

# GENTRIFICATION KEYWORDS



QUEER TO THE LEFT



# Gentrificaton Keywords

Why *keywords*? We have borrowed the idea from Jan Zita Grover’s “AIDS: Keywords” (1987) who herself borrowed the idea from Raymond Williams’ *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976). Both of these projects begin from the premise that language is deeply political and consequential and thus demands critical attention from those of us hoping to transform our world.

At first glance, a phrase like “**affordable housing**” seems to be a simple descriptor of a particular type of housing. But the meaning of a word or phrase is never a mere reflection of the object or idea that it supposedly describes. To the contrary, the meaning of words comes about in usage. This matters because rather than simply *reflecting* the world around us, words, and the meanings they acquire through usage, actually *shape* our understandings of that world. The point, then, is that language is never neutral. As a result, activists who are engaged in political struggles—which always occur within language—must consider the role that language plays in the particular struggle in which they are engaged. As activists, we need to consider the meanings of words and phrases that are being used in the debate. Questions we might bear in mind include: Does everyone mean the same thing when they use a particular word? What kinds of assumptions are packed into the word? What values does a given word elevate? Whose interests are being served by a given word and whose are being hurt? And how is a given word or set of words structuring the very debate?

A keywords project poses and answers such questions, providing what might be called a “social history” of particular words and phrases that are frequently used in discussions about a given issue, noting how they are used, in what contexts, by whom, and with what effects. Our entries work against the notion of words as merely reflective of some objective reality “out there”; they point instead to the ways in which words have lives. They are always part of discussions and debates and therefore always carry a political charge. Highlighting these sites of use and debate gives activists new potential sites of political intervention.

Why *gentrification* keywords? Queer to the Left has been engaged in the fight against gentrification and for more low-cost housing in Chicago since 1999 (see page 11). We have chosen the words and phrases that follow because we frequently hear them in discussions and debates about housing issues; our specific analyses of them come directly out of our activist experiences, particularly in the Uptown neighborhood.

This is necessarily a work-in-progress. Just as gentrification continues while simultaneously adapting to changing conditions, so too do the words used to debate it. We plan to add more keywords as necessary, some that we have already chosen (listed on page 12), and some that will surely arise as we continue our housing activism. If you have ideas for additional keywords, as well as comments on current definitions, please send them to [queertotheleft@risup.net](mailto:queertotheleft@risup.net).

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## Queer to the Left

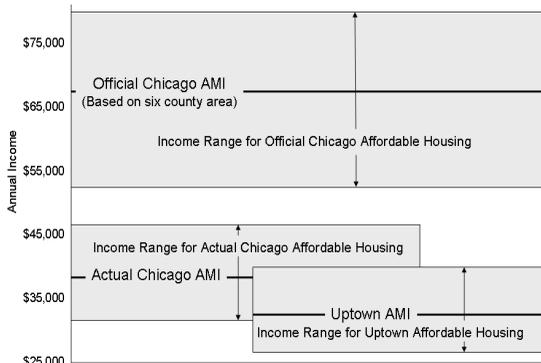
Queer to the Left (Q2L) is a group of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people who fight for racial, economic, gender and sexual justice. We are committed to forming coalitions with others to stop gentrification, police brutality, the death penalty, and the racism and growing conservatism of the mainstream lesbian and gay movement. For more information please go to [www.queertotheleft.org](http://www.queertotheleft.org).

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**Affordable Housing** - Housing that is presumably within the means of people who have low to moderate incomes. Everyone from Mayor Daley on down proclaims their support for “affordable housing.” The rhetoric sounds good, but when used by City officials, the term “affordable housing” is utterly deceptive. Indeed, the majority of households in Chicago cannot afford “affordable housing” as defined by the city. How is this possible? City officials define “affordable housing” as housing that is affordable to households making 80-120% of the six-county *Area Median Income* (which was \$67,900 in 2000, a figure that is calculated using income data from Cook County—the county that Chicago is in—as well as wealthy counties like DuPage and Lake). That means that a household would need to make approximately \$54,000 to \$81,500 per year in order to afford such housing. But in Chicago, the median household income is \$38,625 (2000 Census); in Uptown, the median income is even lower: \$32,328 (<http://www.chicagotribune.com/classified/realestate/chi-020515census-income,0,1933037.formprofile>).



