they are trying to improve. What city officials and business people then do is start putting businesses and housing to attract the wealthy, most often white, population back into these neighborhoods. This then results in gentrification.

Gentrification “will connote essentially private-capital-induced development in formerly lower income areas that results in a pattern of higher rents and land and house values. This pattern of rising rents and property values displaces many existing renters and owner-occupiers on fixed income by making the area unaffordable,” (Lang, 8). I will be focusing on the gentrification of Harlem due to the Columbia University expansion. Part of the purpose of gentrification is the improvement of the neighborhood. I will be using the case of Columbia University and Harlem to discuss what it means for a neighborhood to improve when, in many cases like this one, the improvements happen at the expense of the residents that are already there.

The fact that Harlem is undergoing the process of gentrification cannot be denied. The increase in signs for condominium sales has gone up. You do not even have to walk along all of Harlem. You go to 125th street and walk across towards the east side, the strip of stores that used to be mostly mom and pop shops, stores owned by people in the area, or at least fitting the needs of people in the area were there. You go now and you see Old Navy, H&M, and Starbucks just to name a few. An area that white people would rarely be seen in is now a place many of them call home. Columbia, whose main campus is at 116th street, has now extended to around 100th street and has gone uptown to 135th street. But, they even have facilities located in Washington Heights, a predominantly Dominican neighborhood, at around 167th street. Which is another part of Manhattan being affected by the expansion, as I will later discuss as well.

People are indeed being displaced and the culture and demographics of the neighborhood are changing. What then does it mean for a neighborhood to improve if it is

at the expense of the residents that have lived there if not all, for most of their lives? There seems to still be issues with lack of resources and education, I personally have family that chose to turn to a life of crime for the quick easy money because school did not seem appealing anymore. The neighborhood has seemed to change for the students moving in and not for the residents that have lived there for years. Harlem, which is an area full of history and Black culture, will soon become an extension of the upper west side. It is obvious that Columbia and the city believes that certain people give worth to the neighborhood, while others take it away. I will spend the rest of my thesis proving this statement and explaining why.

This thesis will attempt to analyze Columbia University gentrifying Harlem by looking at their histories, census data, theories of gentrification and fieldwork done on the different residents to see how they feel about the changes. I will attempt to argue that improving a neighborhood, in this case, means revitalizing it in order to attract and accommodate the mostly white middle class faculty and students that are moving into the area and this is done at the expense of the residents that were already living there. The histories of Harlem and Columbia University are important because it will show us the factors that led up to the present situation. The census will show the racial and income change over the past few decades in the area around Columbia, known as Morning Side Heights. The theories are important to further analyze the process of gentrification Harlem is going through. The fieldwork is one of the most important pieces of data that was collected because it will give an idea of the impact gentrification has had on the residents, both the gentrifiers and the ones that are being gentrified. It is important to look at cases like this in order to make people, city officials and developers specifically,

realize that we need to come up with ways to better neighborhoods for people that live there instead of further marginalizing them. We live in a democracy where the government has a responsibility to provide the general resources and aid necessary for its citizens to participate at an equal standing with everyone else. But the government is obviously ignoring the issues and needs of specific groups and further marginalizing them in order to not have to deal with them. The government, businesses and city officials are serving their self-interest and the interest of people that contribute the most to government, which does not include residents from inner city neighborhoods. In this case it is Columbia University serving its self-interest at the expense of the residents of Harlem.

The following chapter will be discussing the different theories of gentrification and how other scholars have looked at Harlem and its gentrification. The following chapter will be a brief discussion of the history of Harlem and the history of Columbia University. I think it is important to look at how Harlem became Harlem as well as how Columbia University was founded and perhaps why they chose that area, since it is important to look at the history to completely understand the present. Then I will discuss my methodology, the formulation of my hypothesis, definition of concepts, how I take into consideration the variables, the type of data I collected and how I analyzed it and looking into Harlem. The following chapter will be the presentation of the data I collected and the analysis of the data. Then I will end with the conclusion, which will be a summary of the question, hypothesis and actual findings, as well as what I think should be done or could have been done instead in terms of urban renewal in Harlem.

Literature Review

This chapter will focus on the theories of gentrification as well as what other scholars have to say about the effects. The theories usually focus on one aspect, the social, economic, and sometimes even the racial aspect. There are scholars that go on the negative or positive of each category. In this chapter I will attempt to lay out the different theories and schools of thoughts to see how they work with each other, or go against one another. The theories will be used as a framework to describe the gentrification in Harlem, in order to better explain the process and to answer the question of improvement.

The Gentrification of Harlem:

In the 1970's Harlem had the largest concentration of working class residents in Manhattan. Although there was a population loss of about one million from the 1970's to the 1980's gentrification was still increasingly happening. Schaffer & Smith argued that because of the rise in rent and cost of living people will most likely start going into Harlem for more affordable housing, (Schaffer & Smith, 252). Using census data and looking at changes in the housing market they were able to come to the conclusion that gentrification has started in Harlem. Apparently the city had policies to implement gentrification but without displacing any residents, (Schaffer & Smith, 362). The authors argued that the city needed outside investors to come in and bring business and life into the area, they did not have enough resources or funding to gentrify the neighborhood on their own. They hoped that with the help of the private investors they would still be able to implement the policies while preventing the area from becoming predominantly white, (Schaffer & Smith, 363). This is relevant because it shows that the gentrification of

Harlem was already predicted because of the rise in cost of living in the rest of Manhattan. The crack epidemic, which will be further discussed in the history section, probably slowed down this process and even brought it to a halt since the crime and drug rate greatly increased. Living conditions in Harlem were so bad by the 1980's that the life expectancy of a Black man born in the 1980's was lower than that of a man coming from a similar background in Bangladesh, (Freeman, 27). One can then gather from this information that the only people left in Harlem were the ones that could not get out. The ultimate decline that this resulted in made the value of the area drop to an all time low, which resulted in businesses and developers buying out abandoned properties and lots. Author David J. Maurrasse who did research on the gentrification of Harlem said that urban renewal happens in stages:

“Stage 1: Grassroots-level organizing – cleaning up streets, holding public officials accountable to the community, and so on.

Stage 2: Planning – policy makers become involved in actively developing strategies, working with CDCs and business – explicit solicitations to a more affluent potential residents.

Stage 3: Pioneer – new residents begin to move in, a few new shops appear appealing to that population; real estate prices begin to rise.

Stage 4: Intensive investment – policy makers, businesses, new residents, developers intensify their investment.

Stage 5: Population shift – demographics and businesses are noticeably different, and the pervious culture appears out of date.

Stage 6: Displacement – fewer and fewer low-income residents can hold onto their rent-stabilized apartments or longtime residents have sold their properties.

Stage 7: Full transformation – the old neighborhood is largely unrecognizable, and most residents are of the newer population, their culture dominates, and most businesses cater to them,” (Maurrasse, 50).

He goes on to say that obviously the demographics of the neighborhood make the stages unique to each case and he said that Harlem at that point, which was up to around 2005, is between stages four and five. So in the beginning of the present decade Harlem has been recorded to be going through intense investment and the beginning of population shift. This is an important explanation to look at because other scholars and theorists that study gentrification have not created the same type of break down to explain it. They go

over the cause and effect without going into great detail about the actual process of gentrification in the same way that Murrasse has. It is interesting that at about 2005 Murrasse would say that Harlem is at around a stage four or five, but from the information I gathered, as I will later get into, I would say it is presently between stages five and six.

Another large contributor to the gentrification in Central Harlem is Columbia University; while Murrasse has studied the area he did not do research on how Columbia is contributing to the gentrification and focuses mainly on what would be the best policies to implement in Harlem. Before I further discuss how gentrification has affected Harlem it is important to first discuss the theories of gentrification, what gentrification actually means and how this can all be applied to Harlem. Most theorists concentrate on the overall economic effects of gentrification and don't really get into the effect it has on the residents that have lived there most of their life, or the residents that were there when the gentrification started. As I stated earlier I am discussing the question of improvement, and what it means to improve a neighborhood, if only the gentrifiers are benefiting from the change. I am looking at the question of improvement, because when it comes to gentrification, improvement is determined in a more subjective way. In my opinion for a ghetto neighborhood to improve, more resources and funding would go into the neighborhood in order to better the lives of the people that already live there. But, in many cases of gentrification improvement is determined by the economic prosperity in the area that happens at the expense of the residents who already live there because they often times end up displaced or criminalized, as I will get into later on. Improvement means to change the neighborhood in every aspect, which usually includes the type of

people because they are the type that are often times associated with poverty and crime. The issue with looking at improvement is that as I stated it is subjective and others may argue with the same given information that there is improvement. But this is something that I will later get into as I give more information and data to support my claim. I will first explore the different theories of gentrification mainly focusing on the economic, social and racial aspects. Then figuring out how those theories may or may not apply to Harlem.

Theories of Gentrification:

An aspect of urban renewal that has become a great interest to social and political scientists as well as anthropologists is gentrification. But before I get into that I should briefly explain urban renewal. Urban renewal is the area of political science where the main focus is on revitalizing urban areas that have declined for one reason or another. The theories are usually based on social, political and economical factors. The following is a definition of gentrification:

“Gentrification commonly involves the invasion by middle-class or higher-income groups of previously working-class neighbourhoods or multi-occupied ‘twilight areas’ and the replacement or displacement of many of the original occupants. It involves the physical renovation or rehabilitation of what was frequently a highly deteriorated housing stock and its upgrading to meet the requirements of its new owners. In the process, housing in the areas affected, both renovated and unrenovated, undergoes a significant price appreciation. Such a process of neighbourhood transition commonly involves a degree of tenure transformation from renting to owning.” (Hamnett, 175).

