Gentrification in Chicago

The city of Chicago, the third most populous city of Illinois, was once known as a beautiful and busy city known for its interesting architecture, great food, and intense winter weather. Chicago is an international center for finance, culture, commerce, industry, education, technology, telecommunications, and transportation. Over time the narrative of Chicago has shifted, the reason for this is simply greed. Now, when people think of Chicago, they think about how violent it is presumed to be, or how expensive it is to live there. This is a result of gentrification, which is the process of renovating and improving a house or district so that it conforms to middle class taste. It affects several different neighborhoods and residents across the city of Chicago. This practice that has been going on for several decades denies residents the ability to live in their own neighborhoods because they are being pushed out. When you push these residents out of their own areas, they are condensed into one big area which will increase violence which would therefore cause the crime rates to skyrocket.Gentrification leads a forced displacement, a focus on spaces that exclude low income individuals and people of color. Ultimately this practice is more harmful than it is beneficial. One of my main goals of this research is to acknowledge the fact that over the year's families have been broken up in terms of stability. When this is done to people, they are forced to start their lives over again. This practice needs to be stopped for good. The term Gentrification originated in the 1960s in London when a German- city planner and sociologist Ruth Glass described the displacement of the poor as upper class people moved into refurbished houses in previously working-class homes, according to KQED (Solomon 2014) This term soon spread to other metropolises as similar neighborhoods began to shift. This practice found its way to the city of Chicago in the 1970s. It began in the now affluent north side of Chicago in the area known as Lincoln Park. This area was once known for dilapidated homes as developers clamored to invest where banks had refused to lend. In the years after World War II, Lincoln Park was a deteriorating neighborhood of walkup apartments, the lake on side and the river on the other. It was close to downtown and closer to the gold coast with its resident's income ranked at sixtieth out of the entire city's seventy-five neighborhoods. Despite the lack racial integration, more than ninety eight percent of Lincoln park residents were white, the entire neighborhood was redlined, a type of disinvestment that often targeted black and brown communities according to Planetizen.Com (Hertz 2019) It was believed for a long time that Lincoln Park was destined for a further economic decline, but in the 1960s that had changed, much of the eastside of the community was above citywide averages in education and income. As incomes increase, so did the rent, each home renovation performed by professional investors increased property value. The urban renewal program in Lincoln park had lobbied for the demolishing of entire streetscapes which as a result displaced thousands of people who were low income black or Latino.

The displacement of residents in their own neighborhoods creates confusion and chaos. Margaret Brewer, a Chicago native of the Woodlawn neighborhood, has lived in Chicago for sixty-four years. In the Woodlawn community, it is planned to have an Obama Center, which promises to help the area reach its peak as a vibrant community as it once was before. Brewer stated in an interview with Block Club Chicago "we want the building here, but we don't want to be displaced". She is worried that longtime residents may not be able to afford to stay in there homes once the process of building begins. The price of living has skyrocketed according to the release of a study by the New Report found evidence of rising rents in new and renovated

apartments around the proposed Obama Center that most of the area's current residents can't afford. The study examined a two-mile radius around the Obama Center site. Sixty nine percent of the area's residents are renters, and of those renters, seventy percent are considered low income under U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development standards. (Evans 2019) Brewer did not feel too well about this, so she rallied with more than 100 of her neighbors. The library itself would be a great added addition, but only if the residents could still afford to live there. One participant at the rally stated, "Affordable housing is a human right". "All of the big cities, not just Chicago, but around the world have been pushing their poorer people and working-class people out like they're a part of used garbage."

Gentrifying neighborhoods and condensing people into one neighborhood also influence that areas crime rate. The most dangerous neighborhoods in Chicago experienced a crime decline, unfortunately, those crime rates rebounded as other areas began to improve. Chicago saw a crime decline in the 1990s which included the most violent neighborhoods. By the early 2000s, violent crime saw a decline and continued to across the city, according to City Labs. (Florida 2019) The city's most violent neighborhoods, today, remain the most economically disadvantaged and the most segregated. The rise in inequality was driven by continuous improvements in safer neighborhoods, therefore creating a gap between the most dangerous neighborhoods and the rest of the city. (Florida 2019) Robert Florida, the reporter for CityLab's also notes that Chicago remains "a tale of two cities" when it comes to violent crime: an already safe city that's getting safer and also a violent city where the violence is starting to increase again. This just proves that you come into someone's neighborhood, gentrify it, and kick those residents out at the same time. This causes those residents to be condensed to one area where they are going to be upset about their lives being uprooting, and that anger then gets reflected in negative ways that leaves people hurt. I found my sources by searching google, using websites and articles that were mostly based out of Chicago with the exception for one. I did this so I knew I would be getting the most accurate information. While researching, I had trouble finding personal accounts of people who lived in neighborhoods that were in the process of being gentrified. I realized that I had to narrow my searches down. I was looking for sources in Chicago, but It was easier to find what I need it when I narrowed it to certain neighborhoods in the Chicagoland area. Displacing people from there homes and ultimately their lives could not possibly have a positive effect on them. It leaves them to scramble to create this entirely new life, starting from the bottom and rebuilding to the top. While researching, I was able to find evidence of people who were directly affected by this practice and how violence is directly related to people being pushed out of their homes. This practice should not be continued because it brings more negatives than positives. It not only affects residents, but the look of the City of Chicago as a whole. A bustling city filled with beautiful scenery is also known as a city that is overly concerned with the idea of wealth instead of protecting its residents.