The City of Chicago is not required to define “affordable housing” in the manner that it does. Indeed, it could define it to include households that are most in need of **low-cost housing**, those households on the lowest end of the income scale. Instead, the City has adopted

a deceptive definition that provides political cover to Mayor Daley and other politicians so that they can talk about the need for “affordable housing” and thereby appear compassionate and concerned about the **affordable housing crisis** while not actually doing anything to solve the massive displacement of poor people from their homes. The City’s housing policies should be based on the actual housing needs of Chicago residents. Also see **Low-cost housing**.

**Affordable Housing Crisis** - Widespread shortage of housing that is affordable for people with low or moderate incomes. In Richard M. Daley’s Chicago, approximately 80,000 people experience homelessness at some point over the course of a year, with 10% of those people living in a more or less permanent state of homelessness; 25% are children under the age of 18. 240,000 households are spending more than 35% of their incomes on housing, including 148,000 that are spending more than 50% of their income on housing (which means there is not enough left for proper nutrition or health care, which is why the Federal government counts those paying such a high proportion of their income for shelter as “housing poor.”). 107,000 households live in overcrowded situations where there is more than one person per room—not *per bedroom* but *per room*—a 25% increase over the last decade. Mortgage foreclosures increased by 74% between 1993 and 2001. Even middle-class people are trying to manage property tax increases, which have increased as much as 70% in 2003-2004.

But to use the language of “crisis” speaks to more than a shortage of **affordable housing** itself. It also highlights the immediate life-altering—even life-and-death—nature of the situation:

The AIDS Foundation of Chicago has identified the lack of affordable housing as

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the number one *health* issue confronting *PWAs* in the city today.

Unstable living situations undermine children's educational opportunities, and are a major factor in educational under-achievement, leading eventually to youth dropping out of school.

Homelessness subjects people to harassment, violence, including civilian mob attacks and police brutality motivated out of hatred of the homeless, and the psychological terror of the threat of violence.

To speak of a "crisis" also is to highlight the systemic nature of the situation. The lack of *affordable housing* is not the result of temporary malfunctioning of the overall economy, housing markets, or government policies, but has been produced by two decades of virtually uninterrupted economic growth, record-breaking levels of housing construction, and vigorous government dismantling of public owned programs serving low-income people. Also see *Gentrification*, *Plan for Transformation*, and *TIF*.

**CAPS** - Community Area Policing Strategy. Initially a plan in Chicago to place *community* and *public safety* concerns in direct dialogue with beat patrol officers. In gentrifying neighborhoods, the process was quickly taken over by new homeowners who have moved into the neighborhood as part of its gentrification. In such an environment, the current CAPS system has become a place where such residents can complain about *suspicious people*, alleged drug dealing, *sex workers*, *riffraff*, and other things that affect *their quality of life*. "*Community*" safety concerns taken up at these meetings only reflect the interests of these residents, and issues discussed are topically limited (for example, police misconduct cannot be discussed). In the name of making the streets safe, CAPS has

sought to bring about a suburban aesthetics (see *Suburbanization*) in which the streets do not include the homeless, *youth* of color, *suspicious people*, or *riff raff* (see also *Urban Life*). Often this "cleaning up of the streets" leads to instances of false arrest from charges of disorderly conduct and breech of the peace. Police force and misconduct used in making such arrests escalates the situation and results in additional charges such as resisting arrest, mob action and battery. These additional charges in effect serve to cover-up the *police misconduct*. Along with *TIF*, CAPS is a leading governmental tool of gentrification.

**Family Housing** - The type of *low-cost housing* that is being lost in Chicago: multi-bedroom units designed for large households with children. The term, mainly used by *low-cost housing* activists, usefully points to the reality that the main type of housing that is needed to resolve Chicago's housing crisis is housing for poor families, both nuclear and extended.