This definition was chosen over others because it actually describes the process and tells us what gentrification is, while most other definitions are very general. I feel those other definitions I came across left out one aspect or another that I felt were important to include. This definition addresses the social issues I plan to discuss within this thesis, which include the aspect of invasion, the displacement of residents, and the

improvements for the new residents. The change in people racially and economically to ones that are wealthier, and racially deemed more acceptable causes for the area to improve economically. Businesses open and people that usually did not come to the area, now go in to shop and live. Their actions indirectly better the neighborhood economically, but at the extent of the original residents. This is all summarized in the definition given above. In the case of Harlem, Columbia University is clearly gentrifying Harlem but justifying it with their social mission to revive it, but it actually gets a little more complicated when I start to explore the data collected on the area and get into more detail on their mission and the implications.

As I briefly mentioned before theories of gentrification are usually described in a positive or negative light depending on the opinion of the theorist, the case they are looking at and the empirical data they obtain from the specific case study. Hamnett summarizes well the way theorists usually argue about gentrification in the following:

“Whereas gentrification has been seen by some as the saviour of the inner cities, heralding a halt to decades of white middle class flight and residential abandonment and offering an increased tax base (Sumka, 1979; Sternlieb and Hughes, 1983) others regard it as a threat to inner city working class areas (Ley, 1981; Hartman, 1979 Marcuse, 1986; LeGates and Hartman, 1986) and a prelude to the wholesale conversion of parts of the inner city into a bourgeois playground (Schaeffer and Smith, 1986), (Hamnett, 174).

Theorists either view it as a salvation for the inner city or an attack on the working class and poor residents of the area. Hamnett goes on to describe the framework needed for a good theory of gentrification. He believes that the theory should explain why gentrification is happening in that area as opposed to others, who is gentrifying, who is gentrified and the timeline of gentrification, (Hamnett, 175). Using this framework I will analyze the gentrification occurring in Harlem. Before getting into a specific case it would be appropriate to try to answer these questions that Hamnett asks for the framework in a more general sense. Although the factors that lead to gentrification

change with specific cases, there are general factors that lead to gentrification as well as factors that attract certain people, etc. As it was stated in the introduction, there were factors of institutional discrimination in housing and educational attainment that allowed for whites, and those who were able to identify as white to attain social mobility. So Blacks were for the most part stuck in the inner city and middle class whites, and those who were able to identify as white, for the most part were able to move out into the suburbs, and did.

“Further there is evidence that suburban rings cast a shadow back over the cities they surround. For example, the extent of suburbanization is correlated with higher central-city tax burdens, partially because of the volume of services and the maze of roadways required by those living outside the taxing jurisdiction of the city (Kasarda 1972),” (Skogan, 224). Many suburbs drain the tax money out of cities leaving surrounding cities overpopulated with little to no resources to better the living conditions of the residents. Because of the lack of tax revenue and resources, many inner city neighborhoods began to decline. Obviously everywhere the decline happened at different rates, but once there are not enough resources going into the area decline starts to happen. Now that it is clear that it is suburbanization that led to the decline of urban neighborhoods I think it is necessary to discuss exactly what factors lead to urban decline because it is a process that happens over time.

There are a few factors that lead to neighborhoods declining which Skogan discusses in his research. He first starts off by describing how a neighborhood remains stable: “Areas are stable if the housing stock is continually repaired and renewed and if people can sell and buy or rent homes there at prices appropriate for the structures and the social class of the residents. Stability means that the neighborhood as a social system reproduces itself,” (Skogan, 206). In other words a stable neighborhood is one where there is enough income and resources to constantly renew the buildings and provide the

residents with the social services they need, for example, good public schools, community centers, etc. People can buy and sell houses, or rent, at a rate that is affordable for the residents in the area. So when there is a lack of investment the neighborhood begins to decline. This analysis of stability makes sense because when I go into the history of Harlem we will see how the neighborhood became unstable because of the people with wealth and resources leaving and how it slowly began to decline. To summarize what Skogan said, decline happens when there is a loss of economical, emotional and social investment in a neighborhood, (Skogan, 222). Harlem clearly reached a point where it was declining and seemed to get worst over certain periods because of drugs and crime. This resulted in fear, which guaranteed for a long time that there would not be any further investment to better the area. I will go into more detail about this decline in the following chapter.

William Julius Wilson also speaks about other factors that lead to decline in the conclusion of his book There Goes the Neighborhood. He addresses the role of the government in the decline of neighborhoods. One major factor is the decrease in federal aid to states. Apparently while the Bush administration was in power it cut the funding to states to put more funding towards the war in Iraq. This resulted in a lack of funding for resources to provide services needed in inner cities to address problems like failing public schools, (Wilson, 183). Because of the lack of federal funding, the neighborhoods solely rely on tax revenue, which they obviously are not getting enough of because of the low income in the area. Brandon, a 22-year-old Dominican resident, who is an unemployed college graduate that lives on 135th street and has lived there his whole life. When he was

asked about who was to blame for the change in his neighborhood he blamed it on the former mayor and governor of New York:

“Mayor Giuliani/Gov Pataki...they made an earnest effort to control crime in New York City and turn the city into a commercial haven...when crime levels sunk, and those stats were made public to the rest of the city/nation, it signaled to people that the city was safer than it was in the past...Manhattan itself is the heart of the 5 Boroughs...all major financial institutions are located there as well as others.... wealthy people moved to lower Manhattan and saturated the living spaces down there...so logically, the next move is to move to upper Manhattan and continue moving up...that's why I have all of these Caucasians in my community today,” (Brandon, 3/25/09).

Obviously the blame cannot be put completely on Columbia, nor the people moving in, the government plays a part in gentrification because they have to often approve the policies and mass construction. Some residents are aware of this and put more blame on the government than any other actors.

Another factor that leads to decline that Wilson addresses is the homogeneity in neighborhoods because of their ethnic and racial divisions:

“Nonetheless, since urban neighborhoods are divided racially, ethnically, and culturally, the potential for ethnic conflict in the larger city is always present because groups are far more likely to focus on their differences than on their commonalities. Although they may be comfortable in their own monolithic neighborhoods, and although many of their members work in integrated employment settings, these groups are likely to view on another as competitors for political, social, and cultural resources,” (Wilson, 182).

Similar to theories applied to greater ethnic conflicts, a group feels threatened when people unlike them start coming into “their” territory because they are seen as competition for the same resources. It is seen more as an invasion rather than someone just trying to find somewhere to live or start a business. They assume that because the person or people are different from them they are a threat because they will try to take away their power and resources. This is sometimes the view on gentrification, a racial and economic invasion into an area that is inhabited by people that are ethnically and economically marginalized. While there is a clear need for help to improve the situation in a neighborhood people feel threatened to a certain extent if the help is coming from the

outside. But then what if it's the same people who are gentrifying like in the case of Harlem? Boyd uses her research done in Chicago to address the "racial uplift" theory of gentrification and she addresses the effects of race in gentrification.

Boyd makes the argument that gentrification is very similar to colonization:

"It also constructs gentrification as a process of "taming" and civilizing wild urban areas and of "sanitizing public space" through the removal or regulation of its original residents (Pérez 2002). This framework implicitly labels those long-time (who are often poor blacks or Latinos) as socially disorganized, unmanageable populations likely to benefit from the presence of middle-class, white urban pioneers," (Boyd, 268).

The neighborhoods that are gentrified are depicted in a very negative way with a concentration on the crime, unemployment rate, teenage pregnancy, lack of educational attainment, etc. They are depicted as places that have no hope except if people with money or white people come in to better the area and save the people. The people that usually gentrify do it for their own benefit as well, not really to help the people. This is similar to the European colonizers who believed that the lands they forcefully obtained from people of color needed their presence to become civilized. They covered up their self-interest in the riches of the lands by justifying it with a mission to save the people, as we will see Columbia does in the case of Harlem. This same idea of an invasion by white people, or a dominant group, of people of color can be seen in Wilson's work as well. They would both agree that gentrification leads to an invasion of marginalized group by a dominant one. Columbia does this as well when they claim to make it part of their mission to give back to the community: "We at Columbia University take pride in our community and embrace opportunities to give back to the neighborhood we call home," (Columbia University). Boyd further explores this theory by looking at Black gentrification. Boyd says how scholars initially ignored gentrification done by Black people as opposed to white, which started in the 1980's, because most African Americans

at that time did not have the financial resources to buy and fix homes in gentrifying neighborhoods. But this “phenomenon” has just become greater since then to the extent that people are now taking interest and researching on it, (Boyd, 269). Her research in Chicago is used to support her argument that “by promoting the presence of the black middle class, gentrification advocates hope to prevent further neighborhood disinvestment and displacement by whites,” (Boyd, 269). This argument is problematic though because it assumes that all African Americans have the same interests no matter their economic status (Boyd, 269). In the end she is making the claim that just because the gentrifiers are ethnically homogenous to the gentrified, one cannot assume that they share the same interests resulting in the residents actually benefitting in the gentrification. This shows that race cannot only be a factor that is looked at, class is important as well. But in the case of Columbia there are racial and class dynamics because the residents in the area are Black and Latino, from working class and poor backgrounds and the students and faculty are middle class and predominantly white and Asian. Race is associated with Columbia through its students because those are the faces of Columbia and that is what the residents usually associate with Columbia when they speak about it. Hector, a Puerto Rican man in his mid 50’s who lives on 129th street and happens to be a janitor at Columbia University noted the change in the people. “I see more Chinese in the area...and a lot of Indians... They’re all just students, they’re here for a while but when the spring comes, the school year ends, they leave,” (Hector, 3/27/09). Hector is not the only one that notes the change in the type of people. Almost all the other residents commented on the increase in white people as well.

