Gentrification is an effort on the part of political and business leaders to restore depressed urban communities by seizing land and property, destroying inadequate properties, and replacing them with new homes, schools, and restaurants. The ultimate goal is for businesses and middle class residents will relocate to these areas therefore increasing property values and revitalizing impoverished. On the surface, the gentrification of a community seems like a positive attempt to strengthen its economy and that of the city as a whole, but it has negative consequences as well.

This case study discusses the efforts of the mostly low-income, African American and Haitian residents of the Liberty City section of Miami, Florida to fight the gentrification of their community. These residents participated in a number of activities to both protest gentrification and the lack of decent housing facilities for the city’s low-income residents with a mixed degree of success. This case study also discusses the events that took place in Liberty City, and the definition and problems associated with gentrification.

Teaching Objectives

The issues associated with the Umoja Village erection and the overall gentrification of Liberty City provides several compelling lessons for students of politics and public policy. With regards to Liberty City, this case demonstrates that poor people of color can gain the resources necessary to fight perceived injustices in their communities by calling attention to the issues. In essence, this case study proves that individuals with few economic and political resources do indeed have the power to confront wealthier business and political elites.

This case was written by Dr. Sharon D. Wright Austin and Leonard J. Laurenceau, Department of Political Science at the University of Florida. Funds for the development of the case were provided by the Library of Congress. The case is intended for classroom discussion and is not intended to suggest either effective or ineffective handling of the situation.

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Teaching Strategies

This case should be taught using the following material as teaching aids:

- The accompanying case study “Max Rameau’s Mission”
- [www.takebacktheland.org](http://www.takebacktheland.org)
- [http://www.miamidade.gov/housing/library/Newsletters/HOPEVI_fall_07.pdf](http://www.miamidade.gov/housing/library/Newsletters/HOPEVI_fall_07.pdf)

YouTube videos:

- “Umoja Village 11.20.06”
- “Umoja Burns”
- “Max Rameau on Umoja Village Parts 1 and 2”

Discussion Questions for a 50 minute Class

1.) Was the demolition of the Scott Carver Housing Development necessary for economic growth?
2.) Was the erection of the Umoja Village Shantytown an effective way to receive media attention?
3.) Was the erection of the Umoja Village Shantytown an effective way to address the housing needs of the homeless and low-income residents of Miami-Dade?
4.) Is it possible for Miami-Dade County, or any locality, to create affordable housing for low-income families and initiate economic growth opportunities?

Discussion Questions for a 1 1/2 to 3 hour Class

1.) Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages of residential gentrification?
2.) What are the alternatives to gentrification?

Simulations and Role-Playing Exercises

Students can be separated into two groups. The first group must argue for gentrification and the other argues against it.

"You are the community activist" activity. Students must advise the residents of a poor community on the right way to fight gentrification and receive media attention even though the initial gentrification process has begun.

"You are the mayor" activity. Students are the mayor or another elected official trying to persuade a low-income minority community that they will benefit from gentrification.