However, the term "family housing" potentially plays into a conservative "family values" agenda which posits the "decline" of the hallowed nuclear family as the source of all social problems. In offering "family values" as the solution, the right-

wing references an imagined happier past when mothers stayed at home to clean, cook, and care for the children; fathers worked to support their families; and homes and the nation were stable and conflict-free. Family values rhetoric attacks those individuals who have presumably caused the decline of the American family and nation—single mothers, feminists, gay men and lesbians, people on welfare, and liberals.



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In using (while failing to challenge) the right-wing's powerful rhetoric of the family, *low-cost housing* activists reinforce the view that families have a more legitimate claim to housing than other households. To be sure, jumping onto the “family” bandwagon appears as a smart strategic move because it holds out the promise of legitimacy for marginalized populations typically deemed a threat to the American family. However, in using, and thereby bolstering, the rhetoric of the family, *low-cost housing* activists unwittingly play into an agenda at cross-purposes with their own interests; the ostensible lack of “family values” in poor and working class households has often been used to justify the de-funding of public housing. Moreover, because gay men (and sometimes lesbians) have been so visible in the *gentrification* process in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood and elsewhere, demands by *low-cost housing* activists for specifically “family housing” can seem homophobic because the term evokes the rhetoric of the right-wing which pits gays (who are somehow outside of families) against families (who somehow never include gays). The call for more “family housing” sometimes seems to derive from a belief that gay men specifically—always assumed to be rich and family-less—are responsible for pushing poor families out of the neighborhood. Unwittingly, rhetoric about the need for family housing may be contributing to a homophobic backlash that in large part is animated by the visibility of gay men in the gentrification process. See *Yuppie Faggot*.

The term “family housing” is useful for drawing attention to the need for large, affordable apartments for households with children, but it is necessary also to challenge the homophobic backlash and the backlash against other groups deemed a threat to the family, like single mothers and people on welfare, and thus alternatives should be sought. One possibility is “multi-bedroom housing.”

**Gentrification** - The remaking of urban working-class residential *neighborhoods* and commercial areas for higher-income, usually white newcomers from the professional middle class. This term came into wider use during the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, harkening back to images of a landed and economically privileged class, i.e. the ‘gentry.’

‘Gentrification’ is frequently seen to be a product of individuals’ decisions to move into a particular *neighborhood*. However, while gentrification would not occur if individuals did not decide to move to a different neighborhood, how it is that certain neighborhoods come to seem appealing as a potential new place to live for both renters and homeowners is not an individual matter. Rather, it is a matter of investment patterns of banks and large developers that target certain areas as capable of producing profits. These investment patterns are in turn supported (and formed) by subsidies from municipal, state, and federal governments (see *TIF*). In this pattern, the city’s primary incentive for promoting gentrification is to augment property values and thus property taxes, which generates a bigger pot of money that the mayor can channel to political supporters with development interests, who then continue to support him (see *Development*).

Decisions of individuals do matter in this process. Buoyed by a sense of entitlement because of their ‘investment’ in their house and motivated by a concern for increasing property values, *homeowners* attend *Neighborhood*



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**Block Association** and **CAPS** meetings to impose their specific interest on the neighborhood (see **Quality of Life**). They demand increased policing of the neighborhood, and the simple presence of certain groups of people, social services or businesses, e.g. **youth** of color and homeless shelters (considered ‘dangerous’) or gay bath houses (viewed as ‘dens of sin’), is no longer tolerated.

Gentrification is a process of displacement of people and businesses that includes actors on all of these levels, but is fundamentally made possible by the actions of banks, developers, and the funding practices of the government.

**Low Cost Housing** - At present, a more precise alternative to the vague and deceptive term “**affordable housing**.” In its fight for low-cost housing in Uptown, COURAJ (Community Of Uptown Residents for Affordability and Justice) defines low-cost housing as housing for poor and extremely poor people. Here’s why: 92% of the children in Uptown’s public schools qualify for the Federal Government’s Free Lunch Program, meaning that they live in households that make less than \$6,000 a year for each member of the family—this is the case in all Chicago public schools. Housing that is affordable to households that make 80-120% of the Area Median Income—Chicago’s definition of “**affordable housing**”—is utterly unaffordable to the vast majority of people currently threatened with displacement as a result of rising housing prices. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, between 1990 and 2000 the number of children living in Uptown declined by 3000 and the number of seniors declined by 600. Those people have left Uptown because they no longer can afford to live in the neighborhood. Chicago needs low-cost housing; Mayor Daley and his cronies should give up the “**affordable housing**” farce, acknowledge the dire need for more low-cost housing, and build it.