Using her research in Chicago Boyd was able to come to the conclusion that the “racial uplift” theory of gentrification is racist and cannot be assumed to benefit the residents.

“This argument is based partly on the recognition that racists universalize the behavior of black individuals, attribute the behavior of one to all members of the group. The resulting logic is that improving the circumstances of one individual or sub-group within the black population will improve perceptions of all. But uplift is also based on the assumption that blacks share a common set of racial interests,” (Boyd, 280).

She reaffirmed that you cannot assume that all Blacks share the same interests just because they are black. You have to take into consideration their economic status, which is what attracted the middle class back into the neighborhood in the first place. There is still neglect because of self-interests, (Boyd, 286). It still does not address the problems that caused the neighborhood to decline in the first place, (Boyd, 286). Race does not matter when it comes to gentrification because the same results will happen, the value of the area goes up and the people get displaced. But, from the point of view of the residents it makes the change more apparent, it comes off as an invasion, especially when they notice a change in the residents as opposed to an increase. These new people are replacing the ones that lived there. I spoke to three men, in their mid to late 20’s, one white, Kenny, one African American, Eric, and one Latino and Black, James. They noted the change in people and felt that the students were taking over: “There’s a lot of white people, a lot Columbia students, pretty much everyone got kicked out...” (Kenny, Eric & James, 3/27/09). They associated the students and white people coming in with people getting kicked out. Their tone and usually the way they viewed the situation they had that same attitude of invasion, especially when it came to Columbia.

Weicher takes a more economic approach to urban renewal and gentrification. He brought up a major act that led to large gentrification projects. The acts of 1959 and 1961,

which allowed for urban renewal projects involving colleges, hospitals, and universities. The 1959 act specifically allowed educational institutions to buy land without any requirement or specifications forcing them to provide housing, (Weicher, 11). Looking at certain cases of gentrification he was able to come to the conclusion that urban renewal does result in the displacement of people. The displaced people are then forced to move somewhere else where they will most likely be forced to pay higher rent than they originally paid in their last home. According to Jose, a 29-year-old Latino, who lived in the Grant Projects on 129th for most of his life, noticed that there has been great displacement: “Columbia bought out these two projects right here, Grant and Manhattanville, they waited for people’s leases to end to buy the apartments. Now all these people are getting kicked out of their homes and they have nowhere to live. They have to go further uptown or leave the city,” (Jose, 3/27/09). Weicher argues while this partially works out economically because of the cycle it creates. The economic cycle specifically is people moving into the neighborhood from wealthier surrounding neighborhoods, which result in the value decreasing from their former homes. They move into the urban neighborhood, the value increases and residents are displaced and able to move in the surrounding the neighborhoods that were abandoned by the gentrifiers. The economic cycle that gentrification creates therefore is forced onto the poor resulting in them becoming actors to survive instead of choice. For it to be a complete success economically and socially, people would move out by choice not because of displacement, (Weicher, 47). Jennifer, a 22 year old Jewish girl from 107th and Broadway, does not think there has been great displacement in her area, “I think it’s just become more populated to be honest...its not like the minorities have been wiped out at

all.” Clearly some residents do not think that there has been displacement, but in both views the cycle fails because either displacement is not seen, or in the case of Jose, the displaced are not replacing the displacers since they are coming from random places.

There are also two general views on how long the effects of gentrification last. Neil Smith points this out in his article, “Gentrification and Uneven Development.” The two positions are that, gentrification is temporary, local and small scaled. The high cost of suburban neighborhoods and low cost of inner city neighborhoods is cyclical and only depends on the economy at that time. The other position is that gentrification has a greater impact and last longer because the people that trickle into the inner city neighborhoods attract new businesses and change in housing which then attracts more middle class people, (Smith, 140). He also discusses how uneven development due to capitalism effects gentrification as well. He argues basically that in a capitalist society there is always a need for expansion, due to competition. You need to expand your labor, materials and create transportation to materials and markets easier. The need to expand effects space in terms of how it is used, and where and how people choose to expand, (Smith, 143). This then results in uneven development because people are then developing and basically investing their capital in certain places as opposed to others. This also results in where the price of living goes up and where people decide to live which may contribute to the suburbanization and urbanization of areas, which according to Smith happens in a cycle depending on how the economy is doing, (Smith, 149). The case of Columbia and Harlem goes against both Weicher and Smith’s theories because there is no cycle. People that are being displaced are moving further uptown and to the Bronx, while the people moving in are coming in from random places for the most part

because they are mostly faculty and students. Hector and his friend Willie, who is also around 60 years old were addressing the displacement, they mentioned how the people who could not afford to live in the area would end up moving to Washington Heights or the Bronx and the people that were bought off, if they were offered enough would buy a house in New Jersey, Puerto Rico or Dominican Republic, (Hector & Willie, 3/27/09). Clearly the cycle of displacement does not apply to the Harlem case as many residents affirmed.

An important aspect that will be further applied to the data presented later on is the change in rent due to gentrification. Gentrification usually starts happening when the quality of housing in an inner city neighborhood is at its lowest. But, at this point the housing is no longer attractive to upper income people. This now creates a demand for higher-income housing, as higher income people leave their housing units, the value goes down enough for lower classes to move in, therefore there is no real competition for housing amongst the classes, (Harvard Law Review, 1836). Upper income people begin to bid for units of lower income housing, they are able to offer more money on available apartments than the residents that live there already. This results in the displacement of poorer residents and the loss of lower income housing, (Harvard Law Review, 1838). Landlords become motivated to turn apartments that become available into condominiums in order to make more money. So now that there is less lower income housing available the rent prices go up because people that cannot afford to buy an apartment have no choice but to rent one Brandon addressed the issues of displacement in his neighborhood on 135th street:

“I feel that a lot of low income families in my neighborhood are being displaced by high income individuals...they're lured to give up their apartment by landlords who offer them lump sums of money.... these landlords later rent out the apartments to high income

individuals who can afford a higher rent.... gradually, as this occurs repeatedly, the cost of living for the whole neighborhood rises, regardless of whether or not there are still remnants of low income families living in the neighborhood and cannot afford the higher costs,” (Brandon, 3/25/09). Brandon and other residents noted the lack of affordable housing in their neighborhoods, which is why a lot of people are being forced to move further uptown. The loss in low-income housing is rarely replaced because of the decrease in government subsidized housing since the 1980’s (Harvard Law Review, 1839). The only thing that saves poorer residents in rent control, and that is only applicable to residents that’s have lived in the apartment for more than several years and it doesn’t effect apartments that are turned into condominiums (Harvard Law Review, 1844). We will go into further detail about how all of this comes into play in terms of Harlem’s situation.

An issue raised by Zukin in her research about gentrification is displacement. “An examination of one year’s tenant out-movers from “revitalizing” areas in five US cities found the costs of displacement to be outweighed by “benefits,” (Zukin, 136). In many cases like that of Harlem, the residents that are displaced end up having to move to worst neighborhoods, in the case of Harlem, many of the people seem to be going to the Bronx or just leaving New York City altogether, as I will further explain later on. Although the exact percentage of displacement cannot be calculated, one can conclude that there is displacement from looking at census data as well as the change people note in who is moving in and out. Crystal, a 22-year-old Latina, who lived on 106th and Broadway for most of her life, commented on the displacement as well:

“If you look at certain areas in Harlem already, the new buildings and businesses they look out of place, so instead of fitting the new constructions to fit into the neighborhood they’re changing the area to fit the new constructions. The prices are going to continue to rise so more people will get displaced. The area is going to be full of college students and tourists, changing the feel and vibe of the area, since it won’t solely be residential. It’s going to suck,” (Crystal, 3/26/09)

She noted on how the displacement has already changed the culture in the area and soon Harlem will be whitewashed and lose that ethnic vibe that its African American, Caribbean and Latino residents have brought to it. Not only are people opposite about the cost of living rising and the increase in displacement, but there is a fear in the loss of culture in an area that is historically known for its culture.

Conclusion:

Using the theories discussed it is clear that Harlem was susceptible to gentrification and while it clearly is in the process of gentrification it has become a unique case. When taking into consideration the factors that lead to urban decline, Harlem has been declining since the 1920's when there was a clear halt to investment. You can argue that it was slowly declining until the 1980's when there was a complete decline due to the crack epidemic. Which became a catalyst for the gentrification that seemed to completely take off in the 1990's. Wilson's application of ethnic conflict doesn't apply thus far to Harlem because of the surveys done by Maurasse he found that around 60% of the participants felt that gentrification would cause improvements that they would benefit from so they weren't completely against it. But, he did not explore the different feelings there might be towards the different gentrifiers, for example if there is more of a fear or anger towards Columbia University versus the people moving in. [insert interview] But they seemed to be accepting of the process in general. Boyd's argument of gentrification being a form of colonization is still questionable because the actual intentions of the gentrifiers in the case of Harlem are not quite clear even though the area is clearly being gentrified. The fact that the people are generally accepting of it as well

makes the application questionable. The gentrified need the gentrifiers to improve their neighborhood and therefore bring the resources and services they need but there is no real dependence on the gentrified.

