Gentrification is often portrayed as a two-sided war: the gentrifiers versus the gentrified. But through a compelling collection of first-hand oral histories from on-the-ground New Yorkers, D.W. Gibson teases out a more nuanced struggle for power between mostly well-intentioned players in a rapidly-evolving global American city. The author’s resulting thesis is clear: the “sin of property” has muddied New York City’s once-cherished sense of community and citizenship.

Unearthing the subtleties of complex social issues through intimate oral histories is an art that Gibson continues to perfect. His 2012 book *Not Working: People Talk About Losing a Job and Finding Their Way in Today’s Changing Economy* similarly relies on a collection of oral histories to depict the vast impact of the late 2000s recession beyond statistical trends. *The Edge Becomes the Center* begins with an unassuming statistical graph. Toussaint still clings to his apartment but he is disconnected from the neighbors across the hall...little by little he has become more disconnected from the community that exists in the building where he grew up. p. 160

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“I always feel like we’re bad people. But we’ve lived here for twenty-three years. We work. We don’t mess with nobody. We’re paid rent on time. And who’s helping us?” - Matt, p. 195

Neighborhoods evolve and I think if you’re willing to be part of that process you’re really able to enjoy that process and enjoy your city.” - Noelia Calero, p. 236

It is the organizational structure of Gibson’s interviews, along with a masterful turn of storytelling, that makes this work great. The author has seemingly eschewed any personal pretenses or prescriptions, allowing the powerfully raw stories of twenty-eight New Yorkers to speak for the complexities of the city’s increasing waves of gentrification. Readers are left to form their own conclusions.

It is quite incongruous when this collection concludes, in its final chapter, with a heavily-handed stance by the author decrying the “invasion” of gentrification that, he states, threatens to dismantle the city’s future. The author’s own methodological structure and reverence for his subjects’ voices throughout already leads readers to this conclusion, if not a more impactful one, so the author’s final chapter diminishes more than it enhances. Therefore, it is with a similarly heavy hand that this reviewer encourages readers to rip out chapter 29 immediately upon purchase.

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