**PWAs** - People With AIDS; people infected with the HIV virus and who are experiencing some kind of immune dysfunction. Chicago’s Department of Public Health (DPH) counts more than 9,000 people living with an AIDS diagnosis in the city, and nearly 7,000 more people infected with HIV but showing no symptoms of AIDS. This latter figure is a conservative one, counting only those who have been tested for HIV in a clinic. More people today are living with HIV and AIDS than ever before, and these figures will likely grow in the years ahead. Because of the lack of meaningful, widespread HIV prevention programs, there is a steady number of new infections each year, and with more effective medications being produced for people in the US, AIDS-related deaths here are in decline. More people living longer is good news, but PWAs have support needs (e.g., particular dietary requirements, regular access to medical and social services, housing that accommodates physical disabilities), so as their numbers grow, support needs grow, most importantly the need for stable housing.

A 2001 survey conducted by the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) found that more than 50% of the PWAs living in the Chicago area have incomes below the Federal government’s absurdly low official poverty level—annual incomes of \$9,310 for a single person; \$12,490 for a household of two; \$15,670 for a household of three; \$18,850 for a household of four. One-third of the area’s PWAs had been homeless at some point. AFC estimates that 5,000 individuals with HIV/AIDS in the Chicago area find themselves homeless or at risk of homelessness each year, leading AFC to declare housing as the number one *health* problem facing PWAs in the Chicago area today. They point out that homeless people and those at risk for

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homelessness fall out of regular medical care and have difficulty sustaining their medication regimens, which typically include special dietary requirements, and which can have severe side effects. Also, living on the streets or in substandard housing puts strains on already compromised immune systems.

Why are PWAs facing such housing difficulties? First, there is a more general housing crisis affecting all moderate- and low-income people in Chicago. Second, PWAs are more likely to be underemployed, unemployed, and/or living on fixed incomes because of health issues and disabilities, making them especially vulnerable to rent inflation. Third, many PWAs live in neighborhoods where *gentrification* is causing the destruction of *low-cost housing*. The DPH reports that 40% of the city's PWAs are concentrated in one of two clusters of neighborhoods: the North Side's Lakeview, Uptown, Edgewater, and Rogers Park neighborhoods, and the West Side's West Town, Near West Side, Logan Square, and Austin neighborhoods. These are exactly the neighborhoods where *gentrification* is taking its greatest toll in terms of the destruction of *low-cost housing*.

**Queer** - Changes in meaning depending on who you ask and when, complicated along lines of race, class, age, and the rural/urban divide. It is most frequently used as:

1. Weird.
2. An insult that puts down any sexual practice that is 'non-normative,' those seen as abnormal, criminal, sick, depraved, or morally wrong, and therefore something to be corrected, as well as despised.
3. An umbrella term for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered."
4. According to some activists, "white people without a clue," which points to the

way the so-called Queer Movement is primarily comprised of white people even while supposedly promoting an anti-racist politic. This point has created much debate about the utility of the word 'queer', when and for whom it is appropriate, what groups of people it might silence.

5. An alternative to the term 'homosexuality', which was used by heteronormative doctors to pathologize same-sex practices through to the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

6. A label for anyone, regardless of sexual orientation, who participates in non-normative sexual practices such as homosex, S&M or polyamory.

7. A critique of the status-quo of sexual or gender binaries such as male/female or gay/straight and as such laden with non-normative political promise.