The “racial uplift” hypothesis clearly showed that gentrification still had negative effects on Chicago in Boyd’s research; it might have a different effect on Harlem because of its unique history and location. While in most cases whites and institutions are known for not contributing and just causing displacement in the areas that are being gentrified, Columbia University strives itself on its social mission to improve and help their local neighborhoods. There is also an expectation as it was seen from the residents themselves to benefit from the gentrification. From the fieldwork I was able to do, there was clearly some animosity towards what seem like a predominantly white, Asian and middle class population coming in, but they generally came off as these groups of people that were coming in as a result of Columbia gentrifying Harlem.

The economic theory on the other hand applies to a certain extent in that the value of the area is going up because of the businesses and people that Columbia has attracted. But the cycle of people moving in from a certain area and the residents moving out into that area fails here. It seems as though most of them seem to be faculty and students, so it can be assumed that these people are coming from anywhere in the country or world. The people getting displaced are going further uptown into the Bronx, but if they are bought out from their apartments and are given enough money, many end up going to New Jersey, Florida or back to their country of origin. The other economic theory clearly applies, with the expansion of capital and need for space and transportation, because clearly people want to still live in Manhattan, but they can not afford to live anywhere

lower than Harlem anymore and anywhere above Harlem is still too ghetto. Columbia sees the benefit in investing in the surrounding area, it has continued to expand as well as continuing to provide transportation around its campuses, not including of course the public transportation that runs through its campus and the rest of the city already.

It is necessary to look at all of the theories of gentrification because it is possible that more than one may explain the case of Harlem, it will allow for us to understand better what is going on there and why. Clearly there was not one theory that completely applied to the Columbia and Harlem case, there were aspects of each theory that applied and there were some that just had to be disregarded altogether. In this case was necessary to see the different perspectives and it also showed the complexities of the gentrification. These theories will be further used as well to analyze the data presented towards the end. The following chapter will be on the history of Harlem, which has been a history of gentrification, as you will see. I will explore the history of Columbia University as well. Exploring both histories will allow for us to understand better why these changes are happening to today, or what has lead up to the changes. One cannot fully understand the present of a person or place without looking into its past and seeing what events and experiences have shaped their history.

The History of Harlem and Columbia University

This chapter will look at the history of Harlem as well as Columbia University. This is important to see how they came into existence into how they presently are now since Harlem was not always the Harlem that people know of today. There are many socio-economic, as well as racial factors that led to the area becoming predominantly Black. It is also important to see the history of Columbia University, to see why they chose Harlem and the effect it had when they started constructing the University. After the discussion of each history I will attempt to connect their histories and see where they both were during crucial periods and how they may have affected each other and this will be the transition into their present relationship.

History of Harlem:

Harlem was created as a mixed middle and working class area. The population changed drastically after World War I when the white middle class started to move into the suburbs and there was a large migration of blacks from the south. By the 1920's Harlem's predominantly black population was solidified with the Harlem Renaissance, making Harlem known for its rich black culture. The new population caused investments and constructions to stop. This situation worsened with the Great Depression and after that there was not really any further investment either. "By the time that Harlem again made international headlines in the 1960s, it had been transformed into a slum and quickly became the most notorious symbol of black deprivation in America," (Schaffer & Smith, 351). In the 1970's Harlem had the largest concentration of working class residents in Manhattan. Although there was a population loss of about one million from

the 1970's to the 1980's gentrification was still happening. I will now further explore this history to explain how Harlem gained its rich Black cultural identity, when and why it started declining and when did the decline lead to gentrification.

Harlem became Black due to the gentrification that was happening in the rest of Manhattan, all the Black residents were forced to move north to more affordable housing, which left them in Harlem. They were mostly displaced from the areas presently known as Wall Street, Penn Station and Central Park. African Americans have such a strong tie with New York City because they are the second oldest ethnic group after the Dutch, and if one takes into consideration the Algonquians then they become the third. Manhattan, as a trading post, was actually created by the Dutch along with the help of a free African known as Jan Rodriguez who was also from the Caribbean. It was the labor of slaves that helped create houses, farms and roads in what is now presently known as the five boroughs of New York City, (Maurrasse, 14). Slavery continued in New York even when the English took over and wasn't abolished until July 4, 1827. The area around present day 80th street and Central Park West was bought out by black landowners who had voting rights as well. This area was destroyed in 1858 to create Central Park. This forced that Black population to move further uptown, as you can see throughout history Black people in New York City were almost forcefully moved around the city. The area around 34th street was predominantly Black as well and they were forced to move out in 1910 for the construction of Penn Station, Macy's, the U.S Post Office as well as the Hotel Pennsylvania. Most of the famous landmarks in New York City were once Black neighborhoods, so one can say that gentrification was part of the African American history in New York way before people knew what gentrification was, (Maurrasse, 17).

As one can see Blacks used to inhabit the rest of Manhattan until they were forced to move to Harlem. Who did they come into contact with when they arrived? The Europeans; Harlem was predominantly a German and Irish neighborhood to begin with; it was considered an elite area of the city. Only the wealthiest and the ones with power lived here until there was an influx of Jewish and Italian immigrants in the late 1800s. Not too much after in the early 1900s the African Americans began coming in as well since they were pushed out of the rest of Manhattan, (Maurrasse, 17). Harlem's location in relation to the business district of Manhattan attracted a lot of developers and there was a lot of real estate activity, (Freeman, 18). It was marketed as countryside with the conveniences of a city, (Freeman, 18). At this point in time all of New York City was greatly developing and they didn't take this into consideration. They had constructed too much too early on and were forced to lower rents and offer housing to Black residents as well. Those who refused to rent to Blacks scared others into buying out or renting to prevent Blacks from coming into the neighborhood. It went as far as even the residents of the wealthiest white streets (129th, 135th, and 137th) coming together and creating an association in which a contract was created stating they wouldn't rent to Blacks for ten or fifteen years. But, this didn't last too long since there was still an abundance of housing that needed to be rented out. So eventually everyone was forced to one way or another to rent to Blacks, and this caused for more to come, since there was more housing available, (Freeman, 18). Adam Payton Jr., who was an African American real estate agent, took advantage of this and bought out the homes, and convinced the white home owners and land lords who were still there to rent to Black people by charging them more than whites. Black residents ended up paying \$5 more than white people for the same type of

housing. This did not stop white flight from taking off which eventually led to Harlem become predominantly Black in a short period of time, (Maurrasse, 19). But while the Blacks were slowly becoming the majority, there was still pride and attraction to the area because of the luxurious and clean appearance it still had at that point. It became an area that Blacks were proud to live in as opposed to other cities where Blacks were ending up in slums, (Freeman, 20).

By 1930 84 percent of Manhattan's Black population resided in Harlem, (Freeman, 22). They were also able to come together and create churches, community centers as well as one of the first chapters of the NAACP to provide support and resources, which were denied to them by the government, (Maurrasse, 20). Harlem was considered the place to be for Blacks around the world, it was a place of empowerment where they can freely express their cultures, (Freeman, 22). Harlem soon became overcrowded because the area was built for nuclear families, not people with multiple children or immigrants coming on their own. People were sharing apartments and housing also because Harlem was one of the few places in the city at the time that was renting and selling to Blacks. So even when the lack of housing became apparent they still had nowhere else to go, (Freeman, 23). The situation worsened when the Great Depression came; half of Harlem was on public assistance, the salaries of unskilled and semiskilled workers had dropped by 43 percent, and the mortality rate in Harlem Hospital was twice as high as Bellevue's (which was in midtown Manhattan), and this was all by 1932. The National Housing Act of 1934 had a large negative effect on Harlem as well because of the implementation of mortgage availability. This was the act that led to the exclusion of investments in neighborhoods in which the majority of residents were non-

white. The residents in Harlem couldn't even afford to buy homes themselves, (Maurasse, 24). The tensions from lack of health care, housing and employment led to the Race Riots of 1935. The only thing that came out of that was the construction of projects between 151st and 153rd streets along Harlem River Drive. By the 1960's Harlem was at its all time worst. Due to everything that had happened along with the Federal Housing Act of 1954 Harlem was falling apart in every aspect. This housing act was supposed to address urban decline due to loss of factories and change to service sector. The decision on how urban renewal would be implemented was left up to the businesses, developers and politicians, (Maurasse, 26).

The Civil Rights movement improved the situation for Blacks in that they were able to move about more freely and make more choices as well as receiving better educations but the concentration of poverty in Harlem at this point was so high that this didn't really affect them. Very little residents owned anything so they were left with little to no power. This led to an increase in crime, which resulted in drug dealing and people using as well. Harlem was one of the areas hit the hardest by the period of 1980's and early 1990's known as the crack epidemic. The later 1990's brought more commercial development, which resulted in attracting people to move into Harlem, (Maurasse, 28). Between 1990 and 2000 the white Non-Hispanic population in Harlem increased by almost 50 percent. The average cost of a home in 1995 was \$190,000 and in 2001 it was \$412,000. Most of the people moving into Harlem are whites and middle class Blacks, (Maurasse, 31). From these facts we can see that the late 1990's was the period where gentrification really took off.

This history was important because it shows the stages of decline that Harlem went through. It is important to note that Harlem was once a place of empowerment and luxury for Blacks and because too many Blacks came into the area, the disinvestment in the area began with whites fleeing to other neighborhoods. Harlem went from a luxurious suburban area to a slum in about 100 years and it was because of the influx of Blacks and immigrants to the area. It was important to go into detail because the factors that lead to the decline and neglect of the Blacks are similar to the ones seen presently within the relationship of Harlem and Columbia University.