Throughout the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century 'queer' was used by activist groups such as ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) as a site for questioning gender roles and promoting an anti-racist and anti-sexist politic. It was also used by the group, "Queer Nation" to focus a sense of solidarity around a sexual identity and a set of sexual practices. More recently, the word has come up frequently in popular culture usage (e.g. *Queer as Folk* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*), both softening the hurtful nuances that the word has held, and through this type of consumerist labeling, watering down the radical political potential 'queer' might have held.

Queer to the Left uses 'queer' in the sense of a political orientation that challenges limiting terms such as gay or lesbian or straight. It is this fluidity of terminology that allows Queer to the Left to both use identity politics for the sense of community it brings and to avoid the

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type of consumerist branding that identity politics frequently has forced upon us. This usage of ‘queer’ also embraces such struggles as that against *gentrification*, which is driven by an oppressive racist logic, as part of the same larger fight for social and economic justice. Here, then, gentrification is a queer issue.

**Subsidized Housing** - Typically used to describe government-subsidized housing for poor people. Rather than eliciting concern about the economic realities of poverty in this country, the term—aided by the racist media—has come to mean the place where black people live and the key source of urban crime (you know, black = criminal). Largely as a result of this construction, people who have never had any interaction whatsoever with anyone who lives in “the projects” have come to fear them. Ignorant of the realities of poverty, many people have also come to resent subsidized housing: the term raises the specter of “welfare cheats” and “lazy” poor people in need of government assistance because they are too immature, irresponsible, and dependent to provide for themselves.

Common usage also erroneously assumes that no other housing is government-subsidized. In fact, all home-owners receive a tax deduction for their mortgage payments and for their state property taxes and thus benefit from a government subsidy. In 2000, the federal government subsidized homeowners to the tune of \$74 billion (more than half of that savings in tax payments went to households with incomes above \$100,000); during the same period, the federal



government spent approximately \$16 billion to subsidize low and moderate income housing. With chain-link fences on balconies, Chicago Housing Authority hi-rise buildings are eminently visible, but what we do not see is the billions of dollars from the federal government that upper income people receive in tax deductions every year.

Another form of government subsidy for upper income people is the City of Chicago’s *TIF* program. *TIF* funds can be used to subsidize the private development of market-rate housing, making the cost of each unit cheaper than it otherwise would be. Popular perception notwithstanding, this is the reality: upper middle class and wealthy people who have no financial need for government subsidy benefit from their own housing being government-subsidized housing. As subsidized housing for poor people disappears, we might, then, rename subsidized housing “welfare for the rich.”

**Suspicious People** – People whose physical appearance and presence invokes fear. People who you do not want to see and with whom you do not want to interact. Used in *CAPS* (Community Area Policing Strategy) meetings to designate people who “gentrifiers” want the police to clear out of “their” *neighborhood*. The value of designating someone as a suspicious person is that you do not have to prove that they are actually doing anything illegal, you only have to mark them as someone that the police should closely monitor in expectation that they will “find” a reason to remove them or, through harassment, cause them to move to another *neighborhood*. Often the designation of suspicious people is tied to a specific location as in “suspicious people hanging out on the corner” or “suspicious people walking down the street in the middle of

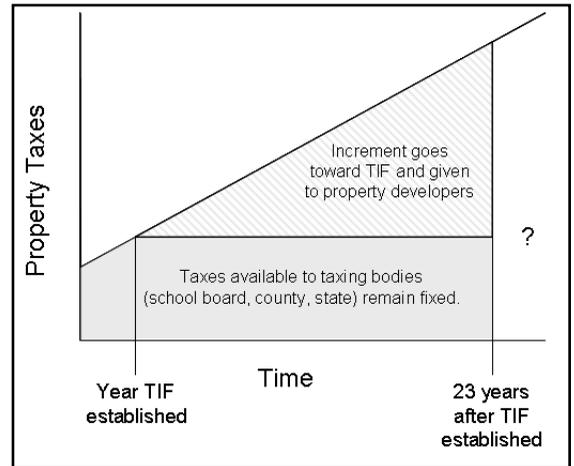
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the night.” Buildings also can be designated as a place of suspicious activity. Identifying suspicious people in relation to a specific space betrays the motivation behind the designation. This designation of suspicious people is used to clear out those elements, whether criminal or not, which are viewed not to be appealing to anticipated and actually growing property values. Suspicious people are criminalized through charges of disorderly conduct and breech of the peace. Police force used in making such arrests escalates the situation and results in additional charges such as resisting arrest, mob action and battery. With growing fear of domestic terrorism, people who appear to be of middle-eastern descent (i.e. Muslim) are also categorized as suspicious people. In less official and less public contexts the terms sketchy or *riffraff* are often used. Also see *Youth* and *Sex Worker*.