History of Columbia University:

Now we will look at the history of Columbia University. Columbia University was founded in 1754 under the name King's College through a royal charter given by King George II of England. This makes Columbia the oldest institution of higher education in New York and the fifth oldest of the United States. Columbia has a history of influential graduates, some of the first were Robert R. Livingston, one of the five people who drafted the Declaration of Independence, John Jay, the first chief justice of the United States, and Alexander Hamilton, the first secretary of treasury, to name a few. The first location was in an old school house part of Trinity Church in the lower part of Manhattan on Broadway, (Columbia University). Even from its founding, it was considered to be a prestigious school.

In 1784 Kings College established a new name, Columbia College, which was supposed to represent the nation's fight for freedom. It was supposed to represent the Revolution, economically and geographically with its location and attraction of an urban

population and its religious Anglican values. At some point, it is unknown, the college moved to Park Place. It made its third move in 1857, to E. 49th street and Madison Avenue, where it was located for the next forty years. Columbia became one of the first places with graduate facilities, with graduate programs created for political science, philosophy, and pure science, (Columbia University). As the school expanded it kept moving further uptown, since there would be more land available at cheaper prices for the expansion.

Seth Low, who became the president of Columbia in 1890, made the decision for the university to move to its current location in Morningside Heights. The location was chosen because of its location and free space, which was needed for the expanding school. The architectural firm McKim, Mead and White were in charge of the project. They designed the buildings after the Italian Renaissance. The University continued to expand inside and out after the location was established. The student protests during the 1960's resulted in the cancellation of the gym that was supposed to be built in Morningside Park, the end to some classified research projects, the retirement of President Grayson Kirk and it also effected the financial situation of the school. A more positive result was the creation of the University Senate which was made up faculty, students and alumni, who now had more say in the University's agenda, (Columbia University).

The next two presidents resulted in a great expansion through the 1980's and 1990's which included a 650-million dollar-building program that began in 1994. During this period Columbia University also created its renowned medical research center in Washington Heights, known as the Audubon Biotechnology and Research Park.

Columbia is currently celebrating its 250th anniversary under its current president Lee C. Bollinger, (Columbia University). The following section will now discuss the relationship between Columbia University and Harlem, in relation to their histories and the status of their present situation.

The Services Columbia Provides for the Community:

I tried to contact Columbia to get further information on their services and expansion project and they simply referred me back to their website, so that is what I have to represent their point of view. I am making this disclaimer to justify the implications and assumptions I am forced to make at certain points. I tried to look into the sites as well that they work with. But there is nothing from Columbia's point of view. I only have responses to what they claim to do for the community as well as the expansion project. So aside from their sites it is not clear what their opinion or views are in relation to Harlem and its residents. Although it is not explicitly laid out in Columbia's link to its history and formation, it is interesting to look at periods in time and compare the situation of Columbia to that of Harlem. For example the college moved to Harlem around the same time the area was receiving its large migration of an African American and Black population. It is also interesting that while the University prospered at this location Harlem was deteriorating probably at around the same rate. Which shows at this point Columbia had no investment in the neighborhood or people aside from its own interests of expanding.

By the 1960's Columbia was starting a period of what seemed like a great expansion and Harlem was still in a depression, which was remarkably low at this point

and continued to be into the 1990's. The only thing that the two held in common during this period were the social movements, protests and riots that went on during the 1960's. During the 1980's and 1990's specifically, Harlem, along with the Bronx and other inner-city areas were hit hard with the crack epidemic, during this same period Columbia went through another large expansion. Which seems to show that throughout history while Harlem was its all time low, Columbia would be at its all time high and it was obvious from the extreme situations that there was no real tie between the two. Columbia essentially became a fortress that cut itself off from the deteriorating area surrounding it and the disadvantaged people that inhabited it.

What is the difference today? Columbia presently has a greater interest in Harlem, which is shown in two ways. One way is the programs that it provides in order to offer aid and resources that are missing in the area and the fact that it is currently undergoing another expansion project. First we will look at the programs and services it claims to provide, then we will look at the expansion project and the community response.

Columbia strives on its mission of contributing to Harlem by the services and resources it provides that would otherwise not be available to the disadvantaged residents. On the homepage of their "Programs and Services" link they claim that:

"The cultural richness of Harlem, Washington Heights, and surrounding neighborhoods is an essential part of what makes Columbia a great place to work and study. But it's a two-way street. The University partners with many local organizations that help improve the quality of life in our community. Columbia provides funding and other resources for programs described in the pages that follow. But even more important, so many of our faculty, staff and students work alongside our neighbors to deliver services that make a difference to people in Upper Manhattan - from health care and education to job training and youth mentoring," (Columbia University).

They are claiming that the culture and neighborhoods of Harlem is part of what makes Columbia the prestigious institution it is today. Therefore they feel that they have a responsibility to provide resources that the people in the area deserve but are lacking.

They are giving back to improve the neighborhood that gives to Columbia. Now I will look at specific services they provide in order to improve Harlem and the lives of the residents.

The first link is for legal services. One of the legal services they provide is for residents who are about to get evicted from apartments they are renting because of gentrification. They also defend people whose landlords are avoiding repairs that are needed to their apartments. The eligibility is limited to people living between 100th and 110th between Broadway and Central Park West, which is technically the Upper West Side. Central Harlem begins at 110th street on the west side, and West Harlem begins around 120th street. The area mainly affected by gentrification is Morningside Heights, Harlem and Washington Heights, basically everything north of the area they chose. The next legal aid they provide is done through a partnership with the Alianza Dominicana and Legal Aid Society. Through this partnership they provide legal aid to immigrants. They give legal advice and representation on cases like getting legal status to work and being able to travel back and forth between New York and Dominican Republic as well helping people who have violated any immigration laws. Something that may be interesting to consider is how their legal status effects their housing situations, since many Dominicans are being displaced from Washington Heights as well. Is there legal status used as a threat to get them to move? The final legal aid is through the West Harlem Community Advocacy Partnership, which basically fights to preserve affordable housing and long time residents in District 9, alone. District 9 is basically Central Harlem from 110th to about 156th street, (Columbia Univeristy). For all three legal services there are no fees and they give legal advice as well as representation. But if you aren't an

immigrant nor do you live in District 9 or Manhattan Valley, Columbia University cannot help you. It is unclear why their services are so limiting and how aware people are of these services available to them as well as how successful they have been in representing their clients.

The following service they provide is health care. They have multiple services available for all health care needs that would come up from pediatric care to medical attention for senior citizens, substance abuse, dental care, etc. The services seem limited in this area as well. A good amount of services that have eligibility requirements, usually in age or location, for the most part don't seem to have fees and most of the services with no requirements either do or don't clearly state whether there are fees or not, (Columbia University). They also provide services for education. There are programs to help teachers improve their skills to better teach their students, all the programs seemed to be science based or limited to a certain area, except for one writing program where graduate students help anyone in the community with their writing skills. They provide tutoring services for elementary and kindergarten but the eligibility is determined through an application process. They then provide different services for specific schools, which range from after school, tutoring to lunch programs. Most of their middle school and high school programs which have the same general range, but also college prep, mentoring and summer employment programs, require an application process to be considered eligible. The adult education services, which range from computer training classes, ESL and GED courses and all programs in between require an application or have fees. But for the most all programs are available for all adults. The childcare and day care center services for the most part have fees although they say that financial aid is available, some

even require a deposit but are open to all age ranges from infant to up to five years old, (Columbia University). The limitations in these services are obviously through the fees. The final service they have available is under arts and recreation where they have art, sports and theater programs for all ages, for the most part these seem more accessible although some require an application or fee or it just wasn't really clear, (Columbia University).

Conclusion:

It is clear after looking at most of the services provided by Columbia or in affiliation with Columbia, that there are many limitations to a lot of the services and do not benefit the whole community. Because of the eligibility standards, application process or fees their services are only limited to certain groups of people. You would find something that you are eligible for, but it may not necessarily be something you need or feel that you can benefit from, for example if you cannot receive legal aid to help you from getting evicted than the fact that you can sign your children up for a sports team or some after school program is not really helpful since you are about to be homeless. This is important to take into consideration as well because I am questions the improvement of the neighborhood, and this shows that Columbia is in fact attempting to provide resources and services in order to better the lives of people that are already living her. But the limitations of their resources do not seem to make up for the displacement, the rise in prices and the feelings that many residents have of neglect and criminalization. "We've lived here our whole lives and we can't stand in front of our building anymore because now we're considered criminals while the Columbia students that just moved in can do

almost anything they want,” (Kenny, Eric & James, 3/27/09). Aside from giving back through their services Columbia claims that their expansion project will benefit the neighborhood and residents as well. In the following chapter I will attempt to explain the expansion project, how the community benefits and their response.

The Expansion Project and a Community Group's Response:

As I brought up in the previous chapter, Columbia claims to try and improve the neighborhood through the social services it provides as well as the expansion project. This chapter will explore the expansion project and how Columbia claims that the neighborhood would benefit from it. I will be looking at what Columbia says the benefits to the community will be, a community group's reaction as well as people that were interviewed who have some kind of significant tie to the neighborhood.

The Expansion Project:

Something interesting to note is the fact that in their history there never seemed to be an attempt to get the neighborhood involved or try to benefit their needs with their other expansion projects and one may even argue that their outreach was needed just as much then as it is now. Jose commented on the fact that he believes that Columbia is fulfilling their own self-interest as a business because of their recent interest in Harlem:

“I think its all business...are they cleaning up for the people in the area? I don't think so... Columbia has been here for yearssss, and now now you wanna decide I'm just gonna buy this stuff out? The city and the economic crisis its in, they sell the projects and make some money, they get rid of buildings and people that they don't care about and everyone wins,” (Jose, 3/27/09).