**TIF** - Tax Increment Financing; a so-called economic “*development*” tool” that allows the Daley administration to take nearly \$150 million in tax revenues a year that would otherwise go towards basic public services like education, transportation, and health, and redirect them towards politically-connected property developers, most of whom are engaged in the business of gentrifying working-class neighborhoods.

Mayor Daley has said, “TIF is the only game in town.” So how is this game played? The State of Illinois has enabled cities like Chicago to designate geographic areas within their own borders as “TIF districts.” They thereby freeze for a minimum 23-year period (and possibly forever) the property tax *revenues* from these areas that go to existing taxing bodies (e.g., the School Board; the County; the State). That doesn’t mean that people’s property *taxes* are frozen—far from it. It means that as property values go up in these designated

areas because of new public and private investment (i.e., gentrification), or just because of inflation, the increase in tax revenues from that area—the “increment” between the tax bill before designation of the TIF district and the tax bills for the next 23 years or longer—goes into a fund to subsidize “*development*” only within



that TIF district. (So the program’s “success” is premised on *escalating property taxes*, which typically means the displacement of residents with low or moderate incomes.) The City can use the promise of future TIF revenue to borrow money to subsidize private *development*. Or it can simply draw from the fund to subsidize private *development* as the money materializes.

State legislators who wrote the law allowing cities to create TIF districts in the first place had the idea that this would be a way for a city to use limited public funds to leverage some private resources, through the offer of public subsidies, in order to bring some kind of economic renewal to economically depressed communities. But the City of Chicago has been unwilling to put any money up front in the process in communities actually confronting economic disinvestment. So there are TIF districts in economically depressed areas that are not stimulating private investment because the

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City won't take any action to lure new development to those areas. There is then little increment to ever work with, so nothing ever happens. But let's say the City would at some point front some money in low-income communities, with the assumption that this money would be repaid with future tax revenue growth from the community. Given that TIF money is used to promote residential and retail *development*, long-term jobs with living wages would not be created; increased property values and taxes would merely displace those with low or moderate incomes.

What most TIF funds have in fact been used to do is to subsidize downtown development (yes, under Daley the Loop and North Michigan Avenue qualify as TIF districts, presumably in need of public subsidies or private developers wouldn't want to invest there) as well as neighborhoods poised to be the next "cutting edge" in the forward march of gentrification. Rather than aiding the poorest neighborhoods, the TIF program in practice works to capture tax growth in some of the wealthiest parts of the city, and then uses this tax growth to further enhance these parts of the city, denying it to the Public Schools and other institutions that might meet the needs of the city's working-class residents who are either being displaced by gentrification or left behind in areas lacking investment.

**Yuppie Faggot** - A melding of the longstanding anti-yuppie epithet "yuppie scum" with the longstanding anti-gay epithet "faggot." It mobilizes resentment against an economic and racial privilege that is widely assumed to be enjoyed by most gay men. The faggot of yesteryear was degraded by his lack of self-control in pursuit of sick pleasures. The "yuppie faggot" of today is a white pleasure-seeker who pays no price in status for his lack

of self-control, but instead actually enjoys a social and economic status above that of the ordinary heterosexual. When guerilla anti-*gentrification* activists in Chicago's Ravenswood neighborhood scrawled "Die Yuppie Faggots" on the homes of neighborhood newcomers, they were identifying gay men's supposed privilege as the explanation for the displacement of longtime working-class residents from the neighborhood.

The expression "yuppie faggot" has emerged in a context where existing systematic research has found that people who have sex with people of their same sex exist across the entire income spectrum, and in every ethnic and racial group. On average, gay men actually earn less income than heterosexual men, even when similarly qualified. Women—straight or not—on average earn less than men, even when similarly qualified. Gay men and lesbians do not, on average, live in more affluent households than do heterosexuals, and in fact are more likely to be renters than owners of their homes, even in *neighborhoods* where *gentrification* is most feverish. So why the use of "yuppie faggot"? Why must the "yuppie faggot" die in order that others might have *affordable housing* and a sense of *neighborhood*?

The idea that gay men and lesbians are an economically well-off group emerged within the gay and lesbian movement itself after the demise of its "gay liberation" phase in the 1970s. Newspapers and magazines geared to gays and lesbians with above-average incomes began trumpeting surveys of their readers that showed them to have above-average incomes and above-average consumer appetites in order to sell more (and more expensive) advertising space.

Simultaneously, in the interest of assimilation, the largest advocacy groups began showcasing the lives of gays and lesbians who were "productive," who made valuable contributions to

Die Yuppie Faggots

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the larger society. In a larger culture dominated by the white professional middle-class, this meant the valorization of white gay and lesbian middle-class professionals.

In the 1990s, the Religious Right picked up this ball and ran with it. Seeking to stop and undo the gains of the gay rights movement, they took ballot initiative campaigns to cities and states across the country, arguing that gays and lesbians needed no “special rights” from the government, because, as the gays have been telling us all along, they are economically and racially privileged. (For details about the actual economic lives of queers, and the ways in which they have been misconstrued, we recommend M. V. Lee Badgett, *Money, Myths, and Change—The Economic Lives of Lesbians and Gay Men* [University of Chicago Press, 2001].)

Over the course of the 1980s, but intensifying in the 1990s and running up to the present, *gentrification* has been advertising “gay privilege” and generating anti-gay resentments at the same time, without orchestration from “pro-gay” or “anti-gay” forces. Sexual outlaws of all races and incomes have historically sought to build *communities* in urban *neighborhoods* as oases in a straight world, long before the contemporary gentrification phenomenon. Historically, these *neighborhoods* were maligned by the dominant society as locales of “deviance”—hardly the locales of some kind of gentry. What is different today is that there is a

visible and growing professional class of gays and lesbians—not representative of queers as a whole—whose own pursuit of *community* is carried out on the terrain of a gentrifying real estate market. In fact, the real estate industry frequently seeks out gay and lesbian professionals to use as a “first wave” of change in “under-priced” working-class *neighborhoods*. Once they move in, they think their housing investments must be protected and cultivated through highly visible participation in block clubs, *neighborhood* planning meetings, and *community* policing meetings (see *CAPS*), frequently in opposition to longtime residents who, across deep chasms of racial and economic differences, they fear.

Hence the “Die Yuppie Faggots” graffiti. But in no gentrifying *neighborhood* are white gay and lesbian professionals the majority of the newcomers. More to the point, *gentrification* is being driven by the real estate industry, banks, and city government, all of which are pumping resources into “under-priced” neighborhoods in order to induce more middle-class professionals, regardless of sexuality, to buy central-city properties because they see the prospects for super profits and super tax revenues in doing so (see *gentrification*). “Yuppie faggots” could all die tomorrow, but that won’t stop gentrification and its class and racial injustices.

# History of Q2L Housing and Anti-Gentrification Activism

**April 1999: Town Hall Meeting: Building a Progressive LGBT Movement** Organized a town hall meeting at the Hot House with other local groups and New York activist Barbara Smith to discuss how to build a more inclusive, grassroots, progressive LGBT movement that would work in coalition with others supporting progressive social change. Gentrification, which had been a major issue in that month's widely followed aldermanic election in Uptown, was a central issue of discussion.

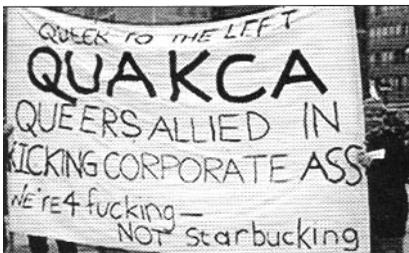
**1999-present: Campaign to build low-cost housing in the Wilson Yard** In coalition with the Community of Uptown Residents for Affordability and Justice (COURAJ), we built a campaign to win the development of 200+ units of low-cost housing in the Wilson Yards, the five acres of Chicago Transit Authority-owned land at Broadway and Montrose.