Everyone has noticed the sudden expansion and the residents realize that there was no real contribution to the area until recently, which leads many to believe that Columbia does not in fact really care about their needs and interests. The expansion plan was approved by the city council in December 2007. The project is 17 acres which includes 129th to 133rd between Broadway and Twelfth avenues, as well as the north side of 125th street and 131st to 134th street on the east side of Broadway.¹ This plan is supposed to be

¹ See figure 1 at end of chapter

over the next twenty-five years. The goal is to create urban academic buildings that are built as part of the community, unlike the older buildings of Columbia, which clearly look like academic buildings creating a stark contrast with Harlem. The expansion will mainly consist of facilities “for civic, cultural, recreational, and commercial activity.” There will be walkways and open public open spaces that are meant to be easily accessible, especially to the waterfront park that is already there. The expansion is also supposed to provide jobs available for “a diversity of people,” (Columbia University).

They address the “community engagement” by simply relisting some of the services that they provide, which I addressed in the previous section. The services they provide have no ties to the expansion project because the one that would be more relevant, which is legal aid for displacement, actually is only for residents that live 15 to 20 blocks more downtown, (Columbia University). Putting these services under the expansion plan creates the assumption that services more like these will come out of the expansion project when clearly they were services that were already provided. They addressed the issues of housing and displacement by providing two buildings with affordable housing. They are supposed to be housing for people that are being displaced from another two buildings that they plan on knocking down. The buildings are supposed to replace 135 units as well as a 10 percent increase in the number of affordable units, (Columbia University).

Columbia makes a claim about the jobs and opportunities that will come out of the expansion as well. The expansion is estimated to create around 6,000 new jobs out of which 3,300 would be administrative assistants, groundskeepers, mechanics, lab technicians, library assistants, cooks, cashiers and other jobs that are not just for

professors or people with advanced degrees. The jobs would include health, education and retirement benefits. The businesses that the university will attract and create will also provide jobs. Approximately 1,200 construction jobs will be created each year, for the next twenty-five to thirty years, while the expansion is under construction. Columbia has made sure to hire minority and locally owned contractors for their project, and they have spent \$112 million in this alone, a third of the total cost of the project. It is estimated that the project will create \$5 billion in compensation for workers, \$11 billion in economic activity and \$430 million in tax revenues for the city and state, (Columbia University).

It is not clear when the jobs will be available since the project will take about twenty-five years to construct, so no one can really get employed now except the construction workers. The people that are currently living in the neighborhood will not be able to obtain most of these jobs until the buildings are up. So how will this benefit the people that are living there now? Technically if people are in the work force already by the time the project is done they will be close to retirement if they are not retired already, assuming that they are at least twenty years old. The only jobs that people benefit from in the present are construction jobs and those are not permanent jobs either. It seems as though a lot of dead end jobs that they provide in janitorial departments and construction are not permanent or secure. Hector commented on the fact that they are laying people off and that there is only real job security for people that have worked there a long time: “They laid 40 people today alone, the economic crisis is effecting them so now they just hire people when they need them, then they get rid of them, its like a cycle,” (Hector, 3/27/09). There assistance they are providing for the displacement as well is clearly not enough to make up for the people that are actually being displaced since they are only

addressing the needs of two buildings, when people are being displaced from many more. They also make the claim to have the community involved in their expansion plan. They are addressing the improvement to the area, through jobs, services and just general physical improvement, which at the end are not really benefitting the residents that have been living there. The following section will take a look at a community group's response to the plan to see how much truth there is behind that claim.

WE ACT's Response to the Expansion Plan:

WE ACT for Environmental Justice (West Harlem Environmental Action, Inc.) is a non-profit community group that was founded in 1988. It is dedicated to fighting all issues of environmental racism, which include, pollution, gentrification, sanitation, and health, to mention a few, (WE ACT). They actually are involved in the planning and have a written response to it. It is under the title of "WE ACT's Official Written Comments on Columbia's Expansion Plan." I will attempt to highlight the main points of the summary.

One of the main points they make towards the beginning is the fact that Columbia claims to have the community involved in their plans and in actuality they do not. The community has made efforts to get involved and they have been denied any input on the project, (WE ACT, 2). One of their main sections is on the negative effects it will have on the residents, which include displacement of people, jobs and businesses. WE ACT claims that because of the expansion over time affordable housing will become a greater issue. Columbia's plan includes demolishing a number of residential buildings in order to build academic facilities. They intend to develop a "mix-use site" for housing, but it will only be for faculty and research staff. They demand for Columbia to be required to make

up for the housing shortage as much as they can in order to avoid or reduce the problem of displacement as much as possible, (WE ACT, 23). According to Columbia's plan they will end up destroying 33 units of housing that are part of a low-income homeownership program. These residents will be forced to move out of the neighborhood and probably even Harlem because they will not be able to afford to live anywhere else in the area. Along with the demolition they will cause a raise in housing prices, which will result in the increase of gentrification, (WE ACT, 25). "Columbia's expansion will directly displace 44 low to moderate income units, and indirectly affect 3300 subsidized units," (WE ACT, 31). Along with jobs and businesses there will be a displacement of community center and services that will also lose business because of Columbia, (WE ACT, 37). They go on to talk about the environmental effects the project will have as well. They believe that the Columbia should not be allowed to go on with their plan until they go back and better address these issues, (WE ACT, 92).

Conclusion:

WE ACT is not against the expansion, they are against the expansion at the state that is now because it is not addressing the negative effects that it will have on the residents. The only problem is that they did not look at the positive effects that the project may have on the area and the residents but clearly from the 100-page report, one may assume that the negative would outweigh the positive. They would argue that there are not any improvements, which the residents are benefiting from. Although they represent the community it would be interesting to see what some members of the community may have to say about the expansion project. The following chapter will look at the proof that

Harlem is indeed undergoing gentrification. I will attempt to prove this using census data and interviews of people that have close ties to the neighborhood.



Figure 1: This map shows the area of Harlem that Columbia University has bought and has planned to expand on.

Research Data and Analysis

The question I am looking at is: What does it mean to improve a neighborhood? I used the case of Columbia University and Harlem. I am arguing that Columbia University is improving the neighborhood for its self-interest and it is at the expense of the residents who have lived in the area. Therefore there argument is that there is no real improvement for the residents since it is costing them to be displaced, not be able to afford to the cost of living, as well as being criminalized. So far I have laid out the history of Harlem and Columbia, I presented the expansion project and showed an example of a community group's response to the expansion project. This was all used to better understand the relationship between both actors. I felt that it was necessary to present this information in order to better understand the fieldwork and census data that I have collected. Without the background story looking at the following information and analyzing it would not make much sense. I will first look at census data through the New York City Housing and Neighborhood System. Then I will present the general themes I got from the interviews. I will conclude by analyzing the collected research together.

Census Data:

The information obtained for the area are estimates because it was obtained by observing changes in a map, there was no way to clearly look at just Morningside Heights, or any specific part of Harlem, you were only given the option to look at an address or zip code. Therefore the information was obtained by seeing the change in the area and averaging out the figures given in the area that would be considered Morning Side Heights and Harlem. The general information is correct; it just is not accurate to the

exact area. I will be looking at the census data of the area from 1980, 1990 and 2000, comparing the racial compositions, income, and housing.

In 1980, 5 to 10% of Morningside Heights was composed of white residents, 75% was composed of Black, and around 40% was Hispanic. In 1990, the percentage of white residents went up to 10 to 15%, the Black population dropped to around 50%, and the Hispanic population was around the same 40%. In the year 2000 the white population increased to about 15 to 30% of the area, while the Black population is about 40% and the Hispanic population was still around 40%, (Social Explorer). One of the signs of gentrification is an increase in a white population, while it seems as though most of the people moving in are students, clearly there are people moving in more permanently because if they were not then the percentages of whites would be pretty much the same across the decades. [insert interview here] But there is a clear increase and this is a sign of gentrification.

The next set of data I will be looking at is income. In 1980 the median household income was no more than \$25,000, in 1990 it was about \$30,000. In 2000 they had the incomes by race, the median white income was around \$30,000, the Black median income was \$20,000 - \$25,000, and the Hispanic income was around the same, for the whole area the median income increased to around \$35,000 to \$40,000, (Social Explorer). Another sign of gentrification is an increase in income and the average income in the area went up. The cost of living went up and when speaking to certain people it did not seem as if they were getting raises or paying more they actually were upset about the fact that they could not afford things as easily as they could have before. "Everything is getting expensive and the students get special discounts, but we've kept these people in business

until now and we're the ones that have to pay more," (Kenny, 3/27/09). Many of the young residents are feeling the cost of living rise and they are upset because they know it is due to the changes being enforced by Columbia.

Housing will be divided into median rent, percent occupied by owners and percent occupied by renters. In 1980, the median rent was \$350 to \$500, in 1990 it was \$550 to about \$600, and in 2000 it increased to about \$600 to \$700. In 1980 the percent of housing units occupied by owners was 5 to 10%, in 1990 it was about 10 to 15% and in 2000 it was about 15%, (Social Explorer). During gentrification the number of housing units owned increases because people start moving in that are actually able to afford the rent. The percent of housing units occupied by renters in 1980 was 90 to 100%, in 1990 it was around 75%, and in 2000 it was 60 to 75%. In 1980 30 to 40% of the population was living in poverty, in 1990 it was 25 to 30% and in 2000 it was about the same, (Social Explorer). The percentage of people renting also decreases usually because apartments that were rented out are sold as condominiums, which is happening in the case of Harlem.