- \*Mobilized people and organizations to attend public meetings and hearings on the future of the Wilson Yards.
- \*Issued statements and testified in favor of low-cost housing at public hearings on the future of the Wilson Yards.
- \*Co-organized marches and demonstrations in Uptown to support the demand that low-cost housing be built on the Wilson Yards.
- \*Built the Wilson Yards Coalition, consisting of over forty organizations within the neighborhood and across the city, to come out in favor of building new low-cost housing in the Wilson Yards.
- \*Plans should be announced by the City this fall. We anticipate the inclusion of two different complexes containing approximately 160 units affordable for families and seniors making less than \$20,000 per year.



**2001-2002 - Campaign to stop city subsidies for high-end condos and Borders Books at the old Goldblatt's Department Store site at Broadway and Lawrence**

- \*With COURAJ we organized turnout for, and made presentations at, public hearings at the neighborhood level and at City Hall.
- \*Organized a town hall meeting at Women and Children First Bookstore to discuss the stakes for the LGBT community in the Goldblatt's redevelopment—our need for affordable housing and for the preservation of community-oriented small businesses such as Women and Children First and Unabridged Books, which do not get city subsidies.
- \*Working with COURAJ, we delivered 2000 postcards each to Mayor Daley and the head of the Planning Dept protesting public subsidies for high-end condos and Borders Books at the Goldblatt's site.



- \*This activist campaign pushed the city to commit an additional \$2 million to the nearby Leland Hotel, a single room occupancy building serving low-income people; forced the developer both to drop the price of the “affordable” units built in the building as well as to increase the size of half of them; put the issue of rental housing on the agenda for future TIF-subsidized developments in Uptown.

# History of Q2L Housing and Anti-Gentrification Activism

**January-February 2001: Fighting for tenant rights against Halsted Street businessman** In coalition with the Rogers Park Community Action Network (RPCAN), organized protests on several consecutive Saturday nights outside a Halsted Street gay bar whose owner was illegally evicting low-income tenants in one of his residential buildings in order to rehab the building (without City permits) to “upscale” it and charge higher rents. The publicity caused him to cease the illegal evictions, and caused City inspectors to crack down on his non-permitted work.

**Summer 2002: Campaign to save Circuit Nightclub from residential encroachment** Organized to support the Circuit nightclub against residential developers, who, in cahoots with then-Alderman Bernie Hansen, were hoping to force out Halsted Street’s nightlife. Q2L representatives spoke at meetings of the City Liquor Commission in defense of gay space. We leafleted Halsted Street Days to spread the word about Hansen’s involvement. The growing controversy about Hansen’s business connections and vision for the future of the neighborhood helped force him out of office.

**June 2002: Pride Parade contingent: There’s no place like home...if you can afford one** Marched in Chicago’s LGBT Pride Parade drawing attention to the housing crisis and offering reasons why queers might be concerned.

**Upcoming in Fall 2004: Town Hall Meeting on Gentrification** Q2L will host a screening of the documentary “Flag Wars,” which examines the dynamics surrounding white middle-class gay male gentrification of a longtime working-class African-American community in Columbus, OH. Meant as a springboard for discussing issues surrounding gentrification in Chicago’s North Lakefront neighborhoods.

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## Words in Progress

Alderman	One-Strike Rule
Area Median Income	Pocket of Poverty
Balanced Development	Police Misconduct
Big Box Retail	Public Safety
CHA Plan for Transformation	Public Sex
Community	Quality of Life, The
Development	Queer Space
Displacement	Residentialism
Gay Issue	Revitalization
Gay Neighborhood	Riffraff
Homeless	Sex Worker
Homeowners	Suburbanization
Millennium Park	Urban Life
Mixed Income Development	Urban Pioneer
Neighborhood	Working Families
Neighborhood Block Association	Youth