From the figures obtained and the opinions of the residents it can be assumed that the area is undergoing gentrification because of the increase in owner occupied housing units, the change in racial demographic, and the increase in income. I will now look at the information obtained from interviews of some of the people in the area.

Interviews:

I was able to interview or speak to sixteen people. Five of the interviews were done over the phone or online with people I am acquainted with, and the rest were done

with unknown residents in the area. I got a range of people that live in the area, someone that was bought out, a business owner, a student in the area, people that work at Columbia, someone who moved to the area because their husband was hired to do research, as well as racial, economic diversity and different age groups. I thought it was important to try and capture a diverse set of opinions because of the class and race implications associated with gentrification. With the exception of the business owner, I pretty much approached people in the street that looked like they were just hanging out or relaxing, not in an obvious rush to go anywhere. I conducted the interviews in Harlem on Friday, March 27, 2009, the interviews on the phone and online were done throughout that same week (the week of March, 22). The people I contacted personally, I knew they lived or still live in the area and there was the exception of the student who just goes to City College, which is located on 139th, and Broadway.

With the people I contacted I had questions set up that I asked them, which is attached at the end of the chapter. The questions asked were about their background, the noted change in the area, their opinion about Columbia University and the expansion project. The interviews online and on the phone were typed and the ones done on the street were recorded on my phone. The residents that I interviewed in the street, I used the questionnaire as a guideline but usually ended up having more of a conversation, since it was in person, I did not want to make it seem like an interrogation. There was also some nervousness amongst some of the respondents since they work there, so I tried to make it personal by just having a conversation more than asking a list of questions like I did with people online more. I made sure to ask for the person's permission to record our interview and that they would remain anonymous. I clearly stated that the information

was for my use only and it was only for research purposes. The interviews ranged from twenty minutes to an hour.

There were a few different types of responses that seemed to generally categorize the reactions I received on the gentrification of the area. First I will describe the reactions to the changes in the area then I will describe the reactions to the expansion and Columbia in general, and the future of Harlem.

Reactions to the Changes:

Jennifer, as mentioned earlier, is a 22-year-old college student from a well off background; she has lived on 107th and Broadway her whole life:

“A few of the local restaurants closed because rent got too expensive. There's a big new building that was just built across the street and the rent is really, really high there so it's definitely upper middle class living there,” (Jennifer, 3/27/09).

She seemed optimistic about the changes, aside from the lost of local businesses, she felt that there was some benefits because more people seem comfortable to go uptown:

“I mean to be honest, I feel like there's a fear about Harlem and there shouldn't be. I'm not saying that it should necessarily should be more gentrified, although it does look like it's going in that direction. But I think that everyone should be a little bit less worried about going uptown so in a way, I think that has already began... and I think it will continue down that path,” (Jennifer, 3/27/09).

Now we will look at Crystal who lived just a block away from Jennifer on 106th between Broadway and Amsterdam, and her family was bought out of their apartment after living there 15 or 16 years. She is also 22 years old, a Latina college student, and her father was working two jobs for most of the time that they lived there and her mother worked as well. She had a more emotional reaction to the changes and got more personal about it. She talks about how her parents wanted to move to a more peaceful area and

own a house, which was what led them to move to New Jersey. She believes that the cost of living going up did contribute to her parents' decision to leave:

“My landlord offered us money a couple of times to move out because we have lived there long enough to have controlled rent and they were already renovating apartments and charging high rent. We had a 2 bedroom and we only paid \$900. My dad took the money finally for the second house, and used it towards the down payment. When we moved the rent for the same apartment, just renovated, was \$3000,” (Crystal, 3/27/09).

She then spoke to me about the changes she noticed to the area:

“A lot of the family owned restaurants and businesses, they couldn't renew their leases because they couldn't afford it, so they had to close down. Usually immediately after corporate chains took over, like KFC, Duane Reade, Radio Shack, Starbucks. There are so many banks. The 99 cent store is gone. All the family owned stuff and cheaper stores people with less money would go to are all gone now. Even the supermarkets that are there, there used to be Associates and stuff like that, now its Dagastinos and Gristedes.”

“Everything is changing, of course its gonna effect the people in the area and the businesses because of the cost of living. They're displacing people by knocking people down or raising the rent so they can't afford it. The poor neighborhoods are becoming less affordable. Where do the people go if they can't afford it because of the rent? and they can't maintain their life style since the businesses are more affordable too...they have nowhere to go...” (Crystal, 3/26/09).

There is a clear frustration with the changes especially because they seem to be accommodating a new class and type of people.

Around 129th street I was able to interview two older Latino men, one in his mid to late 50's, Hector, and another in his mid 60's, Willie. I was first speaking to Hector and Willie came by and joined the conversation. They have both been residents in the same building for 30 to 40 years. Hector works in the janitorial services at Columbia and Willie is retired. They both seemed pleased with the changes to the neighborhood because they think it is improving, there is less crime, it is more quiet and the cops and campus security are constantly patrolling the area. When I asked about the change in the residents Hector replied:

“A lot of the Puerto Ricans and Dominicans that lived here have left because they were bought out by the landlord. Some of the received enough money to buy a house in

Florida, New Jersey or to go back to their own country. Other people moved but rent out their apartments to the students. The students are the ones that are moving into their areas, they split the apartments for the school year and then move out, its like a cycle, no one really stays,” (Hector, 3/27/09).

We then started talking bout the rise in rent and that is when Mario joined the conversation. They basically told me that a lot of the people that stay have controlled rent, Mario for example only pays \$382 for a 3-bedroom apartment, when a 1-bedroom in that same building is worth about \$1200 a month. They also said that they like the diversity in the area and sine they have lived there for so long they don't really feel any negative effects. They hope the changes will continue to come in order for the rest of the area to improve, they think that the residents would benefit from the decrease in crime and increase in sanitation and businesses. They did not really think that the displacement was an issue considering all the good things that came out of the gentrification, (Hector & Willie, 3/27/09). This shows that some residents, especially the ones that are not affected by the displacement do not see the issues in the change in the area. The people that have lived in Harlem for so long that they have controlled rent are the ones that only see the positive in the changes. People that own their apartments or still have it leased are even better off because they are making money off of their apartments by renting it to students and faculty. So there are people that are benefiting from the change, although it does not seem to be the majority of the residents.

I walked down the block of 129th street, and went up to a group of guys, three of them agreed to talk to me, they were around their late 20's, early 30's, they all grew up in the building that they were standing in front of. One was African American, Eric, the other white, Kenny, and the third male was Latino and Black, James. They were saying

how almost everyone in their building was displaced because they couldn't afford the rent or they were bought out:

“Everyone was kicked out, the only people left are the old people because they lived there for so long they don't really have to pay anything. They can't leave now because they wouldn't have anywhere else to go. Yeah, my mom still lives there and this old man who is a holocaust survivor, he has the tattoo on his arm and everything,” (Eric, Kenny & James, 3/27/09).

When asked about the new residents in the area they got upset:

“Its mostly white and Asians who are students. It sucks because now we get treated like criminals, we can't even hang out in front of our own building anymore because the cops come and tell us to move. IT IS OUR BUILDING, WE LIVE HERE! We've lived here longer and it is like that doesn't even matter. We don't make noise or start trouble we just bump into each other and start talking and within a few minutes they come and ask us to move. Watch them come around now. We've complained about the students when they hang out outside making noise, one day they even had a barbeque with open fire and everything. We called the cops and they came by and saw it was them and kept going without telling them anything; we had to call three times and say that we saw that they did nothing for them to finally come to tell them to move. On top of that the prices have gone up in the grocery store across the street. We used to go in there all the time and now the prices are ridiculous. But, the students get discounts for going to Columbia, we've lived here longer and kept them in business, but we're the ones that have to pay more, its not right,” (Eric, Kenny & James, 3/27/09).

The guys were clearly upset because they felt the rights they had as residents before were taken away from them, they are now criminals in their own neighborhood and they are the ones mostly affected by the rise in the costs of living. Most of the people they knew have been displaced to the Bronx. The only positive thing they seemed to mention was the fact that the gentrification caused for the area to be cleaned up so there were less drug dealers and drug users on the street. But they believed that Columbia was going to continue gentrifying and displacing residents and that nothing could really be done.

“Columbia is an evil empire that cannot be stopped, it will continue to take over the area until most of the residents are displaced and the area is completely changed. It wouldn't be as bad if they at least provided alternative housing for people, but they don't care,” (Kenny, 3/27/09).

Reactions to Columbia:

I decided to go into a barbershop on 130th street and I was able to speak to the owner, Saul, he was Dominican around 40 years old and he lived in the area as well. He owned the barbershop with his friends, they started rented the space almost 2 years ago:

“I don’t think Columbia is doing anything bad, they are improving the neighborhood. I’ve seen it affect other businesses and they’ve gone out of business, like the gas station across the street. Its funny because no businesses on this side of street are being effected, its all the ones across the street. They said they are going to build a residential hall or something, if anything it will just attract more business for me. They said they are leaving some spaces for rent on the ground floor so that people in the area who are maybe interested may be able to rent the space for their business, but the space will cost \$20,000 a month to rent,” (Saul, 3/27/09).

I then asked him how much he paid for his rent since he recently acquired the space and he said that him and his friend only pay \$2 to \$3000 a month. He seemed grateful that he was able to obtain that space for that price considering how the costs were going up around him. He did not seem affected and saw only good coming out of Columbia gentrifying, aside from people going out of business since it didn’t really affect him he didn’t care. I spoke to Jose, a 28 year old Latino who actually is a construction worker for the expansion plan. He lived in the Grant projects, which are located on 125th right down the block from Broadway, for most of his life but still lives in the area.

“ Yeah I used to live in the projects across the street. Columbia bought them out and the Manhattanville houses as well. They wait for the leases to end and they start kicking people out. They even made a law that if you are caught with anything illegal in your apartment you lose your housing. Its messed up how they’re treating the residents that have lived here for so long. But, they don’t care, are they improving the area? Yes but its at the expense of the blacks and Latinos, do they really care bout us? No. A lot of people are losing business too, and they’re being replaced by businesses that are for the wealthier white people coming into the area, places like Citarella. The only good thing about it is that the crime has gone down and the area has cleaned up a lot, but like I said people are being displaced and it wouldn’t be as bad if they at least offered them housing elsewhere, but they don’t care. In the long run I don’t think the residents will really benefit from the improvements in the area, and that’s the sad truth,” (Jose, 3/27/09).

Conclusion:

Depending on how long people have lived in the area, their socioeconomic background and what kind of business they run usually determined the kind of response they gave. But everyone seemed to be happy about the improvement to their neighborhoods although those that were aware of why the improvements happened were bitter about it at the same time. Younger men in their mid to late 20's felt that they were criminalized and that the culture of the area was changing. They believed that they were not benefitting from the changes and were only forced to pay more and adjust to the changes that were forced upon them. The residents that lived there for a longer period of time that had controlled rent seemed to be fine with the changes and felt there was improvement that they benefitted from since the costs of living did not seem to really effect or bother them as much.

People that are obviously well off to begin with do not have to worry about the cost in living all though they miss the ethnic culture in the restaurants and local businesses that they were used to seeing for most of their lives. Speaking to someone that moved in because of her husband, who is a faculty member, it does not seem that there is a real emotional tie to the area, so the only concern where the areas that were still deemed to be dangerous and dirty. "I like the area it is nice. But I went to 125th street and it was dirty, smokey and there were a lot of minorities, like Latinos and Blacks. But everything before and after that street is nice," (Trina, 3/27/09). But everyone agreed for the most part that the area was safer, it was becoming more diverse but there was a general sense of neglect that was associated with the fact that people realize that Columbia is a business and their needs are not really important to them. The figures might not show a high rate

of displacement but it is happening at a rate that is noticeable and it is affecting the people that still live in the area in a negative way. There is no denying that Harlem is undergoing gentrification and that the ongoing expansion project will only increase this. The question of improvement was brought up in almost every interview. Most of the time improvement was associated with decrease in criminal activity and an increase in businesses to the area, but it did not seem to make up for the sense of neglect and discrimination that many of the residents felt. They were grateful for the improvements in crime and overall appearance of the area but they are fully aware that the change was not done for them and that at the end of the day Columbia is simply fulfilling its self-interests.

Copy of interview questions:

Basic:

Age:

Occupation:

Race/ethnicity:

How long have you lived or worked in the area? (give street):

Main Questions:

While you have lived/worked here, have you noticed any change to the area? Explain.

Who do you think is responsible for the changes?

What does the term gentrification mean to you? (If they do not know the definition, explain). Do you think it is relevant to Harlem?

What effect do you think Columbia University has had on the neighborhood?

Columbia University is planning on expanding from 125th to 135th from Broadway to 12th avenue, do you think all residents, if any, will benefit from this expansion? What do you think the effect will be?

What do you think the future of Harlem will look like? How do you feel about it?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me that you think we didn't get to address?

Conclusion:

The theories of gentrification showed that Columbia and Harlem were a unique case. The economic theories were not applicable because there is no cycle between the gentrifiers and the gentrified. According to the theories, the middle class comes in from the suburbs, the suburbs lose value and the residents from the inner city move out into the suburbs because of the rising costs in their previous neighborhood. But, because the gentrifier in this case is Columbia and the people moving in are students and faculty, they are not coming from a specific place and the residents for the most part are being displaced further uptown. The theories of race are subjective; I was not able to interview a large pool of people therefore going off the people I spoke to. With the people I spoke to I would say the majority had a sentiment of invasion when it came to white and middle class people coming in, while others appreciated the diversity. The theory of colonization brought up by Boyd applies to this case of gentrification as well. Columbia University is improving the area for their self-interest and it is allowed to do so by the city government because these people are deemed to be unable to improve it on their own and the city benefits from it. Columbia believes that fulfilling these self-interests will contribute more to the residents and area, when in actuality it is further marginalizing people and only benefitting the University and those who are closely tied to it. Clearly, since they never attempted until recently to make changes, they do not even believe that these people are of any importance except for dead end jobs that they may be able to fulfill for the University when needed. In other words improvement in this case is Columbia taking over Harlem at the expense of the residents who are seen as the problem and cause of decline. Another theory of gentrification that applies to Harlem is that of displacement, as

we saw throughout the paper there is evidence of displacement and it is in fact happening at high rate. How does all this apply to the question of improvement? The theoretical frameworks that are applicable to this case are ones that support the claim that the residents are in fact not benefitting at all from the gentrification.

The history of Columbia and Harlem showed that during great periods of decline due to social, political and economical factors Columbia was expanding at the same time. Throughout its long history with Harlem, Columbia showed no real interest in getting involved with Harlem to better the area for the residents. They pretty much cut themselves off from the area until they realized the value the surrounding area had. They needed the support of the community so they tried to make social programs to show that they were in fact giving back and that the residents were benefiting from Columbia being in their area. As some residents even stated, Columbia did not show an interest in the area or an attempt to get involved until it needed something out of the area, which is land. Instead of helping people with menial social services that only benefit certain groups and dead end jobs, they should contribute more to the community, in ways that address the social issues these people have had to face throughout history. They are instead further neglecting and marginalizing people. The history shows that the improvements throughout time have always been done to benefit Columbia rather than Harlem or both. There was no real interest in Harlem until the expansion project.

The expansion project, according to Columbia University, is supposed to benefit the community through the jobs it provides and the units of affordable housing they are planning on providing. But most of the jobs, aside from construction, are not going to be available until the expansion project is done, and it is supposed to take up to 20 years.

The services that are supposed to come out of the expansion project are services they already provide that are limited to certain residents depending on the program and eligibility. They only claim to provide two buildings with affordable housing to replace the two they bought out. On Columbia's side it is clear nothing is really improving for the residents. From the residents point of view there is a decrease in crime and drug activity and the area is getting cleaner over all. But, the cost of living is going up, everyone around them is being displaced and they are often being criminalized by cops and Columbia University students who see them as a threat. Therefore once again the expansion is not improving the lives of the residents.

The census data proved that Harlem is in fact going through gentrification because of the increase in income, white people, owned units, and the decrease in Black residents as well as rented units of housing. The census data along with the excerpts of interviews showed with data the actual effect Columbia is having on Harlem, especially on its residents. Aside from the decrease in crime, there is nothing the residents are really getting out of the improvements. This thesis was used as an attempt to argue that improving a neighborhood, in this case, means revitalizing it in order to attract and accommodate the mostly white middle class faculty and students that are moving into the area and this is being done at the expense of the residents that have already been living there.

What can be done instead? The issue does not seem so much that Columbia is gentrifying, it is the effect that it is having on the residents. If they made a better attempt to get the neighborhood involved and provided housing for all residents that were being displaced then there would be less issues with their expansion. They need to actually

improve the neighborhood for the residents not just for their self-interests. If they do not make a bigger attempt to give back to the residents and provide more resources they will end up displacing the whole upper part of Manhattan. Over the past few years there has been an influx of Dominicans into the Bronx and it is because they are getting displaced in Washington Heights as well, it is still unclear how much Columbia has to do with this. Michael, a 24-year-old Dominican, who lived in the Heights for 10 years, noted the change in the area: “The Jews started buying up a lot of the property, including the building where my aunt lived,” (Michael, 3/26/09). He fears that the university will continue to spread and cause more change to the area:

“If universities not only Columbia continue spreading through these areas they will lose the "flavor" that they hold. Whenever ever I walk through Washington heights I always feel a vibe of me being at home because the culture in that area is very much like the culture of my country, and by that I mean Hispanic. From the music you hear playing while cars are driving by, or the convenience to be able to find some soul food at every corner,” (Michael, 3/26/09).

The is already a sense of culture being lost in Harlem and now that fear is spreading uptown to Washington Heights who, similar to Harlem, is a historically cultural area, except this area is known for being Dominican. The Heights is already feeling the gentrification of Harlem through the influx of displaced residents they are receiving.

Improving the neighborhood is to provide the resources and services that are needed by the residents, which the government has a responsibility to provide but clearly is not doing it either. If these groups of people that have always been historically marginalized are continually neglected, what will it take for change? When will there be real improvement? Gentrification does not always have to be a negative as long as residents are displaced at the lowest rate possible, if they even have to be, and their needs are addressed. Perhaps it is not through gentrification then that these needs can be addressed because for the most part it seems inevitable for the displacement to happen.

But universities cannot be stopped from expanding; therefore they should be held with a greater responsibility to provide affordable housing for the average income of the area. They should not be allowed to expand unless they are providing the residents of the area benefits equivalent to their own gains from the expansion. The benefits should be in the form of social, political, and economic empowerment that the residents need